Maybe It Was You from the Start

by ZiallandLarry

Summary

Louis hates the fact he was held back a grade in his youth, but he knows if it was not for being held back he never would have met Niall, Zayn, most importantly Harry, and perhaps Liam. This coming of age story follows five friends (or more than friends) who try to figure out their place in the world while also attempting to hold on to each other. Growing older brings to the surface insecurities, surging hormones, figuring out who they are in regards to new identities, group drama, past trauma, secret plans, and a lot of emotions. But at the end of the day, they always find their ways back to each other.

But to sum it all up: the one where Louis is oblivious, specifically to his own feelings; Harry is a little scarred and secretly possessive; Zayn is a wallflower who will do anything for his 'family'; Niall falls for the last person he would ever expect to; and Liam is kind of an ass, but the boys love him anyways.
*There is a formulated soundtrack to this story. Every chapter title is the title to a song, so altogether the titles add up to a soundtrack.

**This work often goes through reconstruction when I'm bored. I fix grammatical errors while occasionally adding in new scenes and more thorough contexts.

Notes

This is my first fan fiction so please don't judge too hard! I thought this would be an oneshot but as I developed and expanded the plot, I realized it would be a very long oneshot. So it's now going to be a multi-chaptered thing. I live in America, and since I do not know much about the U.K. school system, this will be largely based on the American public school system.

Lots of this story is actually based on real-life experiences I've had with friends while growing up. I thought I could give a semi-accurate representation on how developing sexuality can affect teenage friendships. Plus Larry is so cute, I couldn't help but write this.

Also, I'm very sorry for all of the grammar errors or obvious misspellings... I self-edit, so I often don't catch these things and I have some of the worst grammar skills so good luck!.
Louis and the Strays (Summer Nights)

Chapter Summary

As the beginning to another school year reminds Louis of his disdain of his predicament, Louis reflects on all the events that led him to the present: how he met Niall, Zayn, and how it currently causes him to meet Harry.

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone! So I posted this chapter nearly two years ago. I recently was rereading my story and noticed how much my writing style had evolved from the beginning to the ending, with me writing this for more than a year ago. Since I really care about this story, I decided I may be rewriting parts of chapters to reflect my current writing style while adding some more information and characterization. So if you ever reread this, you may notice parts that you don't remember from before, which don't be alarmed because it's still the same story, just more detailed than before.

Most of this chapter is written in the past tense (though I really don't like that format) because Louis is remembering what happened in the past. At the beginning and end of the chapter, it is written in present tense since the story is occurring from that moment onward, as will be the rest of the story (expect for a couple scenes that are also flashbacks in upcoming chapters). In the first flashback, Niall's accent is really strong (given that in the story he just moved from Ireland to America), and I looked up how the Irish dialect of English is spoken, though for the rest of the story his accent is a lot more subtle and less noticeable since given his young age his language adapts to the setting he now lives in.

There is some mentioning of bullying and racism/islamophobia in the first chapter, but this is just for setting up the relationships between the characters in the first chapter. Those topics are rarely touched upon in the future.

Song for the chapter: "Summer Night" from Grease

It is not that Louis thinks he is better than everybody else. He does not. He believes everybody is born equally and that humans set up the boundaries that exist today. It is just... he is older than everyone else here. He already has an early birthday, so he is naturally older than most of the people in his class. Then to top it all off, he was held back in kindergarten. Not because he was dumb; he was just very shy as a child. Louis did not talk to many other students and stayed largely to himself. His teacher thought that Louis might have a developmental disability, so the teacher requested he retake his kindergarten year. Louis's mother Jay, already grappling with that fact that Louis's father had bailed out of their lives while also raising Louis as her first child, agreed with the recommendation and did not think to investigate the supposed “learning disability.” It soon became obvious that Louis had no learning or social disability. He was smart. No prodigy by any means, but
quite an intelligent student.

Louis deeply regrets his mother's decision for him to be held back. He feels like he lost a year of his life, and the worst part was the decision was completely out of his control. By eighth grade, Louis is fifteen and while all of the other students in his class are merely thirteen. Already feeling emotionally distant from other students, the many years of watching their childish antics and pointless drama led him to only doubled down on his feelings of exclusion. It is as if that extra year of life gave Louis an experience of maturity that he finds rarely relatable in other people.

As Louis sulks down the main hall on the first day class, he tries to remind himself of the positive effects of having to repeat kindergarten. He has a very difficult time doing that though.

There are only two benefits, in his opinion, to being held back: they are Niall and Zayn.

*First Grade*

He met Niall on the first day of first grade.

It was the first day of Louis’s new school year. He happily sat in his seat towards the back row, smiling to himself. He finally did it. After being forced to retake kindergarten, he worked hard enough to finally arrive in the class he should have been in a year ago.

That extra year did not “fix” Louis’s shy personality as his previous teacher had hoped, but they had no reason to be held back once more, so here he sat.

Even after spending the previous year with these students, Louis could not say that he would call one of them a friend. Whenever he tried to talk or play with the other children in his class, he would have a very troubled time connecting with them. His conversations appeared to go over their heads in understanding. They were more preoccupied with playing with the shiniest toy or racing from one end of the playground to the other than Louis cared to.

Louis did not like to think of himself as weird, because he did not feel odd. He just felt like a Louis. But everyone else clicked so easily with other students compared to his blatant failed attempts. Maybe the dark voice in the back of his head was right. Maybe he was not normal. Maybe this is why his dad left. Maybe he will never have a friend.

Through the front door of the classroom walked in this sunny, sandy-haired boy. The boy caught Louis in his day dreamy state, smiling back at Louis’s pride-induced grin. Louis’s smile nearly disappeared in shock of the eyes gleaming back at him, expecting the boy to point and laugh at Louis’s goofy expression. But he did not. The boy simply returned the smile he received from Louis, though Louis cannot help but notice the uneven spacing between the boy’s adorable grin.

Louis then noticed the boy’s attention turned away from him. The boy, whom Louis did not recognize from the previous year’s class, appeared to be smiling at anyone. That just must be what the boy is like. Nothing special about the connection Louis thought him and boy possibly shared. He took a seat in the first row of the room and quickly tried to start conversation with those around him.

“Ello there, dis is Miss. Brown’s classroom, rio mate?” The boy questions to a blonde student sitting next to him. Those around the boy, including Louis, quickly notice a thick accent coming out of the boy’s mouth.

“Your voice!” The blonde next to him hollers back, “Say that again!”

“Ello there… dis is Miss. Brown’s room, rio mate?” The sandy haired boy repeated a little slower, though still brightly smiling at the attention he now received. Maybe making friends in America
would be a little easier than I thought he thinks.

“Whoa! Where are you from?” A girl with dark skin asked, who sits on the other side of him.

“I are from Ireland!” The boy replied quickly.

“From where?” Another boy questioned, “Where in America is that?”

“Oi not from America! I are from across de pond,” The boy explains to the group of children around him.

“What is he saying?” Someone giggled rudely.

“He doesn’t make any sense,” Someone else laughed, though anyone in the room could easily decipher the main idea of what the sandy-haired boy was saying.

“He can’t even speak English!” A kid from across the room squealed, a kid Louis recognized as the class room bully.

“Oi can too spake English…” The new kid mumbled to himself as his cheeks turned pink in embarrassment.

“What a freak,” The same kid across the room tried to whisper to a student next to him, though Niall easily heard the comment.

What was initial wonder and amazement quickly turned to taunting and teasing. Only when the teacher entered to the room at the start of class did the jeers finally cease, but the new boy was now too scared to talk out of fear of continued harassment.

“Louis Tomlinson!” The teacher yells out while in roll call.

“Here!” Louis joyfully stuck his hand into the air to alert his presence.

“Niall Horan?” Ms. Brown called after another few names. Miss Brown knew who the student was. The boy’s father, Bobby, had already been in contact with her, alerting her to their moving situation. Her eyes fell upon the boy in the front room, but he did not react to her calling his name.

Niall’s hands grasped upon his arms close to his opposite hands’ elbows, holding himself as a way of self-comfort. He looks down at his lap, too afraid to answer his teacher’s demand.

“That’s alright,” The teacher smiled at him, “Maybe they don’t do roll call in Ireland.” Niall’s lip quivered. He knew her comment was meant to soothe his worries, but it did not. It made him feel like more of a foreigner, because of course they did roll call in Ireland. He just could not bring himself to answer. Niall did not speak for the rest of the class period.

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Louis scanned the lunch room for an empty seat later that day. He really did not feel personally comfortable sitting next to anyone in his class. They were not welcoming to him last year; why would that suddenly change?

Where he did see a lot of empty seats was around one boy, the new child in his class. Every seat around him, to the right and the left, to directly in front of him and the seats diagonal to him are also unfilled, making Niall’s loneliness ever more apparent to Louis. The scene in front of Louis reminded him a lot of the one he himself had felt for the past two years. Without a thought, his feet
pulled him in the direction of the boy.

As Louis approached, he watched Niall continually look over his shoulder, as if he was expecting the taunting to resume at any moment. Then the foreign boy peered up to see Louis a few feet in front of him, his eyes wide not knowing what would come next.

“Hi, my name is Louis, what’s yours?” Louis inquires simply, trying to come off as sociable as possible, though he really has no idea how to make a new friend.

“’m name is Niall. Is dis yisser sate? Ah, I’m so sorry, Oi can move!” Niall swiftly attempted to gather up his tray and stepped off of his chair.

“Oh no no! Niall! This isn’t mine… I just don’t have anyone to sit with and thought I could sit with you, if that would be okay?” Louis quickly defended from Niall’s accusation.

“Oh,” Niall settled back down into his seat, “Why would anybody want ter sit wi’ me… I’m a freak.”

“Because… that same kid called me freak last year… We freaks gotta stick together, yeah?” Louis offered to Niall, “And I don’t think you’re a freak.”

“Well oi fale loike one,” Niall groaned as he mindlessly stirred his cafeteria mashed potatoes on his trey, “Yer don’t have to fib to me.”

But Louis did something that day; something no other child did. Louis refused to bring up Niall’s accent without Niall’s consent first.

“How’s your day going so far?” Louis asked.

“It’s alright…” Niall lied. But then Niall looks up from his food and the first thing he catches a glimpse of is Louis’s sky blue eyes. They looked so curious, and caring, as if they wanted to know everything Niall has to say.

“You don’t have to fib to me either,” Louis chuckles.

“Truthfully…” Niall sighed, “I hate it here. I miss home.”

“What’s home like?” Louis wondered out loud.

“It’s green,” Niall smiled as he closed his eyes, remembering, “It’s so green. Der grass is green, der fields are green. There is even green on our flag. And St. Paddy’s day, mate, you can’t see anything but green. Here… der grass is yellow and brown… and… I miss der green.”

“In spring, everything is green,” Louis answered, “If you can wait that long.”

“Kind of have too, don’t I?” Niall replied, “And it’s all my fault…”

“What do you mean?” Louis enquired from Niall.

“Well my ‘ncle already lived in the States before we moved here. But, my parents… they… ain’t together anymore an’ it feels loike me fault,” Niall unraveled to Louis. Niall did not know why he was spilling so much on to this stranger, maybe because Louis was the first person to actually be friendly and open since he moved here. Or maybe Louis just had this aura around him that makes him so believable and sincere. Niall did not know why but he somehow ended up telling Louis his entire, while short at that moment, life story, “Oi could hear dem fighting sometimes. It was aboyt me
an’ me brah’der a lot. It’s me fault.”

“I think I know what you mean,” Louis breathed, “My Dad is gone and I feel like it’s my fault too.”

“What ‘appened to you Da’?” Niall asked, “Is he dead?”

“No… He just did not want me. I pretended to be asleep, but I could hear my mom and dad arguing, about me too. Mum tells me it’s not my fault, but…” Louis explained, being just as honest with Niall as Niall was with him, just so Niall did not feel alone with his secrets, “One day he was gone.”

“Louis,” Niall suddenly reached out for Louis and grabs him by the wrist. While Louis and Niall looked surprised by Niall’s sudden touch of affection, neither of them break the contact, “My Da’ told me that parents… are just like everybody else. They’re just people with their own sins… It’s not yisser fault yer man wasn’t gran’ enough to be yissir Da’.”

“Then,” Louis replied, cautiously extending his arm out to also grab Niall’s opposite wrist to also express support, “If it’s not my fault for what happened with my parents, then it’s not your fault for what happened with yours either.”

Louis and Niall shared a warm smile with each other, having finally felt like they were not so alone in this big world. Louis actually liked this boy. He seemed older than he was. Maybe it was the being a foreigner in a new land, or maybe other issues from Niall’s past. But he appeared up to par with how Louis carried a conversation, and that was all Louis was really looking for in a potential friend.

“Yes…” Niall began as he pulled away to take another bite, “My Da’ was the one who asked me if Oi wanted to live in the States, yer know, with my ‘ncle here… Oi was just so knackered of me parents fighting. Oi had so much fun with just him, my da’… Oi didn’t know it meant I’d never go back home…”

“Well my mum told me that sometimes when parents ask us questions, they already have the answer before they ask,” Louis tried to comfort Niall as he just did for him, “Like when my mum asks if I want to go to the park, she already decided we were going to go, but she asked to be nice. Maybe that’s the same for you.”

“I guess I did ‘ear him tell m’ Uncle that he was lookin’ for a job a few months ago… I jist didn’t realize it was in America. I thought it was back in Ireland,” Niall described as he chows down; Louis assumed that now that he calmed Niall down, Niall must have a ferocious appetite, “Maybe you’re rio.”

“Alright everyone! Throw away your lunch and let’s head outside!” A para yelled above students, as everyone quickly grabbed their trash and then headed to the playground.

Niall walked off rather quickly, staying a few steps ahead of Louis as they ventured out of the cafeteria. Louis felt as if this was the closest he had ever gotten to obtaining a friend, and that bloody terrified him. And now it appeared like Niall was walking away from Louis. Did Niall have enough of Louis? Did Louis already scare this kid off?

Louis remembered how his mom told him he actually had to try for friendships, that they do not always come naturally. Even when taking a first step is scary, somebody had to do it. And for the first time, Louis actually had an urge to reach out to someone.

Fighting back all the social anxiety and fear of rejection that had gathered in his gut, “Niall!” Louis called out, “Do you want to, um, play with me?”

And with that, Niall turned around with the largest grin upon his face, “Of course mate! What’s fun
around here?"

“Ah well…” Louis nervously scratched the back of his head, embarrassed that he actually did not play on the playground since most of the children tended to shun him from their games, “I mostly sit by this tree towards the fence, next to the swing set…”

“I love de swings!” Niall hollered, throwing his arm around Louis’s shoulder to pull him along, “Show me de way!”

The boys easily became best friends after that. Just the two of them, Louis and Niall had a mutual understanding of each other's differences and respected them. They did not need anybody else, since no one else could emotionally understand Louis and pretended not to understand Niall. Until fifth grade, when Zayn came along.

*Fifth Grade*

It was their last year before going to middle school. And Louis was so done with recess. Yes, Niall was the best friend he ever had, but Louis could be in middle school right now, doing middle school things and meeting middle school girls.

They were relaxing by a tree on the playground when Louis and Niall looked up and saw a dark skinned boy sitting alone on a swing. Louis felt as if he had never seen that boy before, but that could not be true since it was the middle of the year, and Louis had very good visual memory when it came to facial recognition.

"Who is that kid?" Louis asked Niall.

Niall looked over at the kid then back Louis, "I don't know him. If he is new, he's not in our class.” Niall's accent had become more subtle given the young age he had came to the United States. He still had inflections and vocabulary that were obvious Irish, but his voice sounded a lot more Americanized than when Louis had first met him. When he is angry though, he cannot hold back his natural inflection and swear words.

"Let's go find out," Louis said standing up.

Louis walked over the boy with Niall following close behind. Louis noticed the boy was holding a notebook, either writing or drawing in it. The boy watched the two approaching and closed his notebook as he made eye contact with them. As Louis observed the boy, he thought the boy was pretty... Louis could not explain why his head thought that but it is what it is.

"Hi," Louis said trying to smile, "Um don't think I've seen you around here before."

"Name is Zayn," the boy answered blankly.

"My name is Niall, this is my best pal Louis," Niall said with a bright smile.

"Nice to meet you guys," Zayn responded quietly. They stood in a moment of silence as Louis tried to find something to talk about with this stranger. Till Niall opened his mouth.

"So what're your favorite football teams?" Niall blurted out in awkwardness.

"To clarify, when Niall says football he means soc-" Louis was cut off.

"Oh I know what he means," Zayn answered with a chuckle. Zayn called out of the names of South American and African soccer teams with Niall reacting as if Zayn just said the best team on earth or
overdramatic cussing. Louis stood in silence since he had no idea about sports outside of the States, let alone in the states. After a while the teacher called all the students in from recess, and they parted ways.

It became ritual after that. Everyday Louis and Niall met by the tree and talked for a bit, as Zayn sat in his swing drawing or writing in his notebook. Eventually Louis and Niall would walk over to Zayn and converse. Then they parted again. Zayn never acted like he wanted them there. He appeared more as if he tolerated their presence.

The thing Louis and Niall do not ask was where Zayn is from or his nationality. Louis heard the snickers from other students saying that Zayn was a terrorist, so he did not want Zayn to think that Niall and he only saw Zayn for the color of his skin.

That repetitious behavior occurred for about a week. Until one day when Louis and Niall were sitting by their usual tree, Zayn walked over to them and started the conversation. Louis and Niall smiled as Louis gestured for Zayn to sit on the ground with them.

That was how two became three. Zayn later explained that while he is of Pakistani-decent, he does not see himself as a Pakistani. His father was from Pakistan, but Zayn was not born there.

Over the course of their friendship, Zayn articulated why he appeared okay with being a loner. In the post-911 anti-Muslim hysteria, he often felt victimized due to the color of skin and the religion he practiced. People would say he was not really American because he was Pakistani and Muslim even though he was born in the States like everyone else. He eventually began to close up to strangers. Zayn felt as if he was in a land of hypocrites. Until he met Louis and Niall.

For it was pretty obvious that Louis and Niall did not see Zayn just for his skin color. While they may have liked Zayn because he was different, they liked his differences on the inside than on the outside. He carried around his notebook with him everywhere, writing or drawing whenever he had a spare second. Louis and Niall began asking about the notebook, but Zayn would deflect the question.

It was the night of Zayn's first sleepover with Louis and Niall, Zayn's first sleepover ever actually. It was happening at Zayn's house since his mother was still too nervous to let her son stay over at someone's house for the first time. When Zayn's mother answers the door for the guests, Louis and Niall noticed she was wearing a head scarf, but their parents make no mention of it.

Later in the evening while they were hanging out in Zayn's room, Niall finally had to ask, "So what was that thing your mother was wearing over her head?"

"A hijab," Zayn answered calmly.

"Why does she wear it?" Niall responded.

"For the religion we practice," Zayn said trying to look composed, but his heart began to race.

"Oh and what's that?" Niall asked again.

"We practice, um, Islam," Zayn answered looking down.

"What's Islam?" Niall requested. Louis did know what Islam is, but he did not a lot about it.

"You know... it's like any other faith. A group of people believe in something, try to follow it and um..." Zayn was terrified at this point; he thought his friends understood that he was Muslim that it was a known but unspoken thing. He was horrified that if they talked about it, it would scare them
"Do you believe in God?" Niall asked.

"Yes we believe in the same God Christians and Jews follow," Zayn answered.

"Okay. Do you guys believe in Jesus?" Niall asked again.

"We believe he was a prophet, but not the son of God," Zayn replied.

"Cool, thanks mate! What movie do you want to watch?" Niall said with a large smile.

"Oh I brought Grease!" Louis exclaimed while pulling the movie out of his backpack.


Zayn stood there in astonishment since there was no conflict about his religion, "You guys don't care that I'm Muslim?"

"Why would that bother us any?" Niall asked.

"Not like what you believe in makes you a good or bad person. Like I've seen some Christians be complete dicks, and I've met some atheists who are the nicest people I know. So come on, you think me and Niall would actually judge you about that? I'm kinda offended," Louis said ending his opinion, acting as if he was actually offended and turned away from Zayn.

"No no no!" Zayn said with a laugh as his arms wrapped around Louis, "Sorry, people have treated me different in the past."

"We aren't like most people if you can't tell," Louis answered hugging him back.

"Yeah..." Zayn said with a little tear forming in his eye, "Just feels like for the first time someone actually accepts me for who I am."

"Well that's what friends do right?" Niall replied.

Zayn nodded and thought for a minute: If friends accept each other for who they are, should they really try to keep secrets then? Zayn got up, walked over to his backpack, and pulled out his notebook, "You guys wanna see what I've been working on in this thing?"

This shocked Louis and Niall since Zayn appeared so secretive, but they quickly pulled themselves together and nodded as a reply. Zayn sat down in between them and opened up the book. On the page Zayn opened up to, they saw a sketch of Louis and Niall sitting in front of the tree on the playground talking with each other. It was so well made, so detailed, that Niall and Louis could hardly believe it had not been drawn by a professional artist.

"Oh my gawd, Zayn, this is amazing," Louis finally croaked after looking at the sketch for a long time, "You really drew this?"

"Well duh, who did you think drew it? It's... um... why it took me a week to finally walk up over to you guys. I was trying to finish it," Zayn said trying to hide his smile.

"I like need this Zayn. I want to put it on my fridge for everybody to see," Niall said beginning to look through the rest of the book, "I'm sorry, is it okay for me to look at these?"

"Uh yeah, of course," Zayn said cautiously handing over his book. This was the first time he ever let
someone see his drawings before—well outside of his family. His mom had always told him his drawings were good, but mothers were supposed to say that, so it felt remarkable knowing people outside his family thought his drawings were decent as well.

"And we'll have to tour your art on my fridge after the exhibit at Niall's house ends," Louis said with his eyes glued to the pictures on the pages.

"Maybe I can try to scan you two a copy sometime soon?" Zayn suggests as he stands up.

"Yes please!" Louis exclaimed with a smile, "I'll buy it from you for a quarter!"

"Yeah me too," Niall repeated.

"Only a quarter?!" Zayn quipped sarcastically.

"You think I'm made of money?" Louis snapped back sassily.

"Fine, you'll get the friend discount," Zayn smirked.

"Sweet," Niall replied—and that was the first time Zayn ever sold his art for money.

"Um, would you two mind if I go pray real quickly? I'm supposed to try to pray five times a day," Zayn said reaching for a rug folded in the corner of his room.

"Yeah, we'll be waiting for ya right here," Niall said with his attention still focused on the book. Zayn nodded and walked out of the room. Louis and Niall continued to investigate the notebook seeing pictures of Zayn's family, houses, trees, and nature, everything it seemed.

Zayn arrived back in the room less than ten minutes later, "So what movie are we going to watch?"

"Thought we already agreed on Grease?" Louis yelped.

"There was no such agreement," Niall said throwing a pillow at Louis.

"If he really wants too..." Zayn gives in.

"No, he has made me watch it like ten times. Don't let him win," Niall pleaded to Zayn.

"But it will be our first time watching it together," Louis makes a pouty face.

Niall dropped his face in defeat, "Fine... You're going to regret giving in, Zayn."

Louis leaped up with an I win grin and inserted the DVD into the television. Zayn and Niall hopped off Zayn's bed to sit on the floor, using the bed as a backrest. Louis squeezed in between them as the movie began. Louis then started to feel a little guilt about Zayn opening up to them while Louis and Niall revealed nothing about themselves. Perhaps he should say something to level the field.

"I want to be an actor someday," he blurted out.

"Huh?" Niall snapped.

"An actor, I wanna be an actor someday, maybe in movies or on stage. Like wanna see me do Grease?" Louis said trying to act very calm, but his friends could see the excitement and anxiety in his eyes.

"Do Grease?" Niall questioned cautiously.
"When I get bored I memorize scenes in movies, and I've kinda memorized the entirety of Grease... Wanna see?" Louis requested again.

"We'd love to." Zayn agreed with a smile. On screen it was the scene before the song *Summer Nights*. Louis stood up and started acting out the scene, being every character while changing the pitch of his voice for each actor. He stopped right before the song began. He bowed while Niall and Zayn cheered for him.

"You know, I actually want to sing," Niall revealed after the applause finished.

"Right now?" Louis asked.

"No someday, like, that's what I want to do. You guys should hear me belting it out in the shower. Quite good if I do say so myself," Niall said nervously avoiding eye contact.

"No time like the present!" Louis said with a wicked smile.

"I'm not gonna take a shower at Zayn's house just so you can hear me sing!" Niall yelled. Louis and Zayn broke into laughter.

"That's not what I meant. Sing in front of us right now!" Louis explained.

"I've never sung in front of anybody before!" Niall said defensively.

"Well me neither. Join me!" Louis exclaimed jumping back up. The song *Summer Night* has already begun on screen, "Tell me more, tell more! Was it love at first site?"

Louis's voice was not powerful, but it was smooth and could hold a tone. Niall first tried to reject the offer by shaking his head at Louis, but as soon as Louis ended his verse he stuck his hand out to Niall, then he was all in.

Niall grabbed Louis's hand, jumped up, and sang: "Tell me more, tell me more! Did she put up a fight?" And when Niall sang, his voice carried. Louis and Zayn could hear how passionate he was about singing. They danced around the room with Louis singing the female verses and Niall singing the male verses. After much resistance Zayn finally joined them, lightly singing the backup verses while focusing on trying to help keep a beat. Sure, Zayn actually liked to sing too, but he believed he had already shared enough with them for one day so he would have that for later.

Zayn's father Yasser and mother Patricia walked past Zayn's door in the hallway, to figure out what all the commotion was that rang throughout the house. What they saw was Louis, Niall, and Zayn singing and dancing around the room unaware of their performance's publicity.

"Oh my goodness, they're a bunch of idiots," Yasser laughed quietly, though feeling parental pride that his son finally found some mates that seemed to understand him.

"Yes, but they're our idiots," Patricia agreed, pulling her husband away from the door.

Their friendship was sealed after that night. It was always those three boys together: on the playground, in the hallways, before school, after school, anywhere. Adding a third person seemed to strengthen Louis and Niall's friendship instead of straining it. Louis and Niall loved each other to death, do not doubt that, but they only had each other. Occasionally they would become exhausted of one another, or run out of things to do or stories to tell. Zayn added something new. He was relatively calm while being very emotional and analytical. If Louis or Niall needed any advice, they would first go to Zayn. Niall was very energetic and rowdy, so if Louis ever desired a break from always being on the go, Zayn was his go-to guy. Zayn did have his wild moments, but in
comparison to Niall he balanced out the forming group well.

*Middle School*

The next year they went to middle school. A big adjustment but it also gave them more freedom and choices. Louis and Niall encouraged each other to take a drama class and choir respectively.

After much pushing and opposition from Zayn, Louis and Niall finally convinced him to take an art class, saying that if anything Zayn would probably teach the class a thing or two. Zayn did not know why he was so reluctant to joining an art class. He loved art, performing and analyzing it, but... Zayn was used to being a big fish in a small pond. The idea of seeing artists that could possibly be better than him... intimidated him. Luckily, his friends reminded him that he already had the world's two biggest supporters, that would see his art as the best not because of what he made, but because of who made it. That calmed Zayn's fears as he enrolled in the class.

They all excelled. Louis got a minor role in the first play he auditioned for. Niall quickly made his way to the top of the choir class. In many people's opinion, Zayn's art work was the best in the school, especially to Louis and Niall.

The last time Zayn was bullied for his ethnicity/religious identity was in sixth grade. He, Louis, and Niall were walking down the hallway when a seventh grader thrusts his shoulder into Zayn and whispered, "Go back home Paki, don't need you blowing up this school too."

All color drained from Zayn's expression as shame spread across his face. Seeing the pain in his mate's eyes, something within Niall went off. He was not sure what it was, but the next thing he knew his fist smacked against the bully's cheek. The seventh grader fell back with blood now pouring from his nose.

"Niall!!" Zayn yelled in bewilderment. Niall glanced down at his bruised fist also in shock of what he had just done. The seventh grader stood back up and pushed Niall to the ground. Now seeing both of his best friend's hurt by the same person, Louis then shoved the bully back on to the floor. Teachers pushed through the crowd of students forming around the fight. Zayn pulled Niall up onto his feet as Louis guarded his friends from the apparent threat. A teacher then dragged the four boys to the principal's office as the bully continued to fling swear at his targets.

Principal Cowell scolded each boy individually. At the end of it all, he talked to Zayn, Louis, and Niall, who held an ice-pack to his knuckles, together.

"Boys, I've now heard what happened to every person who participated and a few who saw the fight. I must reinforce that this school has a zero-tolerance for violence. That being said, if what everyone says is true, we also have a zero-tolerance policy for any type of discrimination. What Joey Kota said was completely inappropriate and offensive, and will not be tolerated in my school. If something like this ever happens again, you need to find me or another teacher and report it. I know in the heat of the moment, it's easy to react rashly. I don't know if I would have done much differently if I was in your shoes without the conflict deescalation training I do have. But school policy is school policy. Niall Horan and Louis Tomlinson, I am going to give the minimum punishment that I can for the policy, which is a one-day suspension from school. Zayn Malik, since you did not participate in the fight, you can come to school tomorrow without any form of punishment," Principal Cowell concludes.

"I'm sorry, I know I shouldn't have, it's just… you shoulda seen my friend's face. What that guy said was totally uncalled for!" Niall tries to explain.

"You didn't have to do that… I could have handled it myself..." Zayn mumbled.
"Doesn't matter. I don't regret a thing," Niall confirmed to his friend.

"Well I called your parents, so they will all be here any minute," Principal Cowell gestures for them to leave the room as it appears he has paper work the fill out from the incident.

Louis, Niall, and Zayn walked out of principal’s office to the lobby of the school. Zayn's parents were already there. His mother hugged him tightly, and then his father Yasser walked over to Louis and Niall.

"Thank you boys so much," Yasser declares, "I know you are always over at our house as it is, but you two are permanently welcome whenever you want." Yasser then shakes both of their hands firmly, something Louis and Niall reciprocated as a sign of mutual respect. Zayn and his family left just as Louis and Niall's families arrived. Yasser also thanked their parents for raising such fine young men.

The next day, Niall asked his father if he could go over to Louis's house so they could suffer together. While Bobby explained to Niall violence isn't the answer, he also knew that Niall never would have thrown a punch with the bully's vile remarks. Bobby agrees with the request. About an hour after Niall arrived, Zayn popped up on Louis's door step.

"Why aren't you at school? Did Principal Cowell change his mind?" Louis asked as Zayn came inside.

"No, my dad said something along the lines of a captain goes down with his ship... I'm not exactly sure what he meant to be honest, but he gave me the same punishment as you guys. I went to Niall's house first, but he wasn't there so now I'm here," Zayn said kicking off his shoes at the door. Louis and Zayn walked downstairs where Niall was laying watching television.

He stood up to greet Zayn, but Zayn quickly pulled both Louis and Niall in for a tight hug with Zayn's head resting in between Louis and Niall's.

This surprised Louis and Niall since while Zayn was very friendly to them, he was not normally physical: "I did not get a chance to thank you guys for what you did. Maybe I was a little embarrassed that I did not throw the first punch myself or something. But I realized shortly after how grateful I am for you two. You two are like my brothers, and I love you guys a lot."

Niall and Louis's arms wrapped around the three of them as their heads rested against one another.

"Anytime mate, you'd do the same for us. We love you too," Niall responded.

"Yeah we do... Brothers, the best ones around," Louis agreed.

"You're right... but don't tell my actual brother that! He'd kill me," Niall yelped, and the other two laughed at him in suit. They let go of each other's embrace as that post-emotional awkwardness sets in. Until Niall broke the silence, as usual.

"But really, wasn't that fight the coolest thing ever?!" Niall threw a punch into the air.

"That guy was seventh grader and we took him out!" Louis exclaimed.

"Wow, we are such bad asses," Zayn chuckles, "Tell me what happened exactly! It all occurred so fast!"

They retold the story over and over again to each other; every retelling became more exaggerated and extreme. Until the final time, when Louis played the part of the seventh grader. The scene ended...
with him lying on the ground, playing dead, covered in ketchup that was used to look like blood. Niall and Zayn bowed above him as if they were heavy-weight champions.

Nobody messed with Zayn after that fight. People realized that even if they did not believe he belonged in the school or even in the country, Zayn did have a home, and that home was Louis and Niall.

Seventh grade came and they kept maturing. Niall started dating girls at this point, a lot. Previously his accent was something of ridicule or alienation, but now it was exotic and the girls loved it. While Louis and Zayn did date girls, they were not girl crazy like Niall. While Louis and Niall had often been the closer of the three, with Niall now often doing his own thing, this gave way for Louis and Zayn grow in closeness.

Louis and Zayn would often get into intellectual debates or discussions, talking about the future, their fears and dreams. They would watched artistic movies and went to museums, stuff Niall would find very boring.

Since the fight, Zayn allowed himself to be more intimate with his boys, both emotionally and physically. Louis and Niall had always put their arms around one another, but Zayn rarely reciprocated. The event of the fight proved to Zayn that his friend's truly cared, so he began showing affection the way his friends did. He grabbed their sides; arm slung around one of them in the hallways; having wrestling matches, etc. Especially with Louis, but it kind of makes sense since while Niall was getting girls, they were left with each other... in a neither non-sexual nor romantic way.

One night they were watching some slow French film in Louis's basement. Louis's arm is loosely around Zayn's shoulder, and Zayn rested his head into Louis's neck. The movie ended, the credits played, and they both sat in a comfortable silence. They were relaxed enough where they could just enjoy each other's company without having to fill the quiet with pointless small talk.

Louis may have liked the warmth Zayn left on him. It did not really feel weird that Zayn is a guy since he was just Zayn, and besides for Niall there was no one else he felt this comfortable with. Even when Louis had cuddled with girls, there was always a need for something to be said or planned or thought of. With Zayn or Niall it was just calm. After a while, he did begin to say something to Zayn about putting in another movie, but Zayn’s response was a loud snore. Louis just chuckles and pulled Zayn in a little tighter.

A few minutes later Louis's mother entered the room, "All okay sweetie?"

"Yeah," he said softly, "the movie ended awhile back and Zayn's passed out. I didn't want to bother him."

"Awe you two are precious," she says admiring their friendship, "Why don't you take yourself and Zayn into your bed. It's nearly one, and I don't want the girls waking you two up in the morning."

"That's prolly a good idea," Louis said lightly nudging Zayn as his mother turned on the light, "hey buddy, how about we head back to my room?"

Zayn barely gained enough consciousness to nod as they both stood up. Louis turned off the television and guided Zayn up to his room. Zayn flopped onto Louis's bed and instantly fell back asleep. Louis changed into his pajamas, brushed his teeth, and then hopped into bed next to Zayn.

Sleeping in the same bed was not weird since he often shared beds with Niall or Zayn during sleepovers, sometimes both at the same time. Louis settled in next to him as he hit of his bedroom
light, only the moonlight brightening his room. As he focused on the moonlight, he felt an arm pull
him in snug. Zayn's head rested upon Louis's chest. Louis had never slept with anyone like this
before and felt nervous at the thought of it, but Zayn's deep breathing soon calmed him. He felt his
friend's heart beat and the movement of his chest as Zayn exhaled. Louis relocated his free hand on
Zayn's back and took a deep breath as he closed his eyes. Before Louis knew it, he was also fast
asleep.

Zayn awoke first realizing his body was plastered to Louis's. Initially Zayn feared how Louis might
react once he awakes, but then he felt Louis's hand on his back pulling him in close. So this is
mutual, that's good Zayn thought to himself. His movement slowly woke up Louis.

"Morning buddy, how'd you sleep?" Louis said in a very drowsy voice.

"Not bad... Really good actually," Zayn said still having not moved from his position on Louis,
"Wait... how did I get to your bedroom?"

Louis let out a snort of laughter, "You don't remember? My goodness, you passed out on the couch
so I dragged your ass up here so the girls wouldn't wake you up."

"Wow, what a gentlemen," Zayn said beginning to push himself off of Louis.

"You know me," Louis said, "Excuse me; I gotta go to the restroom."

Zayn laid in bed thinking about the previous night. It should have felt weird to be cuddled with a guy
sleeping the entire night. But it did not feel weird. It felt pretty natural actually.

"Mum is making pancakes if you're interested?" Louis said popping his head in the doorway.

"Like you even have to ask," Zayn answered rolling out of Louis’s bed.

That closeness became a normal occurrence at sleepovers. Even with Niall there, Louis and Zayn
paired off when it was time to sleep. The three of them were happy with life. They probably would
have been happy for the rest of their days if things would have stayed just the way they were forever.
But things were about to change.

Louis may have believed he only had two reasons to be thankful for being held back, but he was
about to get a third.

*Present*

It is the first day of his eighth grade year. Louis loves Niall and Zayn beyond measurement, but there
is still that tiny voice in his head that says he could be in high school by now, one year closer to
getting out of this town. Besides for a few tall jocks he is currently taller than most in the hallway, so
it amplifies the feeling in his head that he does not belong here.

All the students around him are greeting old friends, asking for directions, hugging, and comparing
class schedules. He already knows Zayn and Niall's schedule so he does not need to ask anybody
else. He gazes down the hall trying to spot the two, when he notices a boy.

A boy that looks very lost and honestly a little scared. He carries a large stack of books while trying
to decipher a piece of paper on top of the stack. The boy is around the average height for his age, but
he seems tiny and has the prettiest curly locks of hair Louis has ever seen. Then while he tries to
rearrange his stack of books to make them easier to carry, the books fall with a loud thud onto the
ground. A few kids snicker but most walk around the boy as if he is not there. His face turns a light
shade of pink in embarrassment. The curly-haired boy then drops to the floor to pick up what he let
Before Louis knows it, he is sitting down on the ground next to the boy helping him pick up the mess.

"Oops," The boy says to himself, not aware of Louis's presence.

"Hi," Louis whispers as he grabs a book and tries to take a look at the boy's face, "You alright?"

The boy drops his shoulders, sighs, and then let's out a small laugh, "No, if we are being completely honest, no."

Louis chuckles, "Good, I like honest." Louis and the boy gather up all the books and stand up.

"Thank you so much. I know you didn't have to do that," The boy smiles softly. *Whoa, green eyes Louis thinks those are very pretty... pretty unique!*

"In my opinion, I should have to do that. It's just being courteous, just being human," Louis gives a nod.

Louis tries to think of a conversation to fill in the silence, but his mind is frozen. He hasn't felt this socially awkward since before he met Niall. He would have expected to boy to have left by now with both of them just staring at the other. But neither of them moves. Louis's heart is now pounding. He has to flee.

"Well I hope you have a better day from here on out!" Louis calls out as he swiftly turns away from the boy, feeling hot pink spread across his cheeks.

"Wait!" The stranger calls out, looking as if it took all his will to say that.

"Yeah?" Louis answers.

"Um, I know it's the first day, and everybody is lost on the first day, but most people have friends to ask these questions too, but I don't-" Harry rambles very fast.

"What do you need, kid?" Louis asks with a smile. *He's kind of awkward Louis thinks I like that.*

"I'm new here, and I don't really have anyone to ask how to get anywhere. Could you please show me to my locker and my first class? I'm sure I can handle the rest of the day after that, I just have no idea where to start," the boy requests, appearing very self-conscious having to ask a stranger this.

"Yeah, I can totally do that for you," Louis responds with a friendly grin, trying to reassure the boy that it is no problem to ask. Louis waves his hand, signaling for the boy to follow him.

"So what grade are you in?" Louis inquires.

"Seventh grade," the boy replies.

"Well if you are a seventh grader, your locker will be in one of the side halls. Eighth graders have their lockers in the main hall," Louis grabs the piece of paper off of the boy's stack of books without asking. The boy looks shocked that Louis does that without permission, but he does not fight him about it. Louis looks down on the paper for a name and only sees *Styles.*

*That's a wicked name, Louis thinks.*
"Where are you from?" Louis inquires trying to make conversation.

"Erm, from the Midwest," the boy answers vaguely.

"Why did you move here?" Louis asks again.

The boy takes a few seconds to reply, looking as if he is trying to find the right way to word a delicate situation, "My mum got a new job here. We felt as if it was a good time to move."

"Well you chose a pretty fine school to come to. High test scores, good sports, very little bullying, lots of extracurricular activities. You're going to love it, I guarantee it," Louis tries to alleviate the boy's obvious fears of moving here. But to be completely honest, Louis is talking out of his ass.

"I'm sure I will," the boy gleams back. Before they know it they are at the boy's locker.

The boy places his books on the floor and takes the sheet of paper back from Louis. He attempts to open his locker using the code on the sheet, but after three tries it is obvious to Louis the boy does not know how to open a locker.

"Sixth graders didn't have lockers back at my school so..." he states appearing embarrassed again, "I never learned how to do it."

"Don't worry, I can teach you," Louis declares, grabbing the piece of paper from the boy, but this time boy does not let go of the sheet. This kind stranger seeing his schedule is one thing, but to know something as private as his locker combination is on a whole other level of trust.

"I know you barely know me, but you have to trust me, okay? I haven't even memorized my locker combination yet, so there is no chance I would remember yours. And even by some miracle I did remember, I promise I'd never use it unless you ask me to," Louis tries to reassure him.

"Promise?" The boy requests.

"Promise," Louis answers. The boy then releases his grip on the page and Louis begins to undo the lock.

"The trick is go to the first number turning left, turn it a full circle to the right then to the next number, and finally turn the dial to the left straight to the last number," Louis describes as the door easily flies open.

"Don't know what I'd do without you today," the boy sighs in relief, picking up his books and setting them in his locker, "Kinda cheesy, innit? The school cool kid helping out some new nobody? Easily opening my locker as if you are the Fonz?"

"I'm flattered you think of me as cool, but you will quickly learn I'm not in that clique," Louis hums with a snap from his fingers, "Aye!"

The boy rolls his eyes at Louis's Fonz reference and failed attempt at looking cool, but the subtle grin on his faces proves to Louis that the boy finds him amusing, "So how long have you gone to school here?"

"Well this school since sixth grade. In this school district, since kindergarten," Louis replies.

"You'll be my go-to-guy if I have any questions about this place then," the boy closes his locker.

"May not be the best guy for that, I really don't pay attention to many things around here. I probably
couldn't even tell you what our school mascot is... it's a bird... I think..." Louis explains as him and the boy walk back down the hallway, "Where is your first class?"

"F-hall room 301," the boy responds.

"Cool, that's on my way to my first class, I'll show you the way," Louis comments as they enter back into the main hall.

"I'm going to be so lost without you for rest of the day. If you hear about a missing boy on the speaker system, it will probably be about me," The boy says dramatically.

"Like when kids get lost at the mall! I can already hear it: 'Louis Tomlinson, please come to the main office, a lost child is requesting your assistance on walking to class,'" Louis projects his voice like the muffled speaker system that can be heard through the entire school. The boy laughs at him.

"Your name is Louis?" The boy tries to confirm.

"Oh goodness I'm so rude! Hello, my name is Louis Tomlinson," Louis extends his hand to properly greet his new friend.

"Hello Louis Tomlinson, my name is Harry Styles," the boy replies shaking Louis's hand.

"We're already at your class," Louis notices they just happened to stop in front of Harry’s classroom without realizing it. Louis wishes they were not there yet though. He wants to get to know this boy a bit more, which is very extraordinary since Louis initially dislikes people until they prove him otherwise.

"Thank you so much for everything, Louis. Could you by chance point me in the direction of my next class?" Harry asks handing Louis his schedule.

Louis then looks around the hall, sees a school map on the wall, and pulls it off, "I'll just draw it for you."

"Are you allowed to do that?!" Harry asks scared they will get in trouble if someone sees him steal the map.

"Shhhhh..." Louis says with a mischievous smirk, "The school has hundreds of these maps in the main office, no one is going to notice if one goes missing." Louis pulls a book and pencil out of his backpack and sits on the ground. He then draws Harry's schedule out for him, showing him how to get room to room. Louis then stands back up and hands both his schedule and new map to Harry, "Now you'll never be lost."

"Thank you Louis, so much," Harry sighs gratefully.

"I'm just being a good guy," Louis explains.

"The world need more good guys like you then. I'll see you around; have a good day," Harry turns into his class.

"Yeah... You too," Louis mumbles at spot Harry previously stood at.

"Happy seventh anniversary to the bromance!" Niall yells as he wraps Louis in a hug, lifts him up, and spins him around.

"My back, my back!" Louis cries playfully as he hears the sounds of his joints popping.
"This is so unfair, only because I moved here 4 years after you did?" Zayn lightly punches Niall on the arm, a joking jealousy that Niall and Louis have known each other longer.

"I moved here before it was cool, you were just following my lead," Niall laughs as he sets Louis on back on the ground.

"Yeah sure, I want to be just like you," Zayn replies sarcastically.

"At least you finally admit it to yourself," Niall concludes, "Where you been Louis? We've been looking all over for you."

"Oh I was just showing Harry-" He goes to point at Harry, but Harry is already gone, "Uh, nothing, just walking around."

"Well come on let's get to class! Don't want to be late on the first day. Do you want the teacher to hate us this early in the year? I mean, it's inevitable anyways, but so soon?" Niall asks as he slings his arms over Zayn and Louis's shoulders, guiding them down the hall to their first class.

And that reminds Louis why it is so important he was held back. If he was not held back in kindergarten, he never would have met Niall in first grade and became best friends. If he had not been held back, he would have been in middle school, not on the playground with Niall to meet Zayn. And if he was not held back in kindergarten, he would have been in high school instead of helping Harry get to class on his first day. And that is the story of how Louis met Harry.

Chapter End Notes

As stated above, the first few chapters will continue to grow and adapt as I make changes and add details. Hope you enjoy reading :) Feel free to contact me on here or on my tumblr polydirection.tumblr.com!
Chapter 2 Part 1: I Can't Help From Falling in Love with You

Chapter Summary

Louis finds a couple 'strays' as this group of friends takes shape.

Chapter Notes

So disclaimer: usually, I hate "new kid moves to a school" plots for stories, but I could not figure out a way to start this story without it. The plot doesn't hold that motif for long, quickly moving onto new plots and stories. So if you're like me and this part of the story turns you off to reading the rest, don't worry, it won't be like this for long.

This chapter is split into two parts because it was way too long as one chapter. Part one of his chapter is mainly filler and laying of foundations for the characters for the rest of the story, so please stick with me. Part 2 will have more things happening, I just had to cut the chapter somewhere because it was a really long read without the cut. The chapter title will make more sense once part 2 is up which will hopefully be very soon!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 1

The first days of school are such a bore. Each class saying the same thing: turn in your work, don't cheat, sign here, etc., which just causes Louis to daydream. Whenever he is in the halls, he would look for the little lost boy with curly brown hair. But when Louis goes to his locker and looks down the hall for the boy with the green eyes, those eyes are never there to look back.

He really does not know why he cares so much. Or even why he was nice to the boy in the first place. Not that Louis is mean to people, more like indifferent. Whenever Louis would try to hold a conversation with someone, it would fail, unless if that person was Niall or Zayn. With Harry it came pretty easy. Louis did not have an overwhelming urge to run away from the situation when he talked to Harry, which is a surprise in itself since normally he would find any excuse to avoid or end a social interaction.

Louis could not find him, but he does not dwell on it. Really he does not. But a week after first meeting the boy, his searching is finally rewarded.

Louis is sitting at his lunch table with Niall and Zayn when he looks up to see Harry sitting alone across the room. Harry makes brief eye contact with him but does not sustain it. Harry himself is wondering if he and Louis are at a place to initiate conversation yet. He has been at school for almost a week with no genuine human interactions, and he may go crazy if that does not change soon.

"Lauren McKenzie is so gorgeous. A real beauty from the South and just moved her from Florida. She has the cutest southern twang, and legs that go-“ Niall rambles.

“Mind if I ask Harry to join us?” Louis interrupts Niall, not listening to him in the first place.
"Who?" Niall inquires.

"Harry, that kid over there," Louis nods in the direction of Harry. Instead of subtly peering over their shoulder as Louis hoped for, Niall and Zayn fully turn around in their seats to look at the mystery boy.

"Oh my gawd, could you guys be any more obvious?" Louis sigh in embarrassment. Harry’s eyebrows bounce up once noticing people staring over at him.

Zayn and Niall turn back around to face Louis, "Sorry subtlety is not my strong suit," Niall mischievously grins.

"The one sitting alone?" Zayn attempts to confirm.

"Yeah, why?" Louis responds.

"What's with you and collecting strays?" Zayn questions with a taunting smile.

"What?!" Louis barks in confusion.

"Goodness, Louis, we became friends because we shared class together and mutually had no other friends, and then we became friends with Zayn because he was sitting alone at recess," Niall reminds the group.

"He has a point," Zayn agrees.

"Well- I-" It is not like Louis could say they were wrong. He is the kind of kid who would bring home whatever animal he found on the side of the road and ask to keep it as a pet: dog, rabbit, frog, snail, bird, fish, and dead fish.

"We do not mean this as a bad thing!" Niall continues, "Means you got a big heart, and we love you for that. Go get the kid."

Louis nods to his friends, stands up, and walks toward Harry. It is not a bad thing Louis has a habit of doing this; he just believes no one deserves to think they are alone. The world is full of 7 billion people, how could someone be truly alone? And maybe it is a little easier for Louis, given his social anxiety, to talk to people when he knows he has no competition for attention, because in most cases outside of Niall and Zayn, if Louis was going against someone else, he expected to lose.

"Ello Louis," Harry's voice snaps Louis out of his thoughts and brings him back to reality.

"Hey Harry... Haven't seen you in cafeteria the past few days," Louis begins cautiously, already feeling a nervous tightening in his chest.

"Well I spent my first few days of lunch in the library... I was so anxious I wasn't very hungry, plus I didn't want to be that one weird kid eating alone at lunch. But my hunger finally got the best of me, so I now am that kid eating alone at lunch," Harry chuckles uncomfortably, feeling as if he is making a horrible second impression.

"I saw... I was going to tell you I have a free chair at my table if you are interested," Louis offers.

"I don't want to impose," Harry whines.

"I think since I am asking you, I'm technically imposing on your alone time," Louis responds with some sass.
"Well, when you say it like that!" Harry grins enthusiastically and both of them laugh, "Sure, just let me grab my things."

Harry gathers up his class books and attempts to balance them under his lunch tray, though, it becomes apparent to Louis that the equilibrium would not be sustainable. Hoping to prevent a mess like the one led to him and Harry’s meeting, Louis snatches the food tray so Harry could hold his books without dropping them everywhere.

Louis's fingers briefly run against Harry's grip during the process, and Louis could not explain the bubble of heat that formed in his stomach from the touch. He quickly tries to bury the feeling as Louis leads Harry over to his table where Niall and Zayn sit.

"Hey boys, this is Harry. He's new here," Louis announces as he sets Harry's tray on the table next to his.

"I'm Zayn," Zayn softly nods his head towards Harry, already showing off his usual broody demeanor to the stranger that both Louis and Niall know by this point is a complete act.

"And I'm Niall. We're the other strays," Niall winks as Zayn softly giggles.

"What?" Harry asks looking confused but pleased.

"Never mind them, they're idiots," Louis rolls his eyes at Zayn and Niall, once again feeling embarrassed by his best friends.

And sure, it is a little awkward at first, but within 15 minutes Harry easily talks with both Niall and Zayn. Zayn acts cold, but he does to everyone he newly meets. Niall warmly holds a conversation with Harry, because Niall can do that with anybody. Like when Louis met Niall and Zayn, Harry seemed older than his age. While even being a year younger and having extremely adorable babyface, intellectually Harry seems to be on the same level with Louis.

"So where you from, Harry?" Niall asks with a fry hanging from his lips.

"Murka," Harry replies sarcastically.

"I couldn't tell," Niall chuckes, "Like, where did you go to school before here?"

"Small town in Kansas, so tiny you wouldn't have heard of it. I haven't even heard of it," Harry deflects the questions once again.

Hmmmmm Harry wouldn't tell me either, wonder why he doesn't want to say, Louis thinks. But Louis did not pry into Niall and Zayn's background when he met them, so he has to respect Harry the same. But some reason Louis has slightly more interest than he did in Zayn and Niall. The bell rings mid-thought and they leave their table.

Harry joins them at the table every day for lunch after that. They grow fond of him, even Zayn after a week. School is becoming officially school with actual assignments, which causes Louis to miss the simplicity of the first days of class.

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Louis briskly walks down the crowded hallway at the end of the third week of school. His face points to the ground, focusing on his cell phone at hand, swerving around other students as if he is on auto-pilot. His phone pings from responses on the group chat between him and his two best friends. Both Niall and Zayn have engagements after school, so neither could give him the attention Louis so
desperately wanted. He sighs quietly, trying to avoid the common sight of people with more friends than him exiting the school together.

Until a loud swear word pulls him away from his phone.

"Son of a bitch!" Louis hears Harry yell. Louis gazes up to see Harry holding a piece of paper with his backpack slung over his right shoulder, though the backpack soon slides down his arm and onto the ground in self-defeat. Louis then notices the last of the school buses driving past his new friend.

"Everything okay?" Louis inquires as he attempts to block the sun from out his eyes with his hand.

"Oh," Harry turns around, obviously embarrassed from his emotional outburst, "Yeah, kinda... I mean... Everyday my mom has picked me up after school, but she started work today, so she asked me to take the bus home. But I didn't find the bus in time... That explains why I'm here and the cussing."

"Quite the dirty month from a young lad like you," Louis grins mischievously.

"Don't need your sass," Harry rolls his eyes, "Now I'm trapped here till at least five, if not later."

Louis debates in his head whether he is at the point in a friendship to invite Harry to his house yet, but goodness, he cannot just leave the kid here to rot: "I'm about to walk home. I'm sure my mother can drive you to your house or I can walk you from my place if it's close. You be okay with that?"

"I don't mean to be any troubl-" Harry stammers anxiously.

"Harry, in all due respect, shut it. If I didn't want you with me, I wouldn't have invited you. Let's go," Louis commands, removing any doubt from Harry if he is being a nuisance to Louis.

"How far away do you live?" Harry asks as they begin make their way down the street.

"Less than a mile, really close in my opinion, super easy for Niall or Zayn to swing by whenever they want," Louis answers.

"Niall and Zayn, Zayn and Niall. Do you have any other friends?" Harry questions invasively.

Louis shoots Harry a confused look. He cannot tell if Harry is trying to take a consciously taking a jab at him, or if this boy is just really bad at wording things.

"Oh my god! That came out totally wrong. I didn’t mean it like that! I’m sure you have lots of friends..." Harry looks legitimately scared that he may have hurt Louis's feelings, as if Harry is terrified that he might scare Louis off.

But the honesty Louis perceives in Harry's self-critical response quickly alleviates any fear that Harry has a nasty bone in his body. That is how Louis figures out Harry could never purposefully hurt anybody, even if he so desired to.

"No, just Zayn and Niall," Louis laughs off.

"Sorry, I'm bad with words... and talking... and interacting with people in general," Harry comments while looking towards his feet, still obviously embarrassed with himself.

"You're talking to the king. I literally cannot connect with anybody but Niall or Zayn... well, and now you," Louis agrees nonchalantly.

"And now me?" Harry asks brightly looking up into Louis's eyes. They stare for a brief second,
which makes Louis uncomfortable in a very good way.

"Goodness, don't think you're too special!" Louis tries to defuse the emotional intimacy he is sharing with Harry, which is a lot for a kid he just met.

Harry drops the subject and looks back up at the road ahead, but Louis can see the light smile on Harry's face knowing that Louis has already accepted him as a friend.

"Have any siblings?" Louis asks breaking the silence.

"An older sister named Gemma. She's in high school. What about you?" Harry responds.

"Little sisters, lots of little sisters. You'll probably meet most of them at my place," Louis answers.

"Girls, girls, girls. I wish I had a brother, you know?" Harry asks.

"I've had enough tea parties and fashion shows to last a lifetime," Louis remembers fondly, "But, if I am being completely honest with you, I really don't mind all those activities actually. I know they came off as girly or feminine, but to my sisters they are just activities... The way my sisters would light up when I do something they really care about... it's worth it, you know? Plus, I understand how important male role models are, to anyone. My dad really isn't around... But my step-dad stepped up when I needed someone, and if I can even make my sisters feel a quarter of how much I appreciated it, it's all worth it." He may actually love being a big brother a lot.

When Louis looks over at Harry after his monologue, Harry's eyes stare widely over at Louis in amazement. Louis may even see little stars in Harry's eyes for how brightly they shine up at him. A pink blush spreads across Louis's cheeks.

"It's just me, my mom, and my sister," Harry whimpers honestly, "I wish I understood all of that... Your sisters are lucky to have you."

Then the gravity of his and Harry's conversation hits Louis: both of them admitting their fathers are gone. They are simply and openly spilling out their lives to each other, so easily and without resistance. And they cannot see a judgement face staring back.

Before Louis can responds, he notices the red trim and white paint of his childhood home on a few yards away on the right, "Here we are."

"It's big!" Harry exclaims.

"It has to be big enough to fit the eight of my family somehow," Louis responds as he unlocks the door, "Along with Niall and Zayn."

"Mom? You home? Mom!?" Louis calls out, but the house remains silent, "Guess she ain't home yet. You can just leave your shoes at the door. I'll show you around."

Louis takes Harry on a tour of the house, telling memorable stories for each room. Any scratches or dents on the walls are tales about Niall getting too rowdy in the house. A black splotch on the carpet of the front room is from when Zayn's pen broke when he rolled over it in his sleep. Eventually they make it to Louis's room, which Harry finds marvelous. He takes a minute to inspect every picture and poster on the wall.

"Who drew that?" Harry points at a sketch of Louis and Niall on the playground from when they met Zayn.
"Zayn, he's very artistic. Bought that from him for only a quarter. He now demands at least a dollar, crazy inflation," Louis responds.

"I wish I was that talented," Harry continues to gaze at the picture.

"Yeah, he is," Louis agrees.

"You still like Pokémon?" Harry shifts his attention to a giant poster on his wall.

That time Louis feels a little embarrassed. He, Niall, and Zayn play together, but something they do not advertise. They really should not care what other think of them, but they do not want to be labeled nerds or anything, as if they aren't already. "Well... I mean... Um..."

"I love it!" Harry exclaims, "What game is your favorite?"

Louis sighs in relief, wondering why he would even think Harry could be judgmental about something such as this given their previous interactions, "That's not even a question. The first games, Red and Blues, are obviously the best."

"Wow, you are such a hispter," Harry then mimics Louis as he flicks his hair out of his face, "I only play the first 151."

"Hey, I still play the new games. I'm just saying they aren't as good." Louis comments as he purposefully does a hair flip.

_Damnit Harry is right_ with his impersonation, Louis thinks. "Wanna see my current team?"

"Of course, let me go get my DS outta my backpack!" Harry grins widely as he quickly run to his backpack to retrieve his DS. Louis is already sitting on his bed with his DS in hand by the time Harry returns. Harry and Louis exchange DS's to look at each other's game as they settled comfortably across the bed. Louis turns the television in his room as the boys talk and battle. They completely lose track of time until they hear the sound of the house's garage opening and closing.

"Mum must be home," Louis mumbles while his attention remains fixated on his and Harry's game. The sound of children scampering and yelling fills the house.

"Louis, who's here? Niall or Zayn?" Jay questions as she walks into her son's room, "Oh." _That's not Zayn or Niall._

"Mum, this is Harry. Harry, this is my mom," Louis introduces casually. Surprisingly, Harry quickly stands up and politely greets the mystery women.

"Like he said, I'm Harry. It's very nice to meet you," He grins as he sticks out his hand for a handshake.

"Nice to meet you, Harry," She warmly shakes his hand. Louis only ever brings home two people: Niall and Zayn. So whenever he makes new friend, it is a proud moment for her, "How'd you two meet?"

"Harry just moved here. I helped him on the first day of school find his way around the place. He then started sitting with us at lunch. And now he's here because-" Louis explains.

"Oh goodness, Louis! I forgot I have to get home!" Harry interrupts. Louis then hops up, now also remembering the reason why Harry is here in the first place.
"What going on sweetie?" Jay delicately asks Harry.

"I missed the bus, so I came home with Louis so he could walk me home or something. But we totally forgot..." Anxiety spreads across Harry's face, "Oh no... My mom is going to be so mad."

"She won't be mad, love. She will just be very worried about you. How about I drive you home real quick? Mark can watch after the girls for a bit," she suggests calmly, "Will you come with Louis?"

Jay drives to Harry's house which they all quickly realize is only a few minutes away. As Jay's van pulls up to their destination, Harry's mom is already outside on the lawn, nervously looking down the street hoping to see her son appear at any moment. Relief spreads across her face as the van parks and Harry hops out of the seat.

"Harry! Thank God! Where have you been!?" She swarms her son and envelopes him in a tight hug, "You had me worried sick! You should have been home hours ago!"

"I'm sorry Mom. I missed the bus, so Louis was walking me home, but then we lost track of time at his place," Harry answers as he pulls away. Harry's Mom looks up to see Louis and Anne approaching the scene.

"Thank you so much for bringing him home! I had no idea where he was at," She sighs as she calms down.

"We're so sorry to make you worried. Louis should have called me to let me know what was going on. I would have hurried faster to get him home," She explains with one of her arms around Louis protectively, "I didn't realize Harry was at my house till I got here. He is a very polite boy. You've raised him really well."

"Don't know where he gets it from! He definitely didn't learn his politeness from me" She laughs, "So this is Louis I've heard all about?" A light pink shade of embarrassment spreads across Harry's face once Louis hears Harry has talked about him to his mother.

"That's me," Louis smiles and waves.

"Well shake her hand sweetie!" Anne commands Louis, giving him a small shove in the direction of the stranger. Louis reaches out his hand to Harry's Mom, as she chuckles and shakes in return. She then redirects her attention to Jay.

"I'm Anne by the way," Harry's Mom says extending out her hand again.

"You can call me Jay," Louis's Mom answers. They begin having a conversation about moving and childbearing while Louis and Harry stand there awkwardly watching the interaction. Anne notices this.

"Harry, why don't you take Louis inside, show him around, get him a drink or something?" Anne suggests to Harry.

Harry nods to his mother, "Come on Louis." Harry walks inside and gives a tour, but it feels very inadequate to Louis's tour since there are no memories here, yet. Louis meets Gemma in the hallway, but she does not seem in the mood to talk, very pretty though. They reach Harry's room and it is very plain: no posters or pictures, a blue bed, and wooden dresser.

"We'll need to get you some things for your walls. I can get Zayn to draw you some pictures; it will really class up the place," Louis suggests.
"Hey Lou?" Harry begins.

Nickname, interesting Louis thinks, "Yeah?"

"I really wanted to thank you for being so nice since I moved here. Like, I don't know how to explain it or why you been so pleasant, you're just... nice..." Harry goes in quickly to give Louis a hug. At first, Louis does not move in shock of the sudden affection. But then he feels the way Harry comfortably rests his head on Louis's chest, which causes Louis wraps his arms around Harry without thinking.

"Don't mention it. You're my friend. You deserve nothing less," Louis responds as he places his chin upon the top of Harry's head.

"Harry! Tell Louis his mother is ready to go!" Anne yells from the front yard. Harry pulls away. Louis swears he sees Harry wipe a tear from his eye, but Louis does not want to bring attention to the matter out of fear of embarrassing his new friend.

"See you Monday?" Louis questions.

"You could come over this weekend..." Harry cautiously suggests, "If you got nothing going on?"

"Yeah, I could ride my bike over or something?" Louis confirms as he leaves the room.

After that, Harry quickly falls into place within Louis's group of friends. Harry happens to be in Zayn's art class, giving him an unlikely support when his skills are beginners at best. Niall convinces Harry to join a recreational soccer team that meets on weekends.

But of course, it is Louis who Harry truly bonds with. Louis always meets Harry when he gets off the bus every morning, chatting about their night and anything else. They meet in between classes when possible, again for lunch, and Louis walks Harry to the bus at the end of the day to make sure he does not miss the bus again.

About a month into their friendship, Harry comes to the lunch table appearing very nervous. As the group talks, he would occasionally straighten up, open his mouth as if he is about to say something, and then retreat back into solitude before a sound would come out. After this occurring a few times within five minute, the group stares anxiously at Harry.

"What's going on?" Louis questions concerningly.

"I kind of have a request..." Harry mumbles as he fiddles with his fingers.

"And what is that?" Zayn continues.

"I have this friend in a class of mine, and he's a really nice guy... Kind of a bookworm, head so focused on grades, he's not really enjoying school life. He doesn't really have any friends, but he's really polite once he opens up a bit. Maybe he could eat us? I think he could click well," Harry explains to his friends, honestly caring about this mystery boy's wellbeing.

"I don't know... the newbie bringing in a newbie? That's different than one of us," Niall references Louis and Zayn.

“Harry has not steered us wrong yet,” Louis argues.
"Come on! You guys are really fun... And he's just another stray," Harry smiles at Niall and Zayn, understanding their inside joke.

"Just another stray..." Zayn repeats with a smile, "I'm okay with it. I mean, we are pretty fun guys as Harry said."

"If anything we might scare this kid off. No guarantee he'll even like us," Louis quips.

"Not like us?! Who wouldn't like us?" Niall yelps, "Fine, fine. Go get the boy."

Harry hops off his seat with a grin and disappears down the hall towards the library.

"You're way too accommodating for that kid," Niall takes a lon sip from his milk carton.

"He has a big heart, just like me. How could I be mean to him for that?" Louis rhetorically inquires.

"His heart," Zayn rolls his eyes as if he understands something that the rest of the group does not.

Louis shoots Zayn a look of confusion, but then he sees Harry returning, walking with the boy next to him.

The boy has brown hair like Harry’s, but the hair is much less curly. The mystery boy is good looking, not as good looking as Harry in Louis's opinion but not sore on the eyes. Louis looks back over to Niall and Zayn to see their reactions. Niall gives a light nod to the kid as a sign of welcoming, but Zayn...

Zayn's face is in a state of awe. His eyes appear so bright, and his cheeks may even be flushed. Louis had never seen that face on Zayn before. He could not describe it.

"This is my friend Liam," Harry introduces with his hand lightly on Liam's back, "Liam, this is Niall, Zayn, and Louis."

"Hello..." Liam mumbles quietly, clutching a few school books tightly to his chest.

Zayn shoots up and extends his hand, "Hello, I'm Zayn. It's a pleasure to meet you."

"Hi Zayn. You're the guy with the really good art, right?" Liam shakes Zayn's hand after he sets his books on the table.

"What? Me? No, it's not that good," Zayn chuckles as a now very obvious blush lightens his cheeks.

"What are you talking about mate?" Niall reminds him, "You literally shoved your art in my face last week yelling ISN'T THIS JUST THE BEST DAMN THING YOU'VE EVER SEEN?!

Zayn quickly scowls at Niall before he sits back down. Liam sits down across from him as Niall immediately notices his lack of food.

"Aren't ya gonna eat?" Niall points at the empty space where a tray of food is typically at.

"I don't really eat at school..." Liam trails off.

"No one wonder why you're so skinny. Come on, I'll come with ya," Niall stands up as he pulls Liam by the bicep.

"Haven't you already eaten?" Liam gestures towards Niall's empty tray though he is already being dragged towards the lunch line.
"What? This? This isn't even half a meal compared to what I eat at home. Come on, let's go," Niall replies as the two disappear into the distance.

"Seems like a nice lad," Louis confirms to Harry with a smile, then turning to Zayn, "What do you think of him?"

Louis notices that Zayn is not even paying attention to what Louis had said, but rather intentionally watching the movements of their new friend.

"Earth to Zayn," Harry snaps his fingers near Zayn's face.

"Huh what?" Zayn barks, snapping back into reality.

"I said what did you think of him?" Louis repeats.

"He seems... like a nice lad..." Zayn confirms before he looks down at the boy's books on the table.

That ended their group's expansion period. While not coming into the group as quickly or as deeply as Harry, Liam becomes a regular with them at school. Liam naturally bonds a little closer with Harry and Zayn over time, though the group as a cohesive unit become a normal fixture at their school.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading, this is my first story I've ever published so it means a lot that anyone is reading it at all. There's going to be a good plot and a very thoroughly developed story, I promise, just give me a little time to write it out:) It may seem kind of slow at the start, but I really want the reader to understand how the characters' relationships develop and how their character personalities evolve due to their life experiences.
Chapter 2 Part 2: I Can't Help From Falling in Love with You

Chapter Summary

The boys' bonds grow stronger as they reveal emotional baggage and chaotic home-lives.

Chapter Notes

Chapter 2 Part 2! Thanks for waiting:) I like this part a lot actually. It really gets the plot rolling for the rest of the story.

Song of the Chapter: "I Can't Help Falling in Love with You" by Elvis Presley.

*C.W.: There is some discussion about violence at home and between family members in the past. It is not mentioned often through the rest of the story, but it is there in this chapter so I wanted to warn any reader who may feel uncomfortable by it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 2

Louis convinces Harry to go to the first play of the school year, easily so after learning that Louis would be playing the main role. Harry does not know what to expect. He has heard from Niall and Zayn about Louis's superb acting skills, but it is only middle school acting. And it also the words of Louis's best friends. Harry could not imagine they could say a negative thing about him given how close-knit they are.

But the moment Louis comes on stage as Romeo, confidence flaring and his voice projecting all over the auditorium, Harry's face lights up knowing his best friend is one of the best actors in school.

Gemma sits next to Harry and rolls her eyes. Her brother is bloody obsessed with his best mate, and because of that she is dragged to a middle school play to escort her Harry. In exchange for taking Harry, she does get the car for the night afterwards though. To Gemma's surprise, Louis is actually talented, and his acting makes the show quite enjoyable. Harry even bought him a flower, happily bragging to her that it will be Louis's first.

The curtain closes and Harry is the loudest person in the crowd, nearly embarrassing Gemma. But at the same time, it is adorable how much her brother cares about his friend.

Harry sneaks backstage and greets Louis, rambling to Louis how it was the best show he has ever seen (even if it is the only live show Harry has ever seen), and orders Louis not to stop until his name is in bright lights.

Louis then notices Harry's hands are purposefully hiding behind his back, but Louis tries to let Harry's surprise last as long as it possibly can. Finally after seeing the eagerness growing in Louis's eyes, Harry pulls out the flower, a Pot Marigold, a beautiful orange flower with many long beautiful
pedals.

At first, Louis appears a little starstruck. While a few cautious eyes around him gawk at a boy giving another boy a flower, that does not even phase Louis. But Harry was right, this is his first flower he ever received following a show. He cannot deny that he feels a flutter in his chest. His fingers barely brush against the pedals as his hand hovers above the plant, terrified even the lightest bump could ruin such a beautiful gift.

"Hazza," Louis blushes, "You didn't have to do this."

"I know I didn't have to, Lou," Harry pushes the flower in Louis's direction, "But you deserved it, nothing less."

Louis takes in the soothing smell of the flower, "Good choice."

"Do you want to come to my place after this?" Harry asks with a dumb smile on his face, "I'll even cook for the star of the show."

"Well, there's an afterparty going on that I was invited to..." Louis begins as he sees the light disappear from Harry's eyes, "You should come with me."

"Oh okay," Harry responds obviously disappointed about this option instead.

Louis can understand why: Harry would not know anyone there. It is not that Louis likes the people he's acting with anyways or that he inherently wants to spend any more time with them than he has to. But it is just tradition for cast to have a dinner together after the first show.

"But," Louis interjects, "There will be always be more afterparties... And I guess I kinda tired. Spending a quiet evening with you after the fuss of the show would be relaxing." That smile Louis is slowly coming to adore quickly flashes back upon Harry's face.

"Sweet! My mom is out for the night and so will Gemma. The house is ours. Hurry up!" Harry exclaims as he runs off of backstage with a huge grin. Louis just chuckles as he begins to take off his stage makeup.

"You boys have a nice date! Don't burn the house down please," Gemma requests, stopping the car in front of her house, "I'll probably stay at my friend's house tonight, so I'll see you in the morning. Remember, Mom said she'll be back late, so make sure to pick up any mess... Or if you do leave one, just don't blame it on me."

"Thanks for the ride! Hope you have a fun night!" Harry reaches over to hug his sister as he exits the car.

"Yeah thanks again Gemma," Louis repeats.

"You did great tonight, Louis. I was genuinely impressed, and that is very rare for me," she confirms honestly. Louis smiles as a response. Harry then leads Louis into his house.

"So, what do you have planned for us tonight?" Louis asks as he kicks off his shoes at the door.

"Well, since the greatest actor in the school decided to grace me with his presence on opening night, I thought I would make him a dinner of chicken Alfredo with a side of green beans, watch a movie, and let him unwind after the pressure of being the main role," Harry smiles brightly. He cannot help
but smiling when he is with Louis.

"Whoa! You already got me this flower and came to the opening night. I don't need any more. I only want to spend time with my friend Harry," Louis explains while tenderly placing his hands on Harry's shoulders, to reaffirm what he just said.

"Well, spend time with your friend Harry as he cooks for you," Harry commands as he steps around Louis towards the kitchen.

"You can cook?" Louis questions.

"Can I cook?! My goodness, do you know me at all?!" Harry exclaims while he pulls out some pots and pans from the covers.

"You have never cooked for me before," Louis answers.

"Yes, I can cook, pretty darn well if I do say so myself," Harry replies as he scavenges for supplies in the fridge, "You've never cooked for me either."

"I haven't cooked for you because I can't cook! I'm pretty sure I could burn cereal with milk," Louis sighs as he sits himself at the kitchen table.

"Well unlike you, I won't burn a thing," Harry declares while he fills a pot with hot water.

"Where did you learn to cook?" Louis asks.

"Well, with my father not really around and my mother always working, someone had to," Harry answers.

"You don't really talk about your dad, Harry..." Louis hints at.

"He's not really worth talking about," Harry deflects, focusing on the food at hand.

"Okay," Louis accepts, not wanting to push his friend on the subject if Harry was not up for sharing it. Harry finishes cooking the meal in a comfortable silence while Louis watches Harry make his way gracefully around the kitchen.

"The food is about ready," Harry sets some plates on the table.

"You're going to make a great housewife someday. I'd defiantly hire you as a nanny of my kids," Louis finds the silverware and sets it next to the plates. Louis knows it is not much, but he wants to help where he can.

"I'd prefer the title Uncle Harry," Harry suggests.

"The babies will call you Uncle Hazza," Louis gleams.

"You want children, even as young as you are?" Harry asks.

"I've always wanted kids," Louis replies honestly.

"Couldn't have said it better myself," Harry agrees as Louis and him take a seat at the table across from one another.

"Thank you so much, Haz. I couldn't have asked for a better night," Louis hums while taking his first bite.
"I really appreciate you choosing to come here... I'm sure that party had more interesting people than me..." Harry mumbles as he scoops some pasta onto his plate.

"Cut the self-deprecating talk," Louis orders, "There's no place I'd rather be. I mean it."

Harry blushes at the sentiment. He then raises his glass in the air for a toast, "To the acting career of Louis Tomlinson, may it shine as brightly as it did tonight." Louis tries to hide his smirk as he raises his glass and lightly taps it with Harry's.

"So, what do you think of Juliet?" Harry takes a bit of his food.

"What about her? She's nice enough," Louis replies unenthusiastically.

"Had a pretty good kiss on stage if I do say so myself," Harry giggles, "There has to be something there."

"Well even if there was something there, she has a boyfriend," Louis answers.

"So you're saying there is something there," Harry declares.

"I am not saying that. Maybe we're just really good actors. Did you think of that?" Louis barks.

"Something you're very good at," Harry whispers, "Wish I had something like that..."

"What are you talking about! you're great at lots of things! Cooking for one!" Louis exclaims.

"Maybe... But I can't perform cooking. And I gotta be honest, I'm good but I'm no Gordon Ramsay," Harry mumbles, staring down at his food.

"Of course, you're no Gordon Ramsay; you are way too sweet to be. You're Harry Styles and you're perfectly great at just being him," Louis declares, but Harry appears unconvinced by the argument.

"There has to be something you're good at..." Louis contemplates, "For fuck sakes Harry, you amaze me every day!"

"I do?" Harry looks up into Louis's eyes, trying to detect any sign that Louis lied.

"Well... yeah..." Louis mumbles because of how personal what he said sounded like, but he then notices maybe Harry needs this kind of encouragement and positive affirmation, "You're so happy; your smile could save anyone's day; and you really care for people. I can see it in your eyes. You're younger than me but older at the same time. And like, you always make me laugh. You could easily be a stand up comedian."

"I don't try to be funny," Harry admits, "I kind of thought you found me boring."

"Boring, please? I couldn't spend so much of my time with someone who bores me," Louis answers, "What about acting?"

"I have a really bad memory," Harry begins.

"How about art with Zayn?" Louis asks.

"Good, but not better than the average person in the class," Harry replies.

"Soccer with Niall?" Louis question again.
"Erm, same as with art..." Harry stirs his food impatiently.

"Can you sing?" Louis finally wonders.

"I don't know..." Harry looks back down at his half eaten plate.

"What do you mean you don't know?" Louis demands.

"I mean, I sing sometimes... But no one has ever heard me, at least not in a few years. I only do it when the house is empty," Harry clarifies.

"Hmmm, dinner and a show?" Louis suggests with a mischievous smile, "That'd make this night perfect."

"What?!" Harry's face goes blank with fear.

"A show! I gave you a show tonight, I think you owe me one," Louis explains as his smile widens.

"No, no, no," Harry pleads.

"Harry, I want to hear you sing," Louis normally respects peoples’ desire when they push back on an idea, but he can see that this is something Harry would never do on his own volition. Now is the time for friendly forcefulness.

"Lou..." Harry begs desperately.

"What's the worst that could happen? I'm not going to tell you suck. You know I'd never hurt you like that," Louis explains truthfully.

"I know..." Harry spins his fork around on his plate, distracting himself from the tension.

"Then what is it?" Louis asks.

"It's just... In my head I'm good, great even. But it's a fantasy because I have nothing in reality to compare it to. In my head I win X-factor or American Idol. But if I sing for you tonight, and it's not good... then the dream is dead. Then what do I have after that?" Harry opens himself up.

"Hazza," Louis stands up and walks over to Harry’s chair, "You have me." Louis brings Harry in for a hug, "And I would never kill your dreams." Harry looks up at Louis and rubs his face into Louis's stomach.

"Okay..." Harry finally gives in.

"What are you gonna sing me?" Louis picks up his and Harry's plate off the table.

"You know who Elvis is?" Harry stands up.

"Who Elvis is? Oh my gawd, do you really think I'm that culturally unaware?" Louis playfully swats Harry on the shoulder.

"Okay, I know what I'll sing. Just meet me in front room in a few minutes, I'm going to go get ready," Harry says leaving the kitchen. So Louis cleans the mess Harry left, putting the leftovers of food in the fridge and doing the dishes.

Once he is finished, Louis walks into the front room and sits on the couch. Shortly after, a Harry Styles appears wearing a button up shirt tucked into his slacks, looking like a professional singer.
"Are you ready?" Harry sighs nervously.

"Now more than ever," Louis responds.

Harry plugs his iPod into the sound system next to the television, keeping the volume low enough to have a background beat to help keep his place, but not loud enough to overpower his own voice. Harry turns around as Louis recognizes the song "Can't Help from Falling in Love with You" by Elvis Presley.

Harry opens his mouth: “Wise men say only fools rush in...”

Harry’s voice... It overtake Louis. Harry had a sweet little voice when he talked, but this was powerful, moving even. Out of little Harry Styles came this astounding vocal range that could not be from a 7th grader. It carried through the house, and Louis watches in amazement, star struck, the same way Harry looked at him on stage earlier in the night.

Harry ends with: “For I can't help falling in love with you...”

He stares at Louis waiting for a reaction, but Louis still cannot say a thing. He tries to analyze how Harry became this being, no longer just a boy, in that moment.

“Well?” Harry breathes.

“What the fuck...” Louis whimpers.

“I told I wasn’t good!” Harry turns away from Louis, attempting to hide his face in shame.

Louis shoots up and runs over to his emotional friend, “No Harry, that’s not what I meant. What the fuck as in how have you not sung in front of me before?”

“What?” Harry squeaks weakly, still facing away from Louis.

“Your voice is amazing, incredible, and so many more adjectives that cannot even come to mind right now! Like, how could that voice come out of little ol’ you?” Louis turns Harry around, in total praise of him.

“I’ll be taller than you someday,” Harry chuckles softly, though Louis can tell those words are just a deflection from the topic at hand.

“You wish!” Louis laughs, “And oh my god! If Niall heard you sing and knew you weren’t in choir, he’d lose his freaking mind! You have to try out for the next choir show!”

“I can’t...” Harry nonchalantly shrugs his shoulder.

“Hazza,” Louis orders firmly, though to counteract his aggressive stance he gently pulls Harry's chin up by his fingertips so they can establish eye contact, “You don’t have a choice in the matter. You’re going to and you’re going to be the best there ever was. Well, don’t tell Niall that.”

Harry tries to smile, but he gazes down at his feet, appearing to look for anyway to avoid a confrontation with Louis.

“Why haven’t you tried out before? Why don’t you sing for anyone? Do you not realize how gifted and lucky you are?” Louis prods Harry forcefully.

“It’s just... my father...” Harry finally releases. He quickly closes his mouth after the words slip out, as if what was said did not come out of him willingly.
Louis stares curiously at Harry for a moment. He expects Harry to continue with his story, but his friend’s lips remain firmly shut. Tears begin to gather in Harry’s eyes.

"You know you can talk to me about anything," Louis states tenderly, "I'm never going to judge you for anything you say... well unless you admit to killing someone. But that's the line, and I cannot imagine you ever doing something ever remotely close to that. And I like to think of myself as a good secret keeper. If you tell me not to tell anyone, it won't leave this room."

Harry swallows in a gasp of air, before he finally unravels, "When I was a young, whenever I would sing... He’d yell at me, telling me that no one ever wanted to hear such a squeaky, high-pitch voice... And after you hear something enough times, you start to believe it... eventually I just stopped... and now you..." Harry grabs Louis tight and buries his face in Louis’s chest.

And there is no doubt this time, Harry is crying. Louis feels it in how hard Harry shakes and in the wetness of tears Louis feels on his shirt. Louis grabs that back of Harry’s head and rocks him, whispering that he was here and that it was going to be okay.

“I’m so sorry you have to see me like this... I look so pathetic! I’m sorry...” Harry manages to squeal out in between his sobs.

“Harry please, don’t apologize. You’re not pathetic; you’re human. If anything this makes me think more of you. I know they say boys don’t cry, but they do, and I don’t think anything less of you because of it,” Louis explains as he presses light kisses on Harry’s forehead trying to calm him down.

Harry just nods into Louis’s chest as the tears keep pouring.

“Your father was wrong. I know me telling you this once may not change how you feel, but if anything I am sorry that you believed that lie for so many years because you have a gift anyone would do anything to have. You can’t let him hold you back any longer. You only have one life, Harry. Live it,” Louis concludes.

Louis then recognizes that what he says to Harry may just sound like an empty gesture. Harry is being really open with him, even if it was not the intent. Louis knows he should return to intimacy so Harry does not feel so alone and awkward in such an honest display.

"And if you don't get past what you experienced, that's okay too,” Louis describes truthfully, "My dad ran when I was very young. To the point that I didn't even keep his last name because I don't identify with him anymore. But it still hurts."

Harry contemplates for a moment before opening his mouth, "So you went through that, like me, and turned out okay?"

"I don't know if okay is the right term to use. Maybe I'm never going to be truly over it, and that itself is okay, because kids shouldn't have to go through what we went through... but we did go through it, and it made me who I am and who you are. It sucks, I know... but Harry, I wouldn't change a thing about myself. And I wouldn't change a thing about you."

Harry finally quits crying after that. He looks up to Louis and tries to smile: his eyes puffy, nose running, and his cheeks flushed. Louis places another kiss on Harry’s forehead. Louis realizes that this internal issue for Harry isn't solved with one conversation, but Louis can see the tiniest bit of hope in Harry’s eyes: that if Louis found a way to manage this, so can he.

“I’m gonna go change and wash up. Why don’t you pick out a movie for us to watch?” Harry
suggests as he wipes off some snot with the sleeve of his shirt.

“You got it,” Louis gives Harry a thumbs up.

Harry walks toward the staircase that leads up to his room, but then he abruptly stops right before leaving and turns around, “Thank you Lou, you’re the best friend a guy could ask for.” Harry acknowledges, for the first time, Louis as his best friend.

“Right back at you Hazza.” Louis bright smiles as Harry hops out of the room.

Louis picks a comedy from the movie rack, to offset what they both just experienced, and puts the movie in the player. He changes into his pajamas while Harry is out. He sits back on the couch under a blanket and waits with the DVD menu repeating over and over again. Finally, Harry appears in his own pajamas. Louis lifts up the blankets and Harry scoots in next to him comfortably.

But Harry does not make it more than half an hour into the movie before he is out cold. Louis can feel his head bump into his shoulder with little snores coming out. Louis turns off the movie and guides Harry up to his bedroom. He tucks Harry in to his own bed and sets up a bed made of blankets on the floor next Harry’s. But Louis is restless.

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Zayn waits impatiently by his window in the dead of night. He feels guilty that the back-porch light is not on, but he does not want to risk any chance of accidentally tipping off his parents for what he is waiting for. He stares into the blackness of his backyard.

Liam messaged Zayn about half an hour ago. The message was vague but urgent. Liam asked (or more accurately demanded) that he be allowed to come over to Zayn’s house for the night. Zayn knew it was way too late to ask his parents for such a request, especially for a kid that his parents did not know as well as Louis or Niall.

His fingers restlessly drum against the windowsill as his eyes frequently dash to the clock in his room. Should Liam be here by now? Liam has been to Zayn’s house before, but he is usually driven over by his parents. He has never walked here before, especially not in the dark. Zayn’s heart rate picks up speed as the time passes. Not only did Zayn have to worry for Liam because he sounded emotionally distressed in the brief message, but now he could be lost.

“Psst!” Zayn jolts as his head spins back toward the window.

There stands Liam in the middle of the yard, looking uneasy but also a little relieved to see Zayn waiting for him. Zayn opens up his window as wide as it can go.

“How am I supposed to get in?” Liam calls out softly, “Can you let me in the back door?”

“Then my parents would know you are here,” Zayn contemplates, “One second!” Zayn disappears from Liam’s view.

A moment after, Zayn’s blanket flies out of the window, lowering itself a couple feet above the ground.

“What am I supposed to do with this?” Liam hisses.

“Climb up!” Zayn orders, “I’ll hold on tight. Try not to thrash against the house!”

Liam sighs and takes a firm hold of the blanket and gives it a test tug.
“Argh!” Zayn yells as Liam hears him topple over.

“You alright!?!” Liam asks.

“Uh… Yeah,” Zayn moans, “I forget how strong you are sometimes. Okay, now I’m ready.”

Liam gives it another pull, but this time Zayn remains steady. Liam scales the wall of Zayn’s house, entering the second-floor bedroom. Zayn then closes the window and turns on the television to muffle any sounds of their conversation.

“I should have said this sooner, but thanks for letting me come over,” Liam mumbles, “I know it’s late. I didn’t know where else to go honestly.”

“I’m happy you felt that you could come here,” Zayn reiterates, “Which you can, whenever you want.”

Both the boys take a seat on Zayn’s bed and absent-mindedly watch the pointless program on the tellie. The room is tense, not uncomfortable, but tense as Zayn is concerned for his friend but does not know how to press the issue without invading Liam’s privacy. But directness usually works for him with Louis and Niall…

“I really appreciate all of you guys for letting me into your tight friend group…” Liam takes the initiative away from his friend.

“It wasn’t like an effort or anything,” Zayn tries to sound more casual than he lets on, “You just seem to fit right in.”

“Well, you’re the one who actually sends me the invite to most group events,” Liam clarifies, “So I feel like I owe a little more to you.”

“Well, it feels to me like you belong with us strays,” Zayn hums.

“Us strays?” Liam attempts to clarify.

“Oh,” Zayn nervously chuckles, “It’s just a name we kind of picked for ourselves.”

“Better than the other names I’ve heard about you guys…” Liam whimpers.

“Oh, are we the topic of conversation?” Zayn playfully nudges Liam.

“I may not say a lot, but I still hear things,” Liam admits.

Zayn stays quiet after that comment though. His attention redirects towards the television.

“Don’t you want to know what people have said?” Liam blurts out in confusion.

“Why would I care?” Zayn interjects.

“You honestly don’t care what people say about you?” Liam does not seem to understand the idea.

“These people don’t have the decency to either be my friend or even say that stuff to my face? The only people’s opinion I care about are the people who care about me,” Zayn proclaims defiantly.

“I wish I felt like that way…” Liam whimpers.

“It takes time to get there,” Zayn explains with a friendly hand on Liam’s shoulder, “For me, it took...
Niall and Louis standing up for me in a fight to finally feel that way. Since then, I really haven’t cared about what people think besides for them, and I guess you now too.”

“I remember hearing about that fight…” Liam sighs, “I, in fact, actually remember the first time I saw you three.”

“You do?” Zayn coughs nervously as his cheeks pinken, “Where?”

“On the playground back in elementary school,” Liam remembers, “The three of you always hung out by that one tree. I remember watching you guys whenever I tried to join in with the other kids playing soccer, but they always did their best to ignore me. I was always a little envious that you three didn’t seem to care nor want to spend time with anybody else. Sometimes those other kids were down right horrible to me, but I still desired their approval. It’s exhausting.”

“You just gotta realize where you belong,” Zayn nods his head, “Once you figure that out, you’ll know where to put your energy.”

“And where’s that?” Liam wonders desperately.

“With me,” Zayn answers directly. Liam’s eyes widen by Zayn’s brutal honesty, causing Zayn to recoil with his proclamation, “I mean, uh, with us. In our group.”

“I wish I would have known it was this easy to click with you guys,” Liam says.

“We don’t mean to appear exclusive,” Zayn elaborates on, “I know I don’t always come off as the most approachable person.”

“But you’re fucking softy, aren’t ya?” Liam jokes as he bumps his body against Zayn’s.

“Things change,” Zayn smiles back.

“Feels like everything is changing…” Liam groans.

“Change isn’t always a bad thing,” Zayn replies.

“Lately it’s felt like it is,” Liam finally releases, “I guess it’s why I’m here now.”

“What’s changing exactly?” Zayn inquires.

“Everything,” Liam repeats, “My body; my emotions; the relationships in my life; how I feel about people. My home is a chaotic wreck right now. I just needed to get out.”

“What’s going on at home?” Zayn presses cautiously.

“My sisters are a bit older than me, so they’ve always come off as more mature. Lately, though, they’ve been fighting with my parents non-stop. I guess my sisters are trying to assert their growing authority and independence against my parents. Somehow, I’m getting caught in the middle with everyone taking their anger out on me…” Liam’s expression drops from his usual joyful demeanor to one that is exhausted and nearly broken, “I couldn’t do much about it being the youngest in the house, but I mostly just repressed it and stayed in my room. Recently, I’ve become so angry by all of it. I don’t like feeling this way… and then tonight…”

“What?” Zayn demands as if he is feeling everything his friend is telling him.

“My sister accused me of stealing something from her room. I didn’t, but she didn’t believe me no matter how much I denied it. She started screaming and then shoving me, over and over again, until
finally I shoved her back. Hard. She looked so shocked and then stormed out of the room. I just slammed my door shut… I can’t believe I did that; I’ve been taught to never hit a woman, and I shoved her… Fuck, Zayn, I feel like shit. I don’t want to hurt anyone. I’m just so mad at home all the time,” Liam ends appearing so ashamed of himself, his eyes darting to Zayn afraid what Zayn will think of him now.

“Well, do you feel bad about what you did?” Zayn asks.

“Of course,” Liam responds quickly.

“Would you ever do it again?” Zayn questions again.

“No! Never!” Liam answers.

“Then…” Zayn starts, “That’s better than what a lot of people ever feel after they do something shitty. If the story happened the way you said, it sounds like you reacted in self-defence. You need to apologize to your sister for starters, and hopefully she will apologize for shoving you in the first place. But after that, you must find a way to channel your anger. Being mad now and again is totally okay. Feelings are a natural part of being human. Anger can be a good emotion if released in a healthy way. And given your current living situation, it’s completely understandable why you would be mad. You’re young. Your body is going through a lot of changes, which may affect your mood and emotions. Let yourself learn and grow from this. It’s okay to feel guilty about this, but use that guilt to make sure it never happens again. If she comes to you again and starts a fight, try to end it before it escalates. Tell her to leave, and if she refuses then call your parents or your other sister to come into the room to either mediate or make her leave.”

“What can I do about all my anger then?” Liam requests urgently, "I'm exhausted from being mad all the time.”

“Hm… You could go to the woods and scream your lungs? You could exercise,” Zayn speaks his thoughts out loud, “What about boxing?”

“Boxing?” Liam scoffs, “Do you see how scrawny I am? Somebody else could take me out with one punch.”

“That doesn’t mean you can’t learn to punch just as hard,” Zayn snickers, “Everyone doesn’t start out as a heavy-weight champ.”

“I guess you have a point,” Liam chuckles, “Uh… Thanks Zayn. I was honestly terrified to tell anyone any of this because I was scared they’d think the worst of me… And you honestly made me feel a lot better. You give surprisingly good advice.”

“I’m not going to say I know exactly what you are going through, but I have sisters too and I’ve heard and been in my share of family arguments. Also, if things are ever tense at home, feel free to come over here if you need a break,” Zayn gleams, “I’m always here for you if you need me.”

Suddenly, both boys look down and see they are holding each other’s hand. Neither of them can remember one of them grabbing the other, but here they sit, fingers intertwined around each other without a purpose or thought to it. Zayn’s heart then begins to pound in a way it never has before.

“At the same moment, both boys quickly recoil their hands back into their laps, not knowing exactly what happened or what it means.

“I’m getting really tired,” Liam mumbles, “Do you have some blankets and pillows so I can sleep on the floor?”
“Uh yeah, let me grab some out of my closest,” Zayn stands up. With his back now to Liam, he
breathes in deep and tries to slow his heart-rate down, but nothing seems to alleviate the thrashing he
feels in his chest or the butterflies he feels in his stomach.

But Louis is still restless. A lot has happened through the night: the play, the dinner, Harry singing,
then Harry crying. Emotionally, it was a lot to process, so Louis stayed awake, playing his DS until
he feels hungry again. He makes his way down to the kitchen when Anne finally arrives home.

“Oh, what are you doing up?” She stumbles into the kitchen, obviously still a little tipsy from her
night out.

“Harry’s already asleep in his bed. I’m a little hungry, so thought I’d get a snack before trying to go
to bed myself. How was your night?” Louis questions as he scavenges around in the fridge.

“A lot of fun honestly. I hadn’t seen the girls in quiet awhile. You’re mom even joined us for a bit.
Everyone was complaining that we were talking about our boys too much,” She laughs, “Did you
and Harry have a good night?”

“Yeah we did. He came to my show and then we had a nice night in just me and him,” Louis
answers with a bag of chips in hand, “Well, I’ll see you in the morning.”

“Hey Louis?” She asks, stopping Louis in the doorway.

“Yeah?” Louis calls.

“Can I talk to you about something, and I mean, it’s kind of serious and I don’t mean to impose, but I
really do not have anybody else to talk about this with,” she starts with obvious apprehension in her
voice.

“Everything alright?” Louis squeaks nervously, his heart starts beating fast.

“Well as you can notice, Harry’s father isn’t around... There are certain things fathers or older
brothers tend to teach maturing men,” Anne begins as Louis nods, but not really understanding
where this conversation is heading.

“Like shaving, wearing deodorant, teaching him how to put on a tie, etc.,” She continues, “If you
don’t feel comfortable with this, it’s completely fine. This is not your concern or responsibility.
Harry, he just... really looks up to you, you know? And you’re older than him by a couple years. If
anyone knows this stuff in his life, it’s you. Sure, I hear about Liam, Niall, and Zayn, but you’re the
one all his stories begin or end with. You really are his best friend.”

“And he is mine,” Louis confirms.

“Do you think you could be that big brother role that teaches him all the stuff his father should have
taught him? I wouldn’t ask this if I didn’t feel like you were the one that could do it. Again, I know I
am asking you a lot, and you don’t have to if you don’t want to,” She repeats.

“No Anne, I get it. I actually barely know my own father. My stepfather took me under his wing and
taught me all of that. I’d be happy to do the same for Harry,” Louis responds.

“Oh thank you. You don’t know how much this means to a mother. Sure, I know how to shave, but
not a face,” she says as her and Louis lightly laugh, "This means a lot to me and him, but you’re a
great kid. I’m really joyful seeing the way you affect Harry’s life, and in turn mine, for the better.”

“Anytime,” Louis yawns as he renews his exit, “Well, I’m feeling kind of tired. I’ll see you in the morning?”

“Night Louis,” Anne agrees as she also makes her way to her own bedroom.

Louis steps back into Harry’s room and closes the door softly. He settles into his blankets on the floor and turns out the lights, finally feeling exhausted enough to sleep.

But after relentless tossing and turning, he cannot fall asleep no matter how tired he is. The ground is way too hard. And after half an hour readjusting himself, he finally builds nerve to bother Harry.

“Harry,” Louis whispers softly, but alas there is no response.

“Harry!” Louis calls out a tiny bit louder. He finally hears Harry stir.

“What?” Harry coos in a foggy voice.

“I can’t sleep down here. Is it okay if I get into bed with you?” Louis requests.

“Yeah... um sure,” Harry mumbles as he shuffles over. Louis crawls into Harry’s bed and actually feels his muscles relax for the first time since trying to sleep.

“Night Hazza,” Louis closes his eyes.

“Night Lou,” Harry rolls facing away from Louis. They both instantly fall asleep.

Chapter End Notes

For those who have reread this, there was a new scene added between Zayn and Liam to add more character and relationship development because I realized that while Liam and Zayn’s close bond is discussed in later chapters, there is no actual scenes that show it. So giving more characterizations to Liam is needed given he is a relatively small character in the beginning of the story but is much bigger later on.

I was nervous to add this scene because I know it discusses family violence, specifically between male and female, and I did not want to excuse/legitimize violence against women since Liam does an action in self-defense. So I talked to a couple women about the scene and the situation it involves to make sure it did not do that. I specifically wanted to mentioned that violence against men by women does happen, another reason why I wrote the scene, because it is neglected a lot by society.

I do believe having characters discussing problematic and violent family lives is necessary since it does happen to to people, like I remember a time when my step mother and step sister got into a physical fight and it was a little traumatizing. Even though that is a completely unhealthy way to resolve issues, I also did not want readers to feel alone if they have also dealt with this issue in real life too, since it is rarely discussed in a healthy way on how to move past it. If you have any questions or concerns let me know, though violence is rarely mentioned in the rest of the story. It is not a reoccurring theme. I believe violence is mentioned only one more time and it does not involve the situation discussed in the scene.
Chapter 3 Part 1: Defying Gravity

Chapter Summary

Due to an uncomfortable 3rd wheel moment, Zayn must come to terms with a secret he has been trying so hard to suppress.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is a normal length for what I plan to write. It probably could be posted as one chapter all together, but heh, it is probably easier to read in smaller increments.

Song of the Chapter: "Defying Gravity" by Kristen Chenoweth and Idina Menzel

Part 1

Louis wakes up to Harry curled up on his chest. He cannot help but gleam at how cute Harry looks in his sleep: his mouth slightly ajar with a little drool leaking out. Harry begins to stir, slowly opening his eyes and stretching. His eyes jolt open when he realizes he is on top of his friend. Abruptly, Harry hops off of Louis and unintentionally rolls off the bed.

"Oh Lou! I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to sleep on you, I don't want you to think-" Harry rambles quickly, reminding Louis of the time Harry apologized for hurting Louis’s feelings the first time they hung out outside of school. Though, Louis was not offended then, and he does not understand why Harry would be apologizing now.

"Haz, it's no big deal. That's how Zayn and I sleep, even rarely Niall. I mean, if you don't want to you don't have to, but I don't think anything of it," Louis says nonchalantly folding his hands behind his head, “Quit apologizing all the time.”

"It's not weird?" Harry questions cautiously.

"Only weird if you want it to be weird," Louis replies simply.

Harry then pulls himself onto the bed and slowly rests his head back on Louis's chest, "It's not that weird."

"Not at all," Louis agrees, "What you want to do today?"

"I dunno," Harry answers, "What about you?"

"I was thinking maybe I could teach you a few things. Stuff, you know, what most men should know how to do," Louis explains his idea.

There is a knock on the door. Harry leans up as his mother walks in.

"Morning boys! I don't mean to bother you two, but Harry I wanted to remind you that we're are
"going to visit your grandmother today," Anne states cheerfully.

"We?" Louis squeaks.

"We as in me, Harry, and Gemma," Anne chuckles, "Though I'm sure my mother would love you. You are a complete delight!"

"Oi, I forgot. I'm sorry Lou, we'll have to do that stuff later," Harry says to Louis.

"What stuff?" Anne asks.

"Louis said he was going to teach me some stuff today," Harry answers nonchalantly, "Man stuff, apparently." Anne smiles knowing that Louis took to heart what she said last night.

"Well I'm sure you boys will have a lot more time to do that. I'll drive you home soon Louis," Anne says as she leaves the room.

Later that evening in Harry’s absence, Niall, Liam, and Zayn take his place in the crowd of the auditorium for the second performance of *Romeo and Juliet*.

When Louis peaks his head around the curtain before the start of the show, he sees a girl sitting in between Liam and Zayn. The girl talks interactively with Liam for minutes on end as Zayn plays on his phone. Louis wonders who the mystery girl may be, but he has little time for the thought as the director calls for everyone's attention.

Unsurprisingly, Louis, and the rest of the cast, performs just as well as the night before.

As Louis takes off his makeup after the show, Niall, Zayn, and Liam join him backstage.

"That was fantastic mate! My little Louis is a star!" Niall hugs Louis tight while also planting a sloppy kiss on his cheek. Louis uses the rag for his makeup to remove any leftover Niall residue as well.

"Didn't know you had it in ya!" Liam agrees with a slap on Louis's back.

"Yeah..." Zayn looks as if he is not even in the room with them.

There is a knock on the door and a female’s voice asks, "Hey, no naked boys in here? Is it okay to come in?"

"Wait, we gotta finish the orgy first," Niall jokes loudly as *Juliet* walks into the room in response.

"Hey babe," Niall presses a kiss on the girl's cheek, "You did phenomenal tonight!" She is still in her renaissance styled dress from the play. *Ashley that's her name... I hope* Louis thinks.

"Hey you," Her fingers intertwine with Niall's, "Are you join us for the celebratory dinner?"

"Of course! If that's alright with the rest of the cast," Niall exclaims, "Where are we meeting at?"

"Old Chicago. We got a couple parents driving us there soon so you guys better hurry up. It would be nice of you to join us for once, Louis, you missed a fun party last night. Those two can come as well if they want," Ashley address the entire group.

"Uh, I got a girl here waiting on me. Would it be okay if she came too?" Liam questions nervously.
"Sure! More the merrier! See you in a bit, I gotta go get out of this horrid thing," Ashley references her bulky, old-style dress.

"Do you need help with that?" Niall winks.

"You pig," Ashley rolls her eyes with her exit.

"Sweet I'll go get her," Liam grins widely as he leaves the room behind Ashley.

Louis immediately turns to Zayn, "You wanna go?"

"Nah... um... I'm kinda tired," Zayn obviously lies with all the emotion appearing drained out of his demeanor, "Think I'm just gonna head home."

"Oh come on! It might be nice for ya to make a couple new friends," Niall pokes at him, "I can guarantee a couple of girls on the cast have talked quite highly about the broody artistic friend of Niall's."

"I have enough friends!" Zayn snaps back defensively, "Thank you very much." Louis can easily sense there is something seriously bothering one of his oldest friends. He simply cannot let the boy head home alone to dwell on his thoughts.

"Mind if I come with you, Zayn? I'm not really in the mood to be around the same people I have spent endless hours with for this project," Louis fibs.

"But you didn't go out last night. You don't need to miss tonight too because of me," Zayn mumbles looking down at his shoes.

"I'd rather spend the evening with you than with a bunch of people I don't even consider my friends," Louis commands to Zayn, "I'm not going out tonight, whether I'm with you or not. I want to be alone, so let's go be alone together." Zayn lightly smiles at the sentiment.

"Do I have to not go also?" Niall whines, fully knowing that given his loyalty to his friends we would ditch the event to help them out, even if he necessarily does not want to.

"No," Louis laughs, "Go get Juliet, Romeo. Plus, it'd be weird to send Liam into that group without knowing anybody."

"Aight. You two are two peas in a pod. Mind if I join you guys later tonight?" Niall questions.

"Depends how late. I'm sure my parents don't want some random guy popping up at our house in the middle of the night," Zayn replies sarcastically.

"Some random guy?! I'm like their third son!" Niall jokes, "And Louis, this better be the last time I see you kissing my girl."

"There's one more showing tomorrow, Niall," Louis quips.

"Okay, this better be the second to last time I see you kissing my girl," Niall demands with a laugh as he exits the room.

"Everything alright, man?" Louis asks Zayn now that they have some privacy.

"Um... I... I don't know..." Zayn deflects from the issue at hand.

"M'kay... Let me get cleaned up then we'll head to your house?" Louis suggests as he pulls his shirt
over his head.

"Yeah, I'll wait for you outside. My parents should already be here," Zayn whimpers in a voice so light and broken that it is nearly inaudible.

The ride home is long as Zayn appears uncomfortable to talk with Louis with his parents close by. The car is eerily quiet. Louis spends most of the studying Zayn's facial features that appear deep in thought.

Zayn quickly ushers Louis up to his bedroom, but he still refuses to speak. Zayn turns on the television and puts on an episode of *Friends*. Louis cannot understand why Zayn is not saying what is on his mind. After years of friendship, Zayn had finally let his walls down and spoke openly with both him and Niall. But the way Zayn acts now appears so foreign and unnatural.

To show some sign of support, Louis spoons his friend from behind on Zayn's bed as they watch the show. Louis does not want to press Zayn on whatever matter is bothering him. The physical contact is their way of communicating and comforting.

Finally, Zayn leans up and lowers down the television volume. He turns to Louis while still attempting to avoid eye contact.

"So..." Zayn begins.

"Yeah Zee?" Louis questions while also sitting up.

"I need to talk to you about something… something that is important," Zayn still doing everything in his power to avoid Louis’s soulful blue eyes that he know would unravel him.

"What is it? You can talk to me about anything, you know that?" Louis says lightly squeezing Zayn's shoulder, "You're making me a little nervous here."

"I know... And what I am about to say isn't about you... Well I mean you did kind of help me realize it, but this is not because of you... it's hard to describe," Zayn attempts to word out carefully.

"Then describe it," Louis demands.

"Louis, I think..." Zayn pulls himself away from Louis, fear written all over his face, "… I think I like boys."

Louis sits there for a moment trying to comprehend what he just heard. He does not really know how to react. He has nothing against gay people; he just has never been around one before either.

"Are you gay?" Louis finally squeaks out.

"I don't know... I still find girls attractive. I just like boys too. Maybe more," Zayn then has tears forming in his eyes. That is what affects Louis the most about this situation: Zayn is so concerned about what Louis thinks about him that he could cry.

Louis immediately grabs Zayn's hand once he realizes this and gives it a supportive squeeze, "You know I love you no matter what gender you want to snog with."

Zayn chuckles, "Snog, date, hold hands..."

"Do you mind me asking what this might have to do with me?" Louis finally questions.
"Oh," Zayn remembers, "It's not that I have feelings for you Louis, because I don't. You're like my brother and to think of you in that way really grosses me out."

"Thanks for the self-esteem boost there Zayn," Louis playfully rolls his eyes.

"That's not what I mean," Zayn giggles, "I don't want you to think that I have feelings for you or anything, because I don't. It's just, with us being so close, it did help me realize I feel more comfortable around guys than I do around girls. Whenever I have cuddled with a girl, something felt off. But when I do the same with you, I don’t have the same concerns. Does that make sense?"

"I think so. But just because you feel comfortable and secure around me does not necessarily mean that you're gay," Louis states.

"Well, I was getting to that," Zayn explains, "I did think that for a while: that something just felt right about you because you're my Louis. But... then I started to fall for a guy that was not you, and it felt a lot different than the coziness I experienced with you."

"Oh," Louis sighs, "How did it feel different?"

"With you I felt safe... comfortable... but with him, I feel passion. He makes my heart pound," Zayn reveals as a grin spreads across his face. Louis finds that smile endearing, that just speaking about this mystery boy makes Zayn light up like a Christmas tree.

"Who is it, do you mind me asking?" Though Louis is pretty sure he already knows who it is. Now that he thinks about it, it is as obvious as hell.

Zayn pauses for a long time, shifting uncomfortably and playing with his hands. Finally he releases the name: "Liam."

Louis puts his arm around Zayn and pulls him in for a tight hug, "I'm sorry Zayn. It must have hurt seeing him with that girl tonight, huh?"

"Yeah, a little... okay, a lot," Zayn agrees with a sad chickle, "That is what really made me realize how I felt. The jealousy that is currently flowing through my body... I feel like something is there, you know?"

"He does seem to really care about you... but I don't know if that means he has feelings for you," Louis articulates carefully. Louis sees a hurt expression on Zayn's face in reaction to his response, and while not wanting to give false hope he also needs to comfort his friend, "I hope he does though."

"Yeah me too," Zayn gleams.

"Why were you so scared to tell me this?" Louis questions, "Do you really see me as a guy who would abandon ya?"

"Well we all have heard horror stories about friends reacting negatively to someone coming out... Though, it was more that I was afraid of losing our closeness, like this," Zayn reference how Louis is still holding him right now, "I like that we can do this and not think anything of it. I didn't want to mess this up."

"Zayn, I'm going to trust you when you say you don't have feelings for me, and if that is true then I don't find this strange either. But if there is ever a point you think you're falling for me, I need you to tell me, because I don't want to lead you on or give you the wrong impression," Louis recommends softly.
"Are you really that cocky? Thinking that I could fall for you," Zayn laughs while lightly shoving Louis away from him.

"I am quite the charmer," Louis quips back.

"If you say so..." Zayn sounds skeptical, "Do you mind keeping this between us as I figure this out?"

"You're not going to tell Niall?" Louis's eyebrow scrunch up, showing his physical displeasure with secret keeping.

"I will... eventually... probably," Zayn admits reluctantly.

"What are you scared of?" Louis asks.

"Niall is a little more macho than us," Zayn explains, "I just don't know how he'd react."

"Niall is more open minded than you give him credit for," Louis replies, "He loves you like I love you."

"Please..." Zayn demands weakly.

Louis then recognizes that Zayn is going through more than he let's on. Homophobia is a scary thing, and mentioning previously his fear of how other people's friends have reacted highlights that fear. Zayn's security is more important than Louis feeling guilty withholding a secret that is not his.

"I won't," Louis promises, "But you will have to tell him eventually."

"Is there anyone you like?" Zayn changes the subject.

"Hmm... Not really. I mean, there is this girl named Hannah who's really cute in my English class, but I don't really know her too well," Louis answers.

"That's it? Just Hannah?" Zayn does not appear convinced.

"Well yeah. I mean, is there someone else you think I like?" Louis prods looking forcefully into Zayn's eyes.

Zayn stares back for a second then looks away, "No one... Just wondering."

"Any other announcements you want to alert me to tonight?" Louis leans back comfortable into Zayn's pillows.

"I'm pregnant," Zayn replies sarcastically, "and it's Niall's."

"There's a greater chance of me ending up with a fruit bat than that happening," Louis sighs while reaching for the remote, "There's a scene I really like coming up. Can I turn the volume back up?"

"Go ahead my friend," Zayn offers as laying back down on the bed. Louis turns the volume up and the two return to their original positions before the talk. Zayn quickly falls asleep in Louis’s embrace, finally finding some peace after speaking on what had been ravaging his mind for weeks.

A few episodes later, there is a tapping on the bedroom door.

"Hey mates!" Niall loudly exclaims while entering the room.

"Shhhh!" Louis hushes, attempting to prevent Zayn from waking up.
"My bad, my bad," Niall whispers back as he takes a seat on the ground next to Zayn's bed.

"Didn't think you were going to make it," Louis yawns.

"Ashley and I got into a fight about something stupid. I don't even know about what to be honest. Apparently I'm not allowed to talk to Juliet's Nurse," Niall describes, "Liam offered to leave with me, but he was having such a good time with Emily. I really didn't want to break that up."

"I'm sorry man. She's not a great kisser if it makes you feel any better," Louis offers.

"I already know that," Niall laughs. They go silent as they focus on the television for a few minutes.

"I'm kinda jealous of how close you and Zayn are," Niall interrupts.

"What do you mean?" Louis doesn't understand. He really does see them as a trifecta, even sometimes wondering Zayn and Niall are closer than he is with them.

"Like the... cuddling," Niall points to Louis and Zayn's current position.

"No one is stopping you," Louis chuckles, "And it's not like we are any closer than with you."

"Well you two just do it so naturally, like you don't even have to think about it," Niall explains genuinely.

"Get up here you idiot" Louis demands. Niall crawls up on the bed and gets on the back side of Louis. He curls around Louis, takes a deep breath, and then relaxes.

"Not bad... not as good as with a girl, but not bad," Niall agrees with a yawn.

Soon Louis and Niall fall asleep with Friends still playing on repeat. Zayn's parents, Patricia and Yaser, enter the room once seeing the bedroom and television light glowing into the hallway.

"Aw look how cute they look," Patricia grins as she lightly strokes Zayn's cheek.

"Think they're getting a little too old for this?" Yaser questions as he hits off the bedroom light.

"They won't be young and innocent like this forever," Patricia turns off the television as she exits the room, "Let them enjoy it."

Little did she know, Patricia was a tad bit wrong with that statement.
Chapter 3 Part 2: Defying Gravity

Chapter Summary

Louis has been pushing Harry through much of the scarier moments of his life recently, teaching him how to do many things. After conquering on his biggest fears, Louis teaches Harry a lesson he won’t ever forget.

Chapter Notes

Song of the Chapter: "Defying Gravity" by Kristen Chenoweth and Idina Menzel

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 2

Over the next month Louis goes along teaching Harry all the things Louis believes a man should know how to do. He teaches Harry to shave, though both boys only have a few whiskers on their faces. Louis teaches himself how to put on a tie just so he can instruct Harry. Louis starts giving Harry basic voice lessons just so Harry would feel a bit more confident about his voice before his first audition. He even demonstrates to Harry how change a tire on his bike.

While Harry never says it, it really means something that another male is trying so hard with him. His father never tried. And while his mother may have nice boyfriends every now and again, he sure would not think of them as a father or family figure. Louis is the first guy to try for Harry, making Harry feel worthy for the first time in his life.

Niall begins to talk about an upcoming show, the Wizard of Oz, which would be playing at the school in a couple months. While having not told the boys that Harry could sing yet, Louis severely pressures Harry to try out. And Harry pushes back, and pushes back, and pushes back, until he finally gives in just to shut Louis up.

"I'm going to suck," Harry whines as he rests his head on Louis’s shoulder.

"No you're not, because you're Harry Styles and I've heard what you can do," Louis reassures him.

"Singing in front of you and singing in front of people who will be judging me are two very different things," Harry whimpers.

"You have too! I know it's scary, but they say in your life you don't regret the things you do, you regret the things you don’t do, and I am not going to let you regret this someday," Louis says rubbing Harry's shoulder.

"It's different looking into your eyes when I sing, knowing you weren't going to care whether I sounded good or not," Harry sighs.

"How about this: I will be sitting in the auditorium in one of the back rows, and whenever it gets
scary, just look at me. Because you know I'm going to tell that you did amazing no matter what happens," Louis coos.

"You'll really do that for me?" Harry asks.

"Wouldn't miss it for the world," Louis bolsters him.

The day of the audition finally arrives. Even though not technically part of the *Wizard of Oz*, Harry prepares to sing the song *Defying Gravity*. Louis sits in the back row of the auditorium as the choir teacher and a couple judges sit in the front row to watch the auditioners.

"What are you doing here mate?" Niall barks abruptly. Already being so focused on the stage, Louis jumps a foot in the air due to the unexpected noise.

"Niall! Goodness! Don't do that to me!" Louis sighs as he settles back into his seat.

"Didn't answer my question," Niall pokes, "Come here to see my pretty face? I'm flattered, but you could have waited for opening night."

"Sit with me," Louis demands as he pats the spot next to him, "You'll see."

"Okay," Niall sits down, but within a few moments he becomes obviously impatient, "What are we waiting for?"

"Next audition is Harry Styles!" The choir teacher calls out.

"Louis, what's going on?..." Niall questions cautiously.

"Just watch," Louis orders, "Shh!"

Harry slowly walks on stage appearing nervous as hell. He scans the first few rows for Louis, but he does not spot his friend.

"What will you be performing?" The choir teacher demands from him.

"My name is Harry Styles," He answers very softly, "And I will be singing *Defying Gravity.*" The music begins, but he is paralyzed in fear.

"Louis..." Niall whispers in a worried tone.

"Shh!" Louis barks. Louis then jumps to his feet and waves his arms in the air erratically to seize Harry's attention. Finally, Harry spots him and a look of relief spreads across his face. Louis begins mouthing the words, reminding Harry why Louis was there in the first place.

"*Something has changed within me. Something is not the same,*" The words flow out of Harry's mouth, "*I'm through with playing by the rules of someone else's game!*" The confidence grows from within him, his voice slowly becoming louder and louder.

"*Well if that's love, it comes at much too high a cost!*" His voice echoes across the auditorium, "*I'd sooner buy Defying Gravity!*"

"*And nobody in all of Oz! No Wizard that there is or was! Is ever going to bring me down!*" Harry finishes with his arms held high in the air as the room falls silent. While the choir teacher does not look exceptionally impressed, the two judges do. Louis smirks at Niall who is frozen in awe.
"Wha-What was that?" Niall stands up and then runs out of the room before Louis can answer. Louis gathers his book bag and follows after him as Harry also walks off stage.

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By the time Louis and Niall find him, Harry is surrounded by all the other choir students at tryouts, asking: what his name was, if he was new, why he was not already in choir, and etc. which is very overwhelming for Harry when on a typical school day he doesn't talk to people other than his four boys. The only person Harry is looking for is Louis though. Niall finally grabs Harry by the arm and pulls him out of the frenzy.

"Harry!" Niall hollers, "You can sing?!

"Apparently!" Harry awkwardly chuckles.

"You have such an amazing voice, and you aren't even trained yet! I'll train you, and then when I'm gone at high school next year you can rule the choir! A dynasty, I'll have a legacy," Niall rambles as he drifts off into a daydream.

Louis pushes his way through the crowd, "Harry!"

"Lou!" Harry yelps as he jumps into Louis's arms, "I did great, I did great! Just like you told me I would!"

"You shouldn't ever doubt me," Louis lifts Harry off the ground and gives him a spin.

"You knew about this?" Niall accuses Louis.

"I may have given him a push in the right direction," Louis winks.

"Why didn't you tell me?" Niall demands.

"Because Harry was nervous enough as it was. If you knew how good he is, you'd be pressuring him far too much. This way Harry would have zero expectations, worked out great, didn't it?" Louis explains simply. Harry looks so pleased and proud of himself, something Louis has never seen before in the boy.

"Spend the night with me tonight, we have to celebrate!" Harry requests with a wicked smile.

"I'll call my mum and ask. Take care of him Niall. I don't need him eaten alive by these ruthless choir kids," Louis comments as he leaves the room.

"They aren't that bad!" Niall calls out.

Louis stops at the door and shoots Niall a very blank stare, remembering all the crazy stories Niall had told him about the group.

"Okay, you're right. I'll protect him," Niall agrees as he pulls Harry tightly against him.

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Louis follows Harry home that night after receiving permission from his mother. Anne and Gemma are overjoyed at how content and fulfilled Harry appears after the audition. Neither of them had ever seen Harry proud of anything he had done in recent years. Harry rambles in great detail on how the judges looked breath-taken and how all the other students acted envious of his talent. He of course thanks Louis several times for convincing him to go for it and for the basic training. Louis would not
accept the thank you, believing he did not really do anything. He just pushed Harry in a direction he was already destined to go down. Though both Anne and Gemma know Harry well enough to realize he would not have done the audition without Louis, so they really appreciate Louis just being Harry’s Louis.

Later that night, Louis and Harry sits on Harry's bed absentmindedly playing video games.

"What part do you think I'm going to get?" Harry asks.

"With those curls, you'd be a beautiful Dorothy," Louis playfully pulls a lock of Harry's hair before it bounces back to its usual curl, "Niall would be a great Scarecrow for you."

"Really Lou..." Harry pleads, "Who would I be?"

Louis sets down his control and takes a long look at his friend before answer deeply: "The Lion."

"The Lion?" Harry inquires, "Why the Lion?"

"Because: all the Lion wants is courage and bravery, but in the end it turns out he had it the entire time. Remind me of you and how you were today," Louis replies tenderly.

"Awh," Harry coos curling into Louis.

"Well you did," Louis runs his hands through Harry's hair, "I'm sure you would have been just fine if I wasn't there."

"Did you not see me? I literally froze up there till I saw you," Harry platonically nuzzles Louis, "If I am the Lion, you're my courage, and I had you the entire time.

Louis grips Harry tight and smiles in content, "I will gladly be your courage if you need me too." It makes Louis really blissful that he and Harry can be open with each other and it not feel strange that they are saying such intimate things to one another. Louis picks up his control again and plays his game until he can feel Harry fall asleep on him.

Unexpectedly, something pokes Louis on the thigh. He thinks it is Harry's finger, but he then notices the placement of Harry's hands on Louis’s chest and realizes it could not be Harry’s fingers. It then hits Louis: Harry is popping a boner in his sleep.

It is not that Louis is grossed out by this since he has woken up to awkward boners with Zayn or Niall before. The situation is an uncomfortable one though, so Louis tries shifting his body so it does not touch him. But the shifting eventually wakes Harry up. He looks up to Louis in a sleepy confusion, but then feels what is going on and crashes onto the floor.

"Harry?!" Louis calls out alarmingly.

"Oh my god Louis I'm so sorry!" Harry begins to cry, "I'm not gay I promise! I'm sorry, please don't leave! I'm not gay I swear!"

"Harry, Harry, Harry, calm down!" Louis slides on the floor with Harry and cautiously places his hands on Harry’s shoulders, "I don't think you're gay and quit saying you're sorry. What happened was a natural bodily reaction that is out of your control."

Harry begins to relax as he wipes tears from his face. Louis is very confused why Harry would react to quickly and self-critically to what happened. Harry has never came off an homophobic before, so suddenly shouting and crying about being gay appears very out of the blue for what Louis knows
about Harry. But much of Harry is shrouded in secrecy. A secrecy that Louis wants to know, but has been cautious in not to press upon.

"Even if you were gay, do you really think I'd care? I love you, like no matter what," Louis explains sweetly, "You got a boner. That's normal, especially if you're asleep, which I know you were." Louis wipes a tear from Harry's face, "Why you crying so much?"

"I... um..." Harry does everything in his power not to look up at Louis, knowing once he does then everything would come spilling from his lips.

"Hazza..." Louis whimpers, not wanting to push the subject but still having great concerns about his best friend. Louis is worried that if he misses his chance now, there may not be another chance to discuss this when it is obvious that Harry has a lot on his mind.

"It's... um kinda why I moved here..." Harry starts.

"What happened?" Louis inquires softly.

"Back at my old school, in Kansas, I had a best friend named Nick. Well compared to our friendship, he wasn't really a best friend, I guess just my closest friend at the time. Anyways one night we were having a sleepover, and we were sleeping in the same bed. I guess in my sleep I slung my arm around him and got..." Harry points at his groin, "One of those... Anyways, he freaked out, called me a faggot, and left my house in the middle of the night. I didn't really understand what was going on until the next Monday, when I got to school and he wouldn't talk to me. He told everybody I was gay, and I got bullied really bad, to the point I asked my mother if we could move. She doesn't know what caused the bullying, just knew it was happening. It was not the reason why we decided to move here, but it was definitely a factor... I guess that's why I never told you guys where I was from because I was scared if you knew then you could possibly find the town on social media, talk to someone from it, they'd say what happened..."

"Harry..." Louis whispers, "That is horrible want you went through. Nobody deserves that."

"I was just scared you were going to leave me like he did..." Harry choked out, "And then I'd lose Niall, Zayn, and Liam... And be alone again, but this time I'd have no where to run."

"I would never, ever, do that to you. I know you're not gay, and even if you were it wouldn't affect our friendship," Louis rambles, "Damn... Zayn came out to me a month ago or so, and it hasn't changed a thing. You have nothing to worry about in regards to your current situation."

"Zayn is gay?!" Harry squawks sharply. Crap Louis thinks I wasn't supposed to say that.

"Well yeah but..." Louis mumbles, obviously feeling guilty from revealing Zayn's secret.

"I won't tell, I promise," Harry finishes, "It's really cool of you that this kind of stuff doesn't bother you."

Louis laughs, "That shouldn't be cool of me. It should be part of being a friend and just being an overall decent human being."

"I wish more people thought like you," Harry nods.

"Yeah me too," Louis agrees.

"Are you?" Harry hints at Louis's sexuality.
"Me? No, I'm not," Louis answers.

"Even if you were, I wouldn't care either," Harry reassures Louis.

"Thank Haz," Louis hugs his friend, but then he feels another jab against his body.

"Oh god! I'm not doing it on purpose," Harry turns bright pink as he scoots a tiny bit away from his friend.

"Harry, again, it's no big deal. You're a teenage boy; it's normal if that happens. Dang, I get them just from a bumpy ride in the car," Louis reveals honestly, "You can go to the bathroom and take care of it. Won't bother me at all."

"Take care of it?" Harry repeats slowly.

"You know, wanking off?" Louis gestures as if he is rolling a pair of dice.

"Oh, yeah..." Harry mumble, but the general look of confusion on his face shows that Harry may know less than he reveals.

"Um... You do know what masturbation is, right?" Louis attempts to clarify.

"Of course I do!" Harry states defensively.

"You know how to do it?" Louis probes, "Like you've done it before?"

Harry looks down in shame, "... No, not really."

Louis then remembers that talk Anne gave to him. Would this count as one of the many things he is supposed to teach Harry about? He would not want to leave Harry in the dark or feeling stupid about something Louis finds as... an important part of his own life now. Maybe this is just one of those things Harry needs to learn about... or at least, that is what Louis tells himself.

"Like it's totally normal. Everybody masturbates. And if someone says they don't masturbate, they're lying," Louis chuckles.

"Do you?" Harry questions.

"Well yeah, on the daily if we're being completely honest," Louis answers genuinely, "You do know how to do it right?"

"Like I've heard about it before, but it was very vaguely. I tried it; it felt nice but it didn't feel as good as everyone describes," Harry reveals.

"So you've never cum before?" Louis probes directly.

"I... I don't think so," Harry answers looking embarrassed once again. This kid was a lot worse off than Louis thought.

"Here's what you do: When your dick is hard, you wrap your hand around it, like you're holding a remote. Then you start moving your hand up and down your cock. After a while you'll start feeling his feeling, in your balls or lower stomach, then you should cum, which is white liquid that comes out of your dick," Louis explains thoroughly.

Harry still appears really confused. His eyebrows are pushed down low in deep thought as he tries to imagine what he just heard. It is a lot to take in at once, Louis recognizes, It is really hard to describe
the action and process, this more must be experienced. As Louis stares at his friend, he realizes he may need to do something he has never done before so Harry truly understands what he is talking about. A nervous flutter gathers in his stomach.

"I... I could show you?" Louis suggests cautiously.

"You could?" Harry demands, "How?"

"Yeah, I mean, I'll be hella embarrassed if anyone found out about it, so as long as this would stay between the two of us..." Louis offers nervously.

"I think that could be agreed upon," Harry nods looking a little excited.

"Okay, sit next to me on your bed," Louis orders Harry. Harry and he take a seat next to each other, feet hanging of the edge and looking at the wall ahead of them. There is a long silence, since this is the first time Louis or Harry has ever purposefully shown themselves to another person. Sure, they have seen friends naked while changing, but this is way different. Louis's dick tightens in his pants as the tension increases in the room.

"What do we do first?" Harry whispers.

"Um, pull down your pants," Louis orders weakly. Harry looks at Louis for a second then follows the order: He keeps on his black boxer briefs, but rolls his pajamas onto the ground. His boner prevalently points up to the sky. Louis stares at his friend for a moment, wondering how normal his own body is compared to someone else.

"Are you going to too?" Harry fidgets nervously next to Louis.

"Oh yeah," Louis remembers, then pulling down his pants. He wears plaid boxers, his dick growing increasingly stiff. Louis then pulls off his shirt.

"Why are you taking that off?" Harry questions.

"This tends to get... messy," Louis explains as Harry also pulls off his shirt, "Okay you ready? We'll pull down our underwear at the same time." Harry nods.

"3... 2... 1!" They say in unison, and whoop there goes their underwear. They both gawk at each other's naked bodies for a moment. They have never inspected a naked body other than their own. Louis being two years older is definitely more developed: hairier and is about 6 inches long. Harry has very sparse pubic hair and has a length of less than 5 inches.

Louis can read the humiliation upon Harry's face, being less developed than the boy next to him, "Don't feel bad about the size and body hair. You're younger than me, by the time you're my age you'll be full of hair and certainly bigger. I was about 4 inches at your age and nearly hairless."

Harry appears a little more self-assured, "So... how do we do this?"

"Okay, well first you grab your dick," Louis instructs grabbing his and Harry copies in example, "Then you move your hand up and down your cock." Louis begins jerking off next to Harry, and Harry follows in suit. The only sound they can hear is their hollowed breathing and the slapping of their hands against their bodies.

"How does it feel for you?" Louis asks in between his desperate breaths.

"Erm, it's okay..." Harry answers unsurely. Louis knows this is feeling amazing for him right now,
but Harry does not sound like he is receiving any pleasure on his end. Louis then leans up to watch
Harry's technique to observe if he is doing anything wrong.

"What are you doing?" Harry hums nervously.

"Just making sure if you're doing it correctly," Louis articulates while watching Harry. Louis feels
some personal responsibility for Harry to learn this correctly... Or maybe he is just looking for an
excuse to touch to body next to him. "Do you mind if I-?"

"If you-?" Harry squawks. But before he can finish his thought, Louis pushes off Harry's hand and
takes hold of his friend's cock.

"Does that feel good?" Louis requests as his hand runs up and down his best friend's member. Louis
nor Harry can deny how turned on they are right now. Louis had never thought about touching a guy
this was before, but now that he is, he cannot deny he enjoy it. The way Harry squirms beneath his
touch shows Louis must be doing something right.

"Oh god yes," Harry moans, his hips instinctively rocking into Louis's grip.

"You get how I'm doing this," Louis questions sternly, "How this feels?"

"Yes yes yes," Harry pants in need.

"Okay," Louis confirms as he reluctantly releases the dick from his fingertips, "You try so I know
you get it."

Harry's obvious disappointment that Louis had stopped is apparent, but he quickly retakes control of
his cock and begins to jack in the same technique Louis had done, "This feels a lot better."

"It's supposed to," Louis lays back down on the bed. It probably should have been strange, Louis
touching Harry like that, but it was not. Both assume that is because they are comfortable with one
another. So is that such a bad thing?

The room goes silent once again, their breathing patterns pick up in speed and deepness. Their arms
and legs brush against one another as they pump their hands around their cocks. They cannot deny
the slightly spark of electricity from their bodies rubbing against one another. As they approach their
orgasm, the slapping of their hands against their dicks grows louder, something that turns both of
them on in an unusual way.

"So how do I know when I'm done? I think I'm beginning to feel something..." Harry's voice shakes
in need. Oddly, the idea of his best friend cumming next to him turns Louis very on, he can feel his
orgasm rising quickly.

Louis's hips thrust up into his hand, "I'm getting very close too. Watch, I-" Louis's cock shots cum:
streaks of the white liquid stain his chest and stomach, one drop even hitting his neck. *Shit that was
the best orgasm I've ever had* Louis thinks to himself. Tiny whines escape Louis’s lips as he milks
out the last few drops of cum.

Harry watches Louis the entire time with big eyes and begins copying the movement of Louis’s hips,
"I think I'm-" Harry lets out a high pitch squeal then a low moan as cum erupts from his cock. He
does not shoot as far as Louis for his first time, but a decent-sized pool of cum forms on his stomach.
Louis and Harry lay next to each other as they catch their breaths in the post-orgasm haze.

"Wow," Harry sighs.
"That's what I was trying to tell ya," Louis responds with a chuckle. Both their hairs stick to their foreheads in a sweaty aftermath.

"Fuck, how have I not been already doing that?" Harry jokes.

Louis laugh, "It just takes time, everyone learns at a different speed."

"Um thank you, I think," Harry awkwardly smiles at his friend.

"Don't mention it," Louis returns with a satisfied grin.

It is weird... No, it is not. It is weird that this is not weird. Like, it should feel odd covered in cum next to your best friend. But neither of them feel apprehension or discomfort in their current situation. Almost as if this is just a natural expression of intimacy between the two.

"I have a couple questions," Harry demands playfully.

"Yeah?" Louis replies.

"Do guys normally do this together?" Harry questions softly.

"Um, I don't know," Louis answers, "I've never really heard of this before."

"Okay," Harry nods as his eyes become distracted in analyzing his friend’s body.

"Your other question?" Louis interrupts as blush spreads across his face from the attention.

"Um, what now? Harry wonders, "I'm covered in this stuff and it's starting to get cold..."

"Oh! Stay right there!" Louis springs to his feet. He walks across the room with his boxers still hanging around his knees. Harry lays there and watches him, mildly admiring Louis's butt.

"Nice bum Lou," Harry winks ironically and giggles.

"Shut up Harry," Louis rolls his eyes as a response. He pulls a towel out of Harry's laundry basket and wipes the cum off his body, running from his neck down to his crotch. Louis then walks back over to the bed and hands him the side of the towel that he did not use on himself, "Here, clean up."

"Thanks," Harry utters while he wipes up his own mess. Louis pulls his boxers back up to his waist and lays down again. Harry pulls on his underwear and throw the towel on the ground.

"I know you said not to mention it..." Harry starts, "But I want to thank you for being my best friend and not judging me for any of my actions, as I don't judge you for yours. And for feeling comfortable enough to do that with me. When I say I don't know what I'd do without you, I mean it. I don't. I'd be the mess of a fatherless boy who didn't believe he's good at anything or good enough for anything. So please, take my gratitude."

"Hazza," Louis adds, "Thank you for letting me be me without any judgement as well."

"Wow, I'm really feeling tired now," Harry yawns, "Does that usually take a lot out of you?"

"Yeah, I usually do it before bed or when I can't sleep," Louis agrees with the notion as he leans up to hit off the lights. Harry and Louis readjust, turning 90 degrees and hopping under Harry's blankets.

"Night Lou," Harry coos as he adjusts to the darkness.
"Night Haz," Louis hums.

The room goes quiet but not comfortable. Harry is not sleeping on Louis like he has before, and Louis fears what they just did may have cost them that closeness.

"Lou?" Harry whispers.

"Yeah?" Louis grunts.

"Can I?" Harry asks. Louis answers by throwing his arm around Harry and pulling him into his chest, "Much better."

Chapter End Notes

School is starting soon! I'll do my best to update often but no promises.
Chapter 4: If I Only Had the Nerve

Chapter Summary

The boys transition into a new school year after their first year together. Some bonds grow stronger as others break. New questions arise about how someone may really feel about someone else.

Chapter Notes

Sorry this took so long kiddos. Got so busy with the semester and dealing with dumb emotional shit (that actually did help my writing though). This is really a transition fluffy chapter. But this chapter gets them into high school, while showing themes and pairings that will become more prevalent throughout the story.

Song of the Chapter: "If I Only Had the Nerve" by Bert Lahr from the Wizard of Oz

Chapter 4

After that night Harry and Louis do not jerk off together again. They do talk about the incident but not about repeating the activity. It just does not come up in conversation, almost as if it is not an option.

One thing on Louis's mind is Harry's age. It is not as if he looks down upon Harry or think that he is this little child that needs coddled, but Harry is two years younger, and Louis does not want to take advantage of him. Not that Louis would intentionally take advantage of him, but Harry is a couple years. He may not know what he wants yet in regards to his forming sexuality. Harry may not know what he does or does not want to do with Louis. 

Maybe when Harry is older we could... Louis wonders.

Because Louis cannot deny that their experience was the best orgasm he has ever experienced. It rocked him like never before. He may even think about it a lot when he masturbates on his own, but that is not gay he tells himself. He believes he would be wanking off to the memory just the same if the experience had been with a girl. He just fantasizes about it because it was the first time he had fooled around with anybody ever. That must be it he reminds himself in the late night when he tugs at himself.

The duo do become a lot closer after the incident. Now there are no walls between them. They literally saw each other at their most vulnerable and intimate moments. So what was there left to hide from each other?

Clothes become extremely optional; changing in front of each other is no longer an issue. Spending entire weekends in only underwear becomes a norm, especially during hot summer days. Whenever Harry has any question about bodily functions or sex, Louis is his go-to person.
Perhaps they are a little too comfortable... Harry admits to Louis that whenever he sleeps alone, he sleeps naked. In consequence, Louis tells him it is no big deal if Harry sleeps in the nude while they shared a bed. Louis losses track of how many times he wakes up to Harry's balls near his face, and Harry howls with laughter every time as if it is the funniest thing in the world. Thus, Harry losses count of the number of times Louis smacks him in the balls for retaliation.

Niall takes Harry under his wing in choir. Harry switches out of his art class with Zayn to join Niall in choir. Niall instructs Harry in private lessons, attempting to improve Harry's skills to the level of other students who have been singing for years, alongside the practices for the upcoming show the Wizard of Oz. His voice gains some new found fame for Harry in the school, especially within the artistic cliques.

As Louis predicted, Harry receives the part of the Lion, a big role for a first time seventh grader. Niall with his dirty brown hair is the Scare Crow. The night it opens, Louis sits in the first row with Zayn and Liam. The biggest smile is on Louis's faces, knowing that Harry being on stage is largely his support of Harry's aspiration. Louis is so proud; he cannot believe the pride he feels.

Backstage, Harry is beyond nervous. The anxiety is overtaking him. I'm in way over his head. He has barely been officially singing for a couple months, and here he is: dressed like a lion and about to sing in front of the entire school. Niall is doing his best to calm Harry down, but Niall is the first of the main characters three to go on stage, so there is only so much he can do before he is it is time to go on. So Harry is left with his thoughts racing about all the ways he could ruin this moment and embarrass himself for the world to see.

"Fuck it!" Harry swears to himself as he decides to run for it. He just to his feet and starts to run. But as soon as he opens his dressing room door, he smacks into Louis.

"Whoa, buddy, where are you heading off to so fast? You don't go on for another 10 minutes," Louis points out, lightly pushing Harry back into the room.

"I was just going to get a drink of water..." Harry lies obviously.

"You must be very thirsty then," Louis declares as he turns around, "You stay here. I'll go get you a bottle of water."

"Wait! I'm not thirsty…" Harry admits uneasily.

"Then where were you rushing off to, love?" Louis questions as he tenderly pushes a lock of Harry's hair behind his ear.

"I don't know… Trying to run away I guess…” Harry honestly responds.

"It'd look more dramatic if you were wearing a wedding gown than dressed as a lion," Louis chuckles.

"I'm being serious!" Harry looks as if he is on the verge of tears, "I'm not made for this; this isn't me."

"And who do you think you are? A coward?" Louis inquires.

"Ha-ha Louis, I get the irony," Harry sighs while putting his hands behind his head in frustration, "I would have been out of the school by now if you wouldn't have stopped me."

"I don't believe that for a second Haz," Louis softly places his hands on Harry's shoulders as a sign of support, "You would have stopped before stepping a paw outside. Do you want to know how I
know that?"

"How?" Harry asks looking vulnerably up into Louis’s eyes.

"Because you are Harry Styles, and Harry Styles does amazing things. Just like he has always done, and just like he's about to do in 7 minutes," Louis explains smiling, "and Harry Styles would not abandon his best friend Louis Tomlinson, who would have waited for him to walk on stage for God who knows how long."

"Louis, please, I'm just the Cowardly Lion. That's all I am," Harry whines as he looks down at his costume.

"And tonight we are going to hear you roar," Louis orders. Harry quickly embraces Louis, burring his face in Louis's neck: Harry's safe spot.

"Babycakes, I love your hugs, but your makeup," Louis softly pushes Harry off of him to prevent any damage.

"Oh shit!" Harry yelps and then walks over to his mirror. His makeup is smudged across his face, "Oh fuck! It's ruined!"

"Sit down Haz. I've performed in enough shows to know how to do a basic makeup," Louis says while opening up a golden yellow blush. He orders Harry to sit down in his seat, which Harry easily does. Louis reapply the makeup, making Harry look more Lion-like than before.

"Gorgeous and brave: two adjectives that perfectly describe Harry Styles," Louis gleams making Harry look into the mirror. Harry smiles as he looks at Louis’s reflection.

"Harry, you're on in two," A guy orders, poking his head into the dressing room before dipping out again.

Harry takes a deep breath and then hops off his chair, "That's my cue."

"Um... I was saving this for after your show, giving it to you after you earned it. But you already earned it Harry," Louis reaches into the jacket he wears and then pulls out a purple flower, a purple Dahlias, "Just like your courage, you had it the entire time. No matter what you believe."

"My first flower... Louis," Harry’s cheeks turn to a light shade of pink under the makeup, though no one would have been able to tell.

"You gave me my first, so I thought you deserved your first from me," Louis answers sweetly, "Also why I didn't want you hugging me. I didn't want you too to squish it."

"It's perfect," Harry gleams.

"And if all else fails: find me in the crowd and sing to me like we practiced at least hundreds of times before, if not thousands," Louis commands as he leaves.

"Love you!" Harry yells out rather loudly.

Louis steps back into the doorway, "Love you too. Now go earn that flower."

Harry walks on stage, sweat running down his forehead from the anxiety and the heat of the overhead lights. But the first face he sees is Louis's with a large grin already there, and Harry has not even done anything yet. Knowing he will always have Louis’s admiration gives Harry a new found
confidence. Then out Harry's mouth comes his roar.

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Harry becomes the school star after that night. While he transitions into a more confident person, the fame does not change the core of who Harry is. He still sits with Louis, Niall, Zayn, and Liam every day at lunch. While he may have many other requests for him to sit somewhere else, Harry knows what loyalty is, and he would not have arrived to where he is today without those boys. It is not like he does not go to parties and other social events from his new found reputation, but Harry knows where home is.

After much pleading from Harry, Louis continues to go to all of Harry's auditions and live shows. Harry claims Louis is his lucky charm, in which Louis denies but smiles at the fact Harry holds him to such high regard.

Their first school year all together turns into summer. Louis and Niall decide to join the high school soccer team and begin training. Liam chooses to try out for the middle school football team and thus joins Louis and Niall in their workout regimen.

That summer is one giant nonstop hangout session with those five boys, mixing and matching everybody at different times; five-person sleepovers with every child gaining first name basis with all the parents.

One warm day Louis and Harry are relaxing at Louis's. Sure, they had just spent the past 72 hours with all the boys, but Louis and Harry do not seem to mind being alone together. While they mindlessly play video games together, Louis notices something is on Harry's mind. As if Harry wants to say something but does not know how to word it.

"Everything alright?" Louis finally hums out.

"What do you mean?" Harry questions looking startled.

"You, being weird, quiet, like your mind is racing," Louis explains.

"Erm... I don't know how to say this..." Harry sighs.

"Well you already started, so keep going," Louis orders him.

"Are you sure you aren't gay?" Harry quickly squawks.

"What?!" Louis yells.

"No offense! I mean it's not a bad thing if you are gay. Just, I notice how you and Zayn sleep, it's like... I don't know. Are you sure you don't have feelings for Zayn?" Harry repeats.

Louis busts out laughing at that one: "Me and Zayn? Really?!"

Harry appears really embarrassed, "The way you hold him, or he holds you. Like, when we were all just talking in a circle last night around the campfire. Zayn just rolls onto the ground, and within a few minutes he grabs your arm and pulls you around him. And you keep talking like it's no big deal. Liam and Niall didn't seem fazed by it at all, as if that was natural! It just seems so easy between you two. And you already told me he's gay-"

"Bi. Zayn's bi he said," Louis interrupts.
"Bi. Yeah. So I was just wondering..." Harry trails off.

"Harry, if I was gay, you know I would have told you," Louis states, "I tell you everything."

"Just wanted you to reassure you that I'd be cool with it," Harry reminds him, "Coming out is a scary thing."

"Like, I don't hold him any different than I hold you," Louis points out.

"It looked different..." Harry looks away.

Then something hits Louis. Maybe something that should not have thought, but once it was in his head it he could not not say it: "Harry, are you jealous?"

Harry then looks flabbergasted, shocked. "What?! No! What would I be jealous of?!"

"Oh my god!" Louis squeals in laughter.

"Oh please, you wish I was jealous of you and Zayn," Harry turns away from his friend.

"I love all my boys Hazza," Louis then squeezes Harry tight, "But Zayn is my brother. Even if I did like guys, he is the last place I'd turn to."

"And what about me?" Harry brings up.

"What about you?" Louis questions back.

"If you were gay, would you..." Harry hints at nervously.

"Would I go after you?" Louis suggests, biting his lower lip.

"I mean, if I had to be gay, you'd definitely be the first on my list," Harry reveals with an awkward chuckle.

"Sure Harry, if I was gay, I'd probably pick you," Louis reassures him.

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That summer is when Louis really begins to find himself. He starts doing charity work in his free time and realizes that is where his passion is. He loves acting and soccer, but those things cannot last forever. He actually feels like he has a purpose when he volunteers at the hospital or packing boxes of food for the less fortunate. He does imagine making big acting or playing soccer, which of course would lead to having large sums of money. But he does not think about buying a big house or a fancy car: he imagines hosting charity dinners or auctions to raise money for organizations that deserve it.

The boys could see changes in Louis. They already knew this about him since all of their friendships are unintentional charities cases, but it really reminds them how unique Louis really is.

The school year begins. Louis, Niall, and Zayn entering their freshmen year of high school as Harry and Liam go into their last year of middle school. Louis and Niall both make the junior varsity soccer team, with Louis subbing into varsity games when need be.

The largest adjustment to Louis is realizing he was no longer the tallest. In fact, Louis had already peaked. As Niall and Zayn continue to grow, Louis does not. Once one of the tallest kid in middle school and within his group of friends, now Louis is rapidly becoming the shortest.
Zayn stays rather busy with art, as Louis and Niall also continue with acting and singing respectively. This often left them busy with very little free time, and they begin to miss the simpler days back when they could easily see each other. But where the three of them do collide is set design.

When the set design manager position is left vacant by a former senior and no one rushes to take it, Zayn volunteers for it knowing it could give him a little more access to Louis and Niall. But much to Zayn’s surprise, he then really comes to love it. Because he helps bring to life what the directors imagine in their minds. The look upon the directors’ faces when Zayn creates what they always wanted is nearly too much for Zayn to handle.

At first the upper classmen hesitate to follow a freshman, but after seeing his talent and passion they quickly accept him as their leader. It is required that if a student is performing in a show, they must help with set design for that project. With Louis in nearly every play and Niall in every choir show, it keeps the three boys close together.

Harry and Liam also take off once their school year starts. While still friends, they quickly fall into their respective cliques. Liam transforms into a football star, and in Harry’s opinion it is quickly going to his head. For the first few days of class, Harry would sit alone at the table that formerly hosted his group waiting for Liam. But once Harry sees Liam at the jock table for the third day, he quickly understands the new situation.

Sure Harry and Liam would partner up in class whenever there was an assignment and would always greet each other in the hallways, but Liam's goal appears to be become popular and find his place there. After a while, Liam disappears from the group all together.

Louis and Niall could see the hurt in Zayn’s eyes every time Zayn would try to invite Liam to an event, and then Liam would either make up some excuse why he could not attend or not reply at all. Niall may come off as this ditsy carefree guy, but he is not one. He can read the people he cares about; Zayn is one of his oldest friends; he could connect the dots.

It is a brisk October afternoon. Damp leaves clutter in the gutters of the neighborhood roads as a wind gently blows through town. Louis demanded that his friends meet him at the local park so they could practice a play he must memorize for an upcoming game. (Yes, Louis uses his friends like pieces on a chest board, but they do not seem to mind).

Harry hurries to soccer field, but Zayn refuses to leave his house until Liam arrives there. Niall agrees to wait with Zayn, but as the time passes it becomes apparent to Niall what the true issue is.

“We can’t keep Louis waiting for much longer…” Niall mumbles.

Zayn looks back down at his phone again, rereading the message from Liam saying that he would be there shortly. But that message was delivered more than half an hour ago.

“He said he would be here,” Zayn repeats more to himself than to Niall, “Just a few more minutes, then we will go.”

Niall stares at Zayn for a long minute as Zayn glares down the street in the direction of Liam’s house. Zayn refuses to look towards the blue eyes dissecting him. He can feel the judgement beaming from his old friend.

“I’m so sorry Zee,” Niall gives Zayn a sympathetic squeeze on the shoulder.

“What do you have to be sorry for?!” Zayn barks as he forcefully shakes Niall’s grip off him.
“I’m sorry he’s not the guy you deserve,” Niall explains softly, “him to be.”

“Well, I’m a really good friend you know…” Zayn replies delicately, “I put in a lot of time… and emotions.”

“I know,” Niall recognizes.

“I’m just so mad!” Zayn firmly expels, “I’m the one who told him to get into sports! I’m the one who told him it’d be healthy for him! And now… and now… it’s like I don’t even matter.”

“But you do matter,” Niall confirms, “To me, and Louis, and Harry.”

“I just wish I was good enough…” Zayn finally admits.

“What the fuck!?” Niall hollers.

“Well it’s true,” Zayn confides, “Apparently I can’t keep his attention compared to that popular clique.”

“You are nothing like those jackasses!” Niall asserts.

“I just said that,” Zayn states sternly.

“No, you don’t understand what I’m saying,” Niall implies loudly, “You’re better than them! You are so smart. You and Louis go on these theoretical rants about psychology and theology that I cannot understand. And have you fucking seen your art? What can those jocks do with their hands? Throw a ball and tackle someone? But Zayn, your art moves people, and you move people! Your friends love you more than anything. It’s not your fault that he’s too dense to realize what’s good in his life. Damn, Harry even goes to school with the kid and Liam won’t make time for him.”

Zayn then turns to Niall with angry tears gathering in his eyes. He looks down as his hands shake with emotions overtaking him. Niall then surges forward and wraps his friend in a tight hug.

“Hey buddy hey, please don’t cry,” Niall pleads, “I didn’t mean to yell at you. I was just trying to make a point.”

“It’s not you,” Zayn whines into Niall’s neck, “I just really like him, you know?”

“It’s pretty obvious,” Niall nods.

Zayn then recognizes that he has never been closer to talking about this issue with Niall than in this moment. While he is terrified of rejection, the safety he feels in his friend’s arms alleviates that fear, “Like, I really really like him, Niall.”

“Oh,” Niall acknowledges, “Was that a secret?”

“Did Louis tell you?” Zayn hisses.

“Nope. You may try to be mysterious, but you can’t hide from me,” Niall answers, “Wait… You told Louis and not me!?”

“I’m sorry!” Zayn chuckles into Niall’s side, “I don’t know why I thought I was scared to tell you… Well, I’m was scared to tell anyone.”

“You were being stupid to think I would care,” Niall confirms, “You like Liam. I’m sure deep down he’s a great lad. I don’t like him, but I guess I can see why you would.”
“Well I like more than him; I like guys,” Zayn clarifies, “You’re okay with that?”

“It doesn’t change who you are,” Niall gleams, “Who you have always been and always will be. Because you are Zayn Fucking Malik. Anybody, guy or girl or anyone in between would be lucky to have you.”

That marks the last time Zayn invites Liam to any group event. He must let go. That does not mean that Zayn stops missing him, but he realizes he should respect himself enough to put his time and effort into people that put effort into him.

Niall even finds a way to connect him with a gay student named Stan in his choir class. Even if it does not develop into a serious relationship, Zayn feels a sense of relief for a boy to flirt back with his attempts for a change. The two go on dates, smoke now and again, and may even teach Zayn how to kiss.

The first audition of the school year approaches for Harry; the first time he will be up on stage without his usual support (a.k.a. Louis). Louis constantly reassures Harry that he has grown a lot in the past year, and he may not need Louis as a lucky charm anymore. He does not need luck, he has talent and confidence. Harry has had a lot of solos in various performances. Louis tells Harry he will be there in heart, but given his school closes half an hour after Harry’s and soccer practice, he would not be able to make it.

So when Harry walks out on stage, most of the audience expects a knock-out audition, as he has always done. Automatically, Harry scans the room for those eyes that always joyfully look back at him. There are lots of eyes that were doing that right now, but not the eyes Harry wants. Then the music plays... His mouth goes dry, his legs refuse to move, and his voice cracks. Compared to a 6th grader's first audition, it was not bad. But as an audition by school-star Harry Styles, it was literal hell. Harry runs off stage in embarrassment before the song even comes to an end.

But he does not stop running once he is off the stage, or even when he enters in the hallway. In fact, he runs straight out of the building.

Across town, Louis and Niall are walking to the high school soccer field along their fellow teammates, when Louis hears his name being called from far behind him. Louis and Niall recognize the voice, turning around to see Harry jogging down the street, cheeks flushed and breathing heavy.

"What you doing here, mate?" Niall asks.

"Lou..." Harry sighs, coming to a halt as he bends over and rests his hands on his knees to catch his breath.

"What's going on?" Louis questions, "Is something wrong?"

"Come with me, please, I need your help," Harry begs with deep breaths in between his words.

"With what?" Louis snaps back.

"Just come with me," Harry demands.

"Harry, I have practice..." Louis replies motioning to the field.

"Please," Harry shoots Louis a desperate look to signal this situation’s importance.
Louis grudgingly looks over at Niall, "Tell the coach a family thing popped up and I can't attend practice. Could you grab my books out of my locker and drop them off to me after?"

"Totally," Niall confirms. Harry turns around and begins running back down the road he came from with Louis following a few steps behind him.

Harry and Louis trot into the auditorium of the middle school where the auditions were previously taking place. The choir teachers gathers her things preparing to leave.

"Sit here," Harry orders Louis, pointing to the spot Louis has previously sat for every other tryout he has attended for Harry. Louis easily complies as Harry hurries over to the choir teacher.

"Wait!" Harry calls out.

"Harry, what are you still doing here?" The middle aged choir teacher with graying hair inquires.

"Let me try again?" Harry requests in a demanding tone.

"It's a little too late now," She replies while looking towards the clock in the room.

"Please, I got my act together, got my lucky charm. I can do this," Harry states confidently. The choir teacher glares at the back corner of the room to see Louis sitting. He waves at her as she recognizes him, "You're good luck charm looks a little sweaty. Are you sure you're ready?"

"Yeah, had to run to get him. Please, you won't regret it, I promise," Harry pleads.

"Okay Styles, you get one," She sits back down. A giant grin spreads across Harry's face as he runs on back to the platform. He takes center stage, smiles at Louis, and sings. Unsurprisingly, perfect as usual.

After that Harry walks Louis home because he must talk to Jay. When he finally finds her, he begs her to let Louis come to every one of his auditions, claiming that it was scientifically proven today that Louis is in fact his lucky charm, and Harry cannot audition without him. She mildly pushes back since that would require Louis to leave school early on those days. When Louis realizes that fact, he backs Harry one hundred percent. After a short debate, she finally agrees to always let Louis attend the tryouts.

And from then on, Louis never misses any of Harry's auditions.

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Throughout the fall soccer season, Louis plays for the varsity team more and more frequently, to the point that he is only not on the varsity team in name. One day during class, a pretty, brown-haired girl enters the room and asks the teacher if she can barrow Louis for an interview with the school newspaper. The teacher agrees, and Louis exits the class with the pretty young thing.

"Hi, my name is Eleanor, and I've been assigned to write a story on an incoming freshmen on the team, and seeing your rise to glory, I thought you would be perfect for this piece. Would you be okay if I asked you a few questions?" She explains, pulling out a pen and paper.

"Oh, I'd love too," Louis gleams, "I'm Louis Tomlinson, it's nice to meet you."

"Well I assumed that who you were since I pulled you out of class," She says with a laugh. Louis blushes in embarrassment acknowledging she already knew who he was.
"So what questions you got for me. Eleanor?" Louis tries to recover.

"Just some basic information: why you are here; what you think of the team; how you feel winning; and where you want to go with this sport?" She describes.

Eleanor then proceeds to ask him all of those questions individually, receiving relatively generic answers. As if anyone would actually say they hated the team, the players, and the experience. But what she does not expect is the response to her final question.

"With your talent, where would you like to take yourself?" Eleanor inquires.

"To be honest, if I ever made it big someday, what I'd really love to do is charity matches," Louis responds.

"Charity matches?" Eleanor requests.

"Yeah, like all or most of the proceeds from the game tickets go to charities or other causes. That way I'd be doing the two things I love doing the most: soccer and making the world a better place, all at once," Louis clarifies nobly.

"That's... different," Eleanor breathes, honestly amazed by the unusual response.

"What do you mean?" Louis demands from her.

"Most guys answer wanting either a big house or fancy car if they go to the big leagues, but that's not what you want to do," She explains.

"Sure those things would be nice, but they wouldn't make me content or complete. I come from a relatively modest household. People and experiences make me happy, not things," he responds.

"Well... Um do you mind if I ask for your phone number in case if I have any questions afterwards? I... ask this of all the interviewees!" she obviously lies, causing a confident smirk from Louis.

"Not a big deal at all," Louis's chest feels a little tight. He grabs her pen and inscribes his number on the page she had been writing down the interview on, "Thanks for the good time Eleanor. I look forward to reading it."

"No, thank you! this is probably my best interview yet," she concludes.

"How long you been doing this?" He asks honestly interested.

"Oh, I'm a sophomore so four years now. I've been doing this since middle school too," she responds.

"And I'm your best yet? Don't know if that means I’m really special or if all of your other interviews are very dull," He laughs.

"I think the special options," she winks with a smile, "See you around."

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Later that night, Louis and Harry are cuddled up on Louis's couch watching television when Louis's phone buzzes.

"I bet twenty bucks it's Zayn," Harry wagers.
"Sure you mean that?" Louis smirks opening up his phone, "Oh, it's Eleanor."

"Who?" Harry asks.

"Eleanor, she interviewed me for the school paper today," Louis answers while reading the text.

"What does she want?" Harry questions again.

"I guess she has a couple more questions and wants to meet up downtown as Paul's Cafe this weekend," Louis replies.

"Ohhhhh, Looouuuuuueeeeeeee," Harry pokes his friend, "Sounds like someone has a date."

"She's a sophomore, she wouldn't want to be seen with a freshmen like me," Louis argues.

"But you would be a sophomore if you weren't held back, right?" Harry clarifies.

"Well yeah," Louis agrees.

"Do you think she's cute?" Harry probes.

"She gorgeous. I don't know if I like her like that, but she's hot," Louis retorts.

"Get it," Harry commands, "Aweeee, Lou has a crush."

"Would you lay off?" Louis attempts to sound more irritated than he is, but his comment comes off more endearing than annoyed.

"Lou's gonna get a girlfriend," Harry sings as tickles the boy underneath him.

"Harry!" Louis squeals as he playfully wrestles his friend. In a ticked-fit, he rolls him and Harry off the couch and onto the floor. Harry continues grabbing at Louis's sides until Louis flips them over and Louis is on top. Now Louis has the upper-hand. Louis tickles Harry just as frantically. Harry screams as he tries to fight Louis off of him. Until Louis notices how close he and Harry are to each other.

The world stops for a second as Louis and Harry's faces are inches from one another. And for the first time, Louis notices how large Harry's lips are and how pink his cheeks become when he blushes. Harry looks down right beautiful if Louis is being honest with himself.

"Lou, Lou, I can't breathe," Harry grunts as Louis returns to reality. Louis rolls off his friend and leans up with his back to Harry. Harry catches his breath as Louis tries to grasp why he was thinking such intimate thoughts, especially about a boy. Especially about Harry. Harry is his best friend. Louis has always known Harry’s attractive qualities: his passion, how he looks when he is vulnerable, Louis has even noticed the defining muscles on his maturing body.

But this. This is new. If Harry had not have forced him to move… he may have… kissed Harry.

"All alright?" Harry inquires with his breathing pattern returning to normal.

"Yeah, just gotta answer Eleanor," Louis pulls out his phone nervously.

Let's meet up this Saturday Louis sends to her.

Chapter End Notes
I just finished Chapter 7 and it's so long. I gotta chop it up into pieces but it's pretty good I hope. I will try to post more often for you guys! Thanks for waiting.
Chapter 5 Part 1: Skinny Love

Chapter Summary

Harry must face a reoccurring fear and theme in his life as Louis begins to direct his attention towards Eleanor. This causes Harry and Zayn to grow in closeness and as Eleanor becomes a larger part of his life, Louis's emotions are beginning to get pushed to the edge.

Chapter Notes

Trying to get things out more promptly for you guys :) Chapter 5 was originally super long (it's really good I love it) so I split it into multiple chapters. Hope you guys like it.

C.W.: mentions of past violence

Song of the chapter: "Skinny Love" by Birdy

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 1

Louis and Eleanor set their coffee day for early afternoon the next Saturday. Louis, Harry, and Zayn are hanging out at Louis's house that same day.

"What do you think I should wear today" Louis prods as he digs through his closet.

"You look great in whatever you wear," Harry answers as he and Zayn sit comfortably on Louis's bed, "You don't need to worry about a thing."

"Well, I want to look extra great," Louis demands, "Maybe even breathtaking."

"Already do, bud," Zayn sighs already bored of this conversation, "We're just going to a movie. You don't need to look breathtaking for us."

"What?!" Louis squawks as he drops the shirt in his hand.

"I don't know about you Zayn, but if I'm going out with people they better look gorgeous. Don't want to be seen around with some ug-gos. I got a reputation to keep," Harry jokes.

"We have plans tonight?" Louis asks again.

"We made plans to see a movie, remember?" Harry reminds Louis, "Avengers is finally out. We planned this like a month ago."

"Oh my gawd, I totally forgot!" Louis squeals honestly.

"What? Got a hot date?" Zayn barks sarcastically.
"Well... Kinda..." Louis replies nervously, continuing to inspect his closet as a way to avoid a direct confrontation.

"Lou..." Harry calls disappointingly.

"Eleanor asked me. I'm so sorry Harry, but you were the one pushing me to do this," Louis pleads to his friend, "I hope it's okay."

"Uh, yeah, It's no big deal," Harry lies, something obvious to Zayn, "Whatsoever..."

"I will make it up to you," Louis guarantees, establishing direct eye contact to show his seriousness, "Promise."

"I know..." Harry utters with a false smile, "Now I see why you care so much about how you look. Let me help you!" Harry hops off the bed and joins Louis outside his closet. Zayn continues to observe them curiously.

Zayn and Harry guide Louis to Pauls's Cafe, as they would be walking near it anyways on the way to the theater. As they say their goodbyes, Harry peers inside the window to see if he can get an idea of what this mystery girl looks like. But there are so many girls in coffee shop. Without a direct description, Harry has no idea which one she could be.

"Good luck mate! Better give us all the juicy details afterwards," Zayn chuckles with a firm pat on the back. Harry expresses a look of disgust after that the mental image of anything juicy between his friend and a girl.

"We're just grabbing some coffee for an interview. I don't even know if it's a date or not!" Louis nervously laughs, trying not to get his hopes up.

"How could she not want to date you? Look at you! You're quite adorable, especially in that Harry designed outfit," Harry calls out as he straightens out the collar on Louis's shirt.

Zayn giggles at the directness of Harry's comment as Louis attempts to calm them down so they will draw any attention to themselves, "I will see you guys later. Enjoy the movie. I can't wait to hear about it." Louis heads inside before he has a chance to give either of them a hug, leaving Harry a little dumbfounded. After he stares at the empty space for a moment, Harry and Zayn head out.

"What does she look like?" Harry inquires a little too quickly to come out in natural conversation.

"Eleanor?" Zayn asks back.

"No, the Queen of England," Harry rolls his eyes, "Yes, Eleanor."

"Why do you care so much?" Zayn demands, hoping properly understands the point of the question.

"Is it so wrong of me to wonder whom my best friend is on a date with?" Harry snaps.

"She has dark curly hair, relatively thin, usually wears designer clothes," Zayn shrugs nonchalantly, "She's pretty, I guess."

"Was she in there?" Harry requests.

"I did not notice her," Zayn answers.
"I wanna go back and look," Harry stops in his tracks.

"Well that's not stalkerish at all," Zayn laughs.

"Please Zayn," Harry begs, "I know it sounds weird, but I just gotta know."

"If it will put your mind at ease so we can see this movie," Zayn concedes as they turn their direction back towards Paul’s Cafe.

As they approach, Harry crouches on the ground so Louis would not be able to see them through the windows. Zayn copies Harry as they both sit below the main window of the cafe.

"Okay, we'll hop up, find Louis, look, then run before he notices us, but we gotta be sneaky," Harry commands.

"This is ridiculous," Zayn actually enjoys this more than he let's on.

"Shhhh! Is sneaky even in your vocabulary?" Harry inquires, "Okay on the count of three we will stand up, look for a brief second, then run, got it?"


"1... 2... 3!" Harry counts down as him and Zayn quickly stand up and peer in the cafe. But when they gaze in, Louis sits at a two-person table facing towards them as Eleanor faces away. Louis and the girl appears to be in the middle of a pleasant conversation, when Louis notices Harry and Zayn inspecting through the window. He shoots them a what the fuck face, his eyebrows digging down low in confusion. When Eleanor turns around to see what he glares at, Harry bolts from the scene. Eleanor starts giggling, which causes Zayn to laugh as well at the absurdity of the situation. Zayn looks over at the now missing Harry, and then chases after him.

"Harry!" Zayn yells trying to catch up with his sprinting friend. Harry finally slows to a stop to catch his breathe.

"She is cute," Harry sighs, "The one second I saw her at least."

"Sorry bro, I think they saw us," Zayn quips.

"Thanks for the update," Harry retorts, "I couldn't tell from Louis's furious expression nor her invasive laughter."

"He wasn't mad, he just looked confused" Zayn whines, "Can we go the movie now?"

"Um... You go ahead. I'm not feeling too well, and we would have to walk by the cafe again to get to the theater... I don't think my embarrassment can handle it," Harry comments looking emotionally defeated, "I'll see you around."

"Harry!" Zayn calls out just before Harry is too far away.

"Yeah?" Harry sighs.

"Do you want to just hang out at my place? We can just talk and stuff?" Zayn suggests, "Or watch movies there, whatever you like."

Harry looks a little taken aback by the request. It is not like him and Zayn are ever mean to each other, but they rarely hangout not in the group environment. "Uh... yeah, sure,"
Zayn is very much a wallflower. He can read people like a book. Harry has always had a lot to say without saying a word. Harry stays rather quiet on that walk to Zayn's house, as Zayn watches how he moves, how he carries himself, and how Harry holds his face together. Harry appears a lot more upset than he should be being a little embarrassed. They arrive in Zayn’s room, put on a movie, and sit in silence until Zayn finally cannot stand the stillness anymore.

"Why does it bother you so much" Zayn blurts out.

"Well for one this girl should be dead by now: running up the stairs and hiding in the closet when she should have been running out the front door," Harry comments while pointing aggressively at the television.

"No, I mean Louis," Zayn pauses the movie, "Because you seem kind of... jealous? And since you don't know how Eleanor is, I don't believe it's because Louis has a girl and you don't."

"Jealous? Me Jealous?" Harry snorts.

"You were jealous of me and Louis at one point," Zayn reveals.

"I can't believe Louis told you about that," Harry cheeks turn pink. He grabs a pillow of Zayn's bed and buries his face in the pillow in shame.

"Don't feel bad," Zayn tenderly rubs Harry's hand as a sign of support, "It's normal to be possessive of someone you care about. Funny to me, but normal. So don't act like you're not the jealous type when the facts prove you are."

"Maybe I'm not as good at sharing as I like to think," Harry admits.

"But you weren't this jealous with Louis and me, so why does this bother you more?" Zayn inquires.

"We did have plans today you know..." Harry trails off.

"No it wasn't the plans themselves. I know you could care less about Marvel," Zayn prods.

"He forgot about me..." Harry discloses.

"Harry, it was a one-time thing. We made these plans weeks ago and barely talked about the movie until today," Zayn clarifies.

"That's what my mom used to tell me..." Harry whispers.

"Tell you about Louis?" Zayn asks.

"Did Louis ever tell you about my father?" Harry questions, "I mean, it's pretty obvious that he tells you a lot."

"Nothing in particular. Just said your father isn't around anymore," Zayn repeats, "I didn't push for more information."

"He wasn't a good guy," Harry explains while appearing emotionally distant, "He... hit my mother around, but claimed he stayed around because he was a gooddamn good father. After a big fight my mother finally kicked him out, but I would still go see him every weekend or so. But then he found a new girlfriend, and I only saw him every two weeks. After that, sometimes he'd just forget about me and not even call my mom to cancel. I'd wait all day for him to show up, and he never did."
Eventually he stopped trying all together. He was just gone. No calls, no birthday cards, Christmas presents. Nothing. Never even said goodbye. It was like that for about 2 years, until we got a call that he was dead.

"Harry," Zayn stares at him with a loss of words.

"I know it's wrong, but Louis is the closest thing I have to a male relative and I'm scared... he's gonna leave me too..." Harry finally confesses the root of the problem.

Zayn and Harry had always been friendly, but not close. This is the moment that changed. Zayn wraps his arms around Harry and holds him so tight.

"That's actually one of the reason why we moved. I guess I always had this hope that one day my dad would come back, change, apologize, and be the father I always wanted. But up until the day he died, I'm sure he never thought that once. Once he was dead, I did not have a single reason to stay in that town. My mother and sister were only there for me, so once I lost my reason to be there, along with the bullying, we left."

"Harry, that's really unfair you had to go through that," Zayn strokes his curls, "Have you told Louis about this?"

"Kinda... he knows he's dead, but not about the abusive or emotional part of it," Harry replies dryly, "I know that this is sad, but it's all I've known. It doesn't really make me feel much anymore."

"Why not? You two tell each other everything," Zayn probes.

"I don't know... I don't want to him to think I see him as my dad or something weird like that," Harry comments.

"If there is every anything in your life you don't have to worry about, it's that Louis loves you," Zayn pulls away and looks deep into Harry's eyes, "If you think you could scare him off..."

"Harry," Zayn says grabbing Harry's face so he cannot neglect the seriousness of the message, "Everything your father was, Louis isn't. I've seen the way he looks at you and the way he talks about you. Like if there is such thing as 'friendship soul mates', that's what you and Louis are."

"I'm just scared he's gonna be mad that you and me were creeping on his date," Harry acknowledges.

"You and me? You mean you. It was your idea to creep," Zayn chuckles lightly.

"Well yeah... I saw his face, what if I embarrassed him and ruined his date?" Harry wonders.

"Even so, Louis is not an angry person. Has he ever yelled at you?" Zayn points.

"No," Harry answers.

"Ever shouted, or refused to talk to you, or punished you, or avoided you?" Zayn inquires, "I get that once you're in an abusive situation, you expect everyone to react the same way, but your friends, like me, choose to be in your life because we want to. We aren't going to be like your dad."

"I get your point... It's just..." Harry attempts to word out, "She's a girl. That's the one thing I can't compare with. I can't date Louis, or kiss Louis, or stuff like that. What happens when he falls in love,
and then there's me. When push comes to shove, he's gonna choose the girl he loves."

"Well you know..." Zayn insinuates, "You could do that stuff with Louis."

"I'm not gay," Harry states defensively, "No offense."

"How was that offensive?" Zayn asks, "And why say no offense to me?"

"Oh I... nothing, it means nothing," Harry tries to deflect but fails, "Okay, Louis accidentally let it slip that you were gay, but I didn't tell anyone and I don't care. Good for you, but that's not me. That's all I mean."

"You could have told me you knew!" Zayn softly yelps, "I've been hiding it for so long! It's exhausting."

"I didn't want you to get mad at Louis for telling me, and I didn't want to force you out of the closet if you weren't ready," Harry explains, "It's normal I feel this possessive about Louis, is it?"

"Yeah, with everything you been through, I can see why you feel the way you do," Zayn analyzes, "Louis is your stability, your security blanket."

"I'm just scared I'm not good enough... or worth his time, especially compared to a gorgeous girl like Eleanor," Harry states.

"I kinda know the feeling," Zayn opens up as well, "It's really hard balancing my Pakistani Muslim identity with my Western identity. Like my dad gets mad that I don't see myself as Pakistani before I see myself as American. And I try, but I just don't feel it. But when I try to be my American identity, people tell me that I'm not: because of the color of my skin and because of my religion. It's like I'm not good enough for either side... Not good enough for anyone. And then you add being gay on top of that..."

"Aw Zaynie," Harry hugs Zayn, "I'll see you as whatever you want to be. You're strong and independent and true to yourself; that's as American as you can get in my opinion."

"Thanks Harry," Zayn smiles, "That's all I've ever wanted to hear."

There is then a knock on the door after which Louis walks in. Zayn and Harry pull away from each other, still smiling and a lot more comfortable in their friendship.

"Whoa! Hope I'm not interrupting anything here," Louis proclaims, acting as if he is about to back out of the room.

"Nope, we're just having a good talk," Harry shift his gaze from Zayn to Louis, "How was Eleanor?"

"It went amazingly actually. She asked me a few more questions, then I bought her a coffee and we talked for another hour or so after that. I asked her if I could take her to dinner sometime next weekend, but I'll also have to ask my friends if I had made any plans I had forgot about first," Louis sits on the bed in front of Harry and Zayn. Zayn smiles over at Harry when he says that, knowing Harry's worst fears were not being realized.

"No plans beside your soccer game Lou," Harry gleams, "So whenever you want to see her, we will spend time with you around your schedule."

"I still really want to see the new Avengers," Zayn suggests, "We should go whichever day you don't have your date?"

"Sounds perfect lads. Why didn't you go to the movies anyways?" Louis asks.

"Just didn't want to see it without you," Harry answers honestly.

"So... does someone want to explain why you two creeping in the window by the way?" Louis inquires. Harry burrows his face into a pillow to hide his embarrassment again as Zayn lets out a laugh.

"I... um wanted to know what she looked like," Harry admits.

"There's a thing called Facebook, you know? Makes stalking a lot easier," Louis explains them. That causes Zayn to laugh even louder.

"Zayn! Why didn't you tell me to do that instead?" Harry cheeks turn a rosy pink.

"That would have been a lot simpler, wouldn't it?" Zayn comments, "This way seemed a lot more fun though."

"Hope we didn't irritate or embarrass ya," Harry offers.

"Nah, not at all. Eleanor got quite a hoot out of it. Found it cute, says only real friends could do something ridiculous as that," Louis mentions.

Over time after that, Louis and Eleanor develop a relationship. Not anything hot or passionate, but a relationship nonetheless. She is beautiful, smart, knows what she wants to do with her life, and Louis loves that about her. As they grow and the months go by, he slowly realizes that while he loves her, he is not in love with her. He really hopes that one day he will.

He feels like he at least has to give this girlfriend thing a try. He has never been girl crazy like Niall or Liam. Girls were beautiful and amazing in his eyes, but he had never met one that made him fall head over heels for her. All the other guys on the soccer team had girlfriends. Niall dated relatively often and Harry even had a few middle school flings. The only person he knows who does not have a girlfriend is Zayn, and that is because Zayn is pretty much gay. And Louis does not think of himself as gay, he just has not met the right girl yet. And perhaps Eleanor will be that girl.

Because Eleanor is like the nicest lady he has ever met. She is not one of those drama queen girlfriends. She acts calm, sweet, and is so nice to his friends even though in the high school hierarchy she is above them. Of course Niall loved her instantly because he loves everyone instantly, and Zayn is cold the first few days but quickly warms up to her. With their connections, she would often go to the boys to ask whom would be good for an interview, and they would direct her the rest of the way.

But Harry and Eleanor did not interact much. Of course, Harry being a middle schooler would cause a lower chance of seeing each other. Louis feels odd about them being together. He cannot explain it. Maybe because they are both two of the most important people in his life respectively. When Louis is with Harry, he gives all his attention to him. And when Louis is with Eleanor, he gives all his attention to her. Eleanor and Harry do have to interact sometimes, like whenever Louis has any parties or at Louis's soccer games. Harry and Eleanor act nice to each other, very formal, but never act close like she is with Niall or Zayn. Louis can easily see that. Harry and Eleanor would never be rude to one another, but that does not mean they will be neighborly either.

This leads to Harry getting closer with Zayn and Niall at the same time. When Louis previously had
ample free time, he would spend it to Harry. But Louis also has to give more time Eleanor, which would leave Harry on his own sometimes. Harry completely understands since she is Louis's girlfriend, and he accepts that Louis is not going to try to remove him from his life. But Harry has to put his free time somewhere, and he does not want to fall out of the group like Liam did. While he loves being Louis's, he wants to be more than Louis's. He wants to make sure he is his own person in the group. Louis is branching off himself, finding an identity without Harry. Harry needs that too.

But Louis must face this divide in his life eventually. And it all comes to a head on the night of the homecoming dance.

Chapter End Notes

Hope to have part 2 out to you soon! I love it, it's one of my favorites so far. Louis has to start facing his emotions instead of distracting himself from them, which I hope you guys will love.
Chapter 5 Part 2: Skinny Love

Chapter Summary

On the night of the winter homecoming dance, Louis's affection for Harry finally come into open conflict with his relationship with Eleanor. Zayn's growing friendship with Harry causes Louis to mark his territory.

Chapter Notes

Ah! I love this chapter you guys. I worked pretty hard on it :) I hope you enjoy. Emotions begin to flare for one another. The expository is done, the story is officially underway.

Song of the chapter: "Skinny Love" by Birdie

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 2

Already dating, Eleanor is Louis's automatic date to the winter homecoming dance. He plans with Niall and Zayn to attend the dance as a group with their own dates. Niall brings an attractive girl named Demi, but Zayn does not say much whenever the topic is discussed. Louis is so focused on the idea of this being the first dance he is taking a girl to, he does not really notice this. Back in middle school, Louis and Harry would generally go stag together and then end up going home with each other. But Harry is not here. Eleanor is.

Well Harry is here, for the moment, helping Louis prepare for the dance.

"This is way too casual Hazza," Louis looks in the mirror at his reflection of dark blue skinny jeans and a buttoned-up plaid shirt, "Eleanor's going to be wearing a beautiful dress, and I'll be there wearing what I usually wear on an ordinary day."

"It's not even time for the dance Lou," Harry says hanging upside down on Louis's bed while he watches Louis fret.

"I'm sure she's already getting ready herself," Louis comments as he unbuttons the shirt and aggressively throws it onto the ground.

"You are being a little too self-critical. That's a great outfit! I'm sure you'll be the sharpest dressed person there," Harry compliments, flipping over onto his stomach.

"Nope, not compared to El," Louis declares as he dramatically falls to the ground to express his frustration.

"I have an idea, but I need to know the color of the dress she’s gonna wear," Harry suggests as he struts over to Louis’s closet.
"Uh… I have no idea," Louis realizes.

"Gotta do everything myself, don't I?" Harry sighs, pulling his phone out of his pocket.

"Watcha doing there?" Louis prods nervously.

"Give me a minute, my goodness," Harry pleads, sending a text then closing his phone. He grabs out a nice pair of black dress pants from the closet. "Put these on," Harry orders as his phone buzzes. He reads his text as Louis takes off his jeans and pulls up the slacks.

"Blue. Turquoise blue," Harry reads to Louis, "That's perfect." Harry then pulls out a black, long sleeved button-up shirt and hands it to Louis, "This too."

"How did you figure that out?" Louis questions while buttoning up the shirt.

"You have your ways, I have mine," Harry teases as he digs deeper into Louis's closet.

"You're scaring me a bit," Louis chuckles uncomfortably.

"I texted Niall to text Demi to ask Eleanor what color she was wearing. That way she would have no idea that you were the one needing to know," Harry explains as finally find a turquoise colored tie deep from within the closet, "This will match perfectly."

Louis finishes buttoning up the shirt, tucks it in, grabs the tie from Harry, and walks over to his mirror. He tries to put the tie on: fails. Tries again: messes up. Finally by the third attempt, Harry glides over to Louis.

"Let me do that for you," Harry requests, undoing the knot Louis tried to make, "You're nervous. It's your first big event with her. You have no reason not to be."

"This isn't even my first date with Eleanor. I don't know why I'm such a mess," Louis admits. A look of relief spreading across his face as he watches Harry flip up his collar.

"Your first dance without me. I'd be a mess too if I was in your shoes," Harry chuckles honestly. He lays the tie around Louis's shoulders and adjusts the length till the larger end touches right below Louis's belly button.

"Yeah… That's why," Louis breathes out. His breath catches as his eyes dissect Harry, but he does not know why.

"You taught me how to tie a tie on, remember?" Harry hints as he begins to tie the knot.

"How could I forget? I practically learned just so I could teach you," Louis smiles.

Harry grins at that comment, "So it's only proper that I do this for you. Now we're even. My Lou is growing up," Harry is really proud of all that Louis is, and is so happy that Louis found his way into Harry's own life.

"But I don't ever want us to be even," Louis declares, grinning at how Harry had called him my Lou.

"Why's that?" Harry requests while slipping the tie under the knot then back over.

"Because I give to you not expecting a thing in return," Louis answers calmly, "Maybe I want you to be forever indebted to me. That way you'll have to stay around."

"I'll stay as long as you want me too," Harry concludes finishing the knot, "Look how handsome
you look." Harry spins Louis around to face the mirror. Harry stands right behind Louis, giving Louis full spotlight in the mirror's reflection.

"Wow Haz, you sure know how to make a guy look good," Louis checks himself out.

"Hold on. It's a little crooked: let me fix it," Harry wraps his arms around Louis from behind, grabbing ahold of the tie at the knot and pulling it tighter so it is closer to Louis's neck.

Louis watches himself and Harry in the mirror. He finds it odd how natural it looks while Harry's arms wrap around him, as if Louis grew another set of limbs. After Harry let's go of the tie, his arms rest upon Louis's stomach. Harry stands on his tippy-toes and rests his chin on Louis's shoulders to get a more proper look at how Louis appears in in the mirror. Louis gazes down his chest at Harry's arms and places his hands on Harry's so Harry could not move them. Louis then closes his eyes and smiles, because he has never felt more comfortable than he does now. He has never felt more beautiful. He can feel Harry smile, the muscles in his neck and on his face contracting against Louis's shoulder.

"You'll be handsomest boy there. You're going to take Eleanor's breath away," Harry proclaims while looking at Louis’s reflection.

Eleanor, my date Louis remembers as he opens his eyes. But in that moment, he does not to leave his room for the rest of the night. Eleanor has held him, gave him long hugs, but has never made him feel as if he did not want a moment to end. But this, what Harry was doing... Louis would have preferred to stay frozen in time than go to some school dance.

But Louis then feels Harry's arms loosening around him, pulling away. Louis begins to panic, attempting to find any excuse to keep Harry's embrace.

"Have you ever slow danced with someone?" Louis inquires very quickly.

"Uh no," Harry chuckles, "You've been with me to every dance I've been to. Ever seen me dance with a girl?"

"You didn't go to your middle school dances this year?" Louis asks turning to face Harry.

"Uh... nah. You asked me to hangout the same night, and I didn't have a date anyways so I didn't really see the point of going," Harry admits.

"I don't mean to hold you back," Louis almost whispers as he rests his hands on Harry's waist. Harry instinctively places his arms over Louis's shoulders, connecting his hands behind Louis's neck.

"No, you don't," Harry replies calmly, "There are just better places I'd rather be."

"I should probably teach you anyways. I don't want you going on a dance someday and not know how to dance with a girl," Louis says peering Harry's eyes, their faces inches apart.

"Yeah... That would be horrible," Harry fears that Louis will feel his heart thrashing inside his chest.

"I'll be the guy, for the demonstration," Louis signals, "Your arms on my shoulders, the boy's hands on the waist. The boy leads."

"How does he lead?" Harry inquires softly.

"It's like telling her where to go," Louis orders, "Feel how I pull you in the direction I want?"
"Yeah I feel it," Harry nods, his cheeks turning a very light pink blush.

"I know it may feel a little weird doing this in silence, so maybe it is best to imagine one is playing," Louis describes, "What song would you think of?"

"Skinny Love by Birdy," Harry answers quickly, as if Harry was already imagining out this moment.

"That is good song..." Louis gulps. Louis then raises his right hand out to the height of his chest, "Give me your hand."

"Okay," Harry quickly complies by placing it in Louis's. Harry's other hand remains firmly against Louis's back, also leading him in the directions Harry wants as well.

"Just another way to dance. A little more fun in my opinion," Louis says with a cheeky smile.

"Why so?" Harry asks. Louis then let's go of Harry's back, lifts his right hand, and spins Harry around.

Harry giggles innocently, "I see why. Let me spin you!" To which Louis unreluctantly cedes to the request as Harry twirls him.

"Oh look at that! Now I'm leading," Harry points out, drawing Louis close to him.

"You're a natural," Louis’s heart pounds.

There is silence. A comfortable silence as they both stare into each other’s souls and dance. If Harry was a girl, this would probably be the most romantic moment of Louis's life and probably Harry's as well. But does it really matter that Harry is not a girl? Romance is romance; a moment is a moment, not mattering who the moment is with. So maybe Louis and Harry could just accept it as it is. They begin to spin, slowly picking up speed till the background of Louis's room blurs and the only thing can visually make out is one another’s face.

"Harry..." Louis whispers as he can feel his lips being pulled by some natural force towards Harry's face.

"LOUIS!? Are you ready to go?" Louis's stepfather yells through the door. This startles both of them as they spin out of the control. Harry and Louis loudly roll onto the floor. They break into a hysterical laughter as Jay runs into the room at the commotion.

"What's going on?!" She asks, gawking at both the boys lying on the ground.

"We were just warming up for the dance. It got a little too hot," Louis responds, standing up while also helping up Harry to his feet.

"Wow sweetie, you look wonderful. Excluding your hair," Jay gleams while motioning to the back of Louis's head.

"Harry picked it out," Louis fixes his hair in the mirror due to the fall.

"You have great style. Guess that’s where your last name comes from," Jay jokes horribly, "Will you need a ride home?"

"No, I'll be okay. I'll just walk, thanks for the offer though Jay. Good luck tonight Lou, you're going to have a lot fun," Harry leaves the room, "Eleanor doesn't stand a chance."

"Get home safe!" Louis comments softly as he watches Harry disappear out the door. Louis really
wishes Harry did not have to leave, feeling guilty that Harry will have to spend the night alone while Louis is out.

"I got a surprise for you!" Harry squeals as he leads Eleanor into the room. Eleanor wears a beautiful, turquoise dress that goes down to her knees including black lacing on the edges of the dress.

"I thought I would surprise you. My parents said they'd give me the car for the night," She glides across the room, "You are honestly dressed better than I expected."

Louis stands there like a deer caught in the headlights. She looks beautiful and breathtaking, but in the corner of the room is Harry. And for some reason, his eyes are drawn more to him than to his date. Eleanor wraps her arms around Louis, holding him like Harry did earlier.

"She looks stunning?" Jay hints very obviously, "Doesn't she Louis?"

"Yes! Very beautiful, you look beautiful El," Louis gives her a kiss on the cheek.

"Thanks Lou," Eleanor says smiling. Harry winces at the use of his nickname for Louis by Eleanor. This causes Harry to leave the room without saying a thing.

"We'll need to pick up Niall, if you don't mind?" Louis asks Eleanor as he watches Harry leave.

"Already got it taken care of babe," Eleanor replies by grabbing Louis's hand and leading him out of the bedroom.

Eleanor and Louis hop into Eleanor's car with Niall and Demi already in the backseats.

"Damn Louis, you really showed me up. Now I'm the worst dressed here," Niall references his jeans and long sleeved shirt compared to Louis's slacks and tie.

"With a smile like yours, you could come to a dance naked and still be the best there," Demi comments, squeezing Niall's cheeks.

"I can definitely *come* naked if that's something you would prefer," Niall winks suggestively.

"Can you two quit being gross," Eleanor sighs as she backs out of Louis's driveway, "Anyways, do you think you are going to win the homecoming queen nomination?"

"I think it is guaranteed at this point, though I wish Niall was running with me," Demi declares sweetly.

"Maybe next year babe," Niall peppers her cheeks with kisses.

As they drive down the road, Louis looks out the window to see Harry trekking down the street.

"Where's Harry going? His house is in the opposite direction," Louis describes, following Harry with his gaze as the car drives by him.

"He's a big boy," Eleanor states looking at the road, "He can go where he wants."

"Harry's not lost," Niall reassures him, "I'm sure he knows where he's going."

"Tonight is our night, please?" Eleanor demands briefly gazing over at Louis, who is still watching out the window.
They arrive at the school for the dance. The music is loud as the cafeteria, now emptied of tables and chairs, fills up with students. Blue and silver streamers hang from the ceiling as the same colored balloons lie across the floor.

People are already dancing, but Louis acts restless. As if he is not really there. Eleanor and Louis sit at a table on the edge of the dance floor watching everyone else having an exciting time. Eleanor appears obviously bugged by her boyfriend’s lack of enthusiasm for this night.

“So Mrs. Barbara tells me she needs the story on the upcoming art exhibit by the artist Simon Cowell a week earlier than she first requested, and I told her my connection, Zayn, hasn’t given me-“ Eleanor rambles to Louis trying to spark a conversation, before he cuts her off.

Finally, it hits him what is missing.

“I’ll be right back,” Louis comments giving Eleanor a squeeze on the arm, obviously not paying attention to her conversation.

“What…” Eleanor sulks, crossing her arms and sinking into her seat.

He pushes through the crowd to find Niall who is dancing with Demi at the center of the room.

"Nialler!” Louis shouts.

"What?” Niall ask not turning dividing his attention from Demi.

"Where’s Zayn?” Louis demands.

"What?!” Niall barks again.

"Where-is-Zayn?” Louis pronounces every syllable clearly.

"Harry didn't tell you? Zayn said he didn't want to go so he invited Harry to hangout," Niall explains nonchalantly.

"Oh... I'm surprised neither of them didn't tell me," Louis mumbles obviously hurt.

"Zayn knows you woulda forced him to come tonight, but he didn't want to. He probably didn't want to fight with you about it," Niall replies not a second offbeat with his dance moves.

"Thanks..." Louis stomps out of the crowd. Well that explains why Harry was walking the opposite direction Louis thinks.

"Babe?” Eleanor surprisingly grabs Louis lightly by the arm, "Everything alright?"

"Yeah, yeah, I'm fine!” Louis snaps at her, "Are you having a good time?"

"Come on, Louis, dance with me," Eleanor smiles into his ear.

"Of course,” Louis replies emotionlessly as they glide onto the dance floor together. They start dancing near Niall and Demi when a slow song comes on. The people who came without dates exit the floor as the couples pair up. Eleanor places her arms on Louis's shoulder which signals for him to grab her waist.

But this does not feel natural. Louis feels as if he is just acting the role in some school play. Where he
knows what he is supposed to do, but the true desire for this is not really there. A robot. Louis is a robot on autopilot. The song ends and Louis can see the worried expression on Eleanor's face.

"Louis?" She senses his apprehension.

"I'll be right back! I promise," Louis lightly squeezes her before dashing out of the cafeteria. He steps outside and begins running for Zayn's house. He does not know why he is running there, but he must. He does not know what he will do when he gets there either.

*Zayn's house is just a fifteen minute jog from the school, I'll barely miss a thing* Louis thinks to himself as he trots.

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Louis arrives in front of Zayn's house. His hair is a mess, his shirt has noticeable sweat stains, and he can barely breathe. He begins to paces up to the front door, but then realizes he would have no idea what to tell Zayn's parents if they answered. So he *casually* strolls around the house to the back yard thinking it would be better to hop through Zayn's bedroom window than cause a scene at the front door.

Zayn's window is about five feet above the ground. It is not easily reachable, but with a hop and a full extension of his arms, it is possible. So Louis jumps, grabs on the ledge, and pulls himself up. He pushes himself high enough so he can gaze inside Zayn's room. In the room, he can see Zayn and Harry watching a movie with the television facing Louis on the far wall of the room.

Harry and Zayn are facing away from him, both sitting on the floor leaning back on Zayn's bed. Louis notices Zayn's arm is loosely draped around Harry's shoulder, and a flame of jealousy ignites within him. Unable to hear to words due the closed window, Louis watches Zayn whisper something funny to Harry, and Harry bursts in laughter. *The same laughter Louis has caused from Harry's lips.* So focused on the situation between his two friends, Louis does not notice that his grip slips from the ledge.

"Ah fuck!" Louis falls hard. He slides down on the earth as dirt stains his clothing.

"What's going on?!" Zayn shouts while opening up his window, expecting a burglar or peeping-tom. His anger subsides when he peaks his head out and sees his friend on the ground beneath him, "Louis?"

"Oh hey?" Louis attempts to say casually as he stands up, a little sore from his run here and subsequent fall.

"What are you doing here?" Zayn inquires as Harry also pops his head out of the window.

"I could be asking you two the same question," Louis accuses as he wipes the mud off his pants.

"We're just hanging out," Harry replies softly.

"Why aren't you at the dance?" Louis ignores Harry, though he does not particularly know why at the younger lad.

"Well you had a date, and Niall had a date. I felt lame going there stag," Zayn explains honestly, "Sorry for not wanting to be the fifth wheel."

"It's you, me, and Niall, as always. You are never the fifth wheel with us," Louis orders him, "Come on then!"
"Harry's here," Zayn argues.

"He can come too! Even better," Louis smiles for the first time in the encounter, as he starts to realize the real reason why he made this voyage.

"You know I can't. I'm not a student at your school. If you wanted me to come, I would have had to fill out one of those guest forms two weeks ago," Harry explains.

"Oh… yeah," Louis notices how stupid he looks in this situation.

"I'm sorry," Harry apologizes.

"Don't be. It's my fault. Um... Niall just really wanted you guys there. I'll head back, at least I tried," Louis lies as he starts to leave, "See you around guys."

Zayn and Harry watch Louis exit the backyard, then Harry looks to Zayn with deep concern in his voice, "Is he okay?"

"You stay here," Zayn orders, leaving Harry in his bedroom, "I'll go check

Louis treads as fast as he possibly can down the sidewalk. He feels so embarrassed about his rash decisions. He cannot even comprehend why he would run for half an hour in the dark, to what? Be rejected by both of his friends... for each other?

"Louis!" Zayn jogs up to his friend, "What's going on?"

"Nothing!" Louis barks quickly as he refuses to look back at one of his oldest mates.

"Don't fucking lie to me," Zayn demands, grabbing Louis's shoulder, "We tell each other everything, remember?"

"And when were you going to tell me you had feelings for Harry?" Louis accuses, pointing his finger invasively at Zayn.

"What?!" Zayn laughs ironically, "Me?! You're accusing me of liking Harry? You of all people?"

"And what is that supposed to mean?" Louis questions bitterly.

Zayn takes a deep breath, attempting to settle himself down while recognizing Louis has not come to the same realization that Zayn has yet, "Nothing... Why do you think I like Harry exactly?"

"I see how you look at him! The way your arm was around him! I feel like I'm catching intimate moments between you two left and right!" Louis charges jealously, though after he says the comment he can only think of two instances including this current moment, "You freakin' ditched me and Niall for him! What else does this all add up to?

"Did I ditch you and Niall, or did you ditch Harry?" Zayn argues back.

"Well now you're not making any sense!" Louis’s voice cracks.

"Do you want to know why Harry and I have gotten so close? Liam abandoned me. We all know it. You have Harry, and Niall has girls. But then you got Eleanor, which is great. Harry and I are so happy for you. But just as Liam was my everything, you are Harry's everything. And now you're gone sometimes. Which don't feel bad about Louis, he understands completely. But as you are currently struggling to find free time between Harry and Eleanor, Harry has too much free time. He is home alone while you are out with her. So maybe we are finding comfort in each other. You can't
be mad at him for that. All Harry wants is coziness and stability. And with him terrified that you are going to abandon him at any moment, I am currently the most stable thing in his life. I'm not going anywhere. But Louis, where are you going right now?" Zayn declares quite dramatically.

Louis calms down really fast after Zayn's speech. He never really thought about how Harry might feel about Louis getting a girlfriend. And now he feels so stupid accusing Zayn of such things just because he was envious.

"I'm going back to Eleanor..." Louis replies looking down in what is the most embarrassing moment of his life, "But I'd never abandon Harry, never."

"Rationally, he knows that, but with his father abandoning him and then the other thing…" Zayn trails off.

"Wait, what about his father?" Louis squeaks.

"You know, how his father ditched him after he got a new girlfriend... And then dying," Zayn tells, "Oh wait shit…"

"Harry never told me that..." Louis whispers, now feeling even worse knowing Harry is telling Zayn things that he is not telling Louis.

"Shit, I probably should not have told you that," Zayn says feeling guilty for spilling Harry's secret, "But does it kind of make sense why Harry and I have been hanging out more? He's dealing with a lot of stuff and I have time for him."

"Yeah..." Louis gazes at Zayn's house knowing Harry is inside, "I'm sorry for accusing you of liking Harry... but you don't, right?"

"Oh Louis," Zayn laughs, "I love Harry to death. He's funny, caring, and sure he is hella cute but definitely not my type."

"Do you mind telling him I'm sorry about this and that I'll see him tomorrow? I probably better get back to the school. I think I may have forgotten about the girlfriend," Louis requests now looking in the direction of the school.

"You ditched Eleanor for the chance to mark your territory on Harry. Don’t you think that means something?" Zayn suggestions heavily.

"Not just for Harry! Thought I'd try to get you to come too," Louis defends himself.

"Louis..." Zayn hopes his friend will understand what he is hinting at.

"I better get back. Sorry again, I'll see you soon as well," Louis states. Zayn then grabs Louis and pulls him into a tight hug. Louis sluggishly hugs Zayn back, pushing his face into Zayn's neck. A lone tear rolls down Louis's cheek, but he does not know why it does.

"Love you," Zayn murmurs.

"Love you too," Louis utters pulling away, "Thanks man..."

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Louis drags himself to the school, fearing what he will face once he arrives there. He feels exhausted and emotionally drained. Eleanor is going to be pissed. She has all the right to be, but he still does
not want to face it. The guilt overwhelms him, for both Eleanor and Harry. Either way he lets one of them down, if not both of them.

"Dude, where you been?" Niall questions, surprising Louis, "Eleanor has been looking everywhere for you."

"I had to run somewhere..." Louis’s eyes race across the dance floor trying to spot her.

"What happened to your clothes?" Niall inquires.

"I fell," Louis answers simply, "Where is she?"

"Uh..." Niall points into the crowd. There, Louis sees Eleanor dancing with this attractive, tall student who is probably a junior.

"Oh," Louis sighs. That is all he can say, because he does not even feel jealous or mad. He knows he is in the wrong here for leaving her here, but why does he feel more bothered about Harry being with Zayn than Eleanor dancing with some pretty boy? The song ends and Eleanor notices Louis's stare. She stomps over to him, confirming his fears about her anger.

"We need to talk," she orders storming past him. He follows a few steps behind her. They finally arrive outside, a tense situation unfolds near the street.

"What the hell?! You disappear on our date night, and you come back dirty as shit," Eleanor accuses with bitterness in her voice.

"I know Eleanor. I don't know what I was thinking. I'm sorry," He articulates, truly meaning it.

"You better be sorry! Where did you go?" She questions.

"Uh, to Zayn's..." He says knowing how bad this all sounds.

"You ran to your friend's house?" She asks again, "Why?"

"Trying to convince him to come tonight..." He attempts to explain.

"And you weren't successful I can see," She gazes upon him in disbelief.

"Well Harry was there..." He responds.

"Harry," She rolls her eyes, "Of course."

"What does that mean?" He asks now feeling a little angry at her.

"Harry Harry Harry," She mimics, "That's all I ever hear about. I actually thought you ran to his house."

Louis does not know how to respond to that.

"Look, you think of yourself as mature compared to other people in your class, but all I see is immaturity. I keep thinking you care about your friends more than me, but this proves it. Louis, I'm not saying not to be friends with your friends. You should spend time with them, but you have to get your priorities straight. Or I will find someone who will prioritize me," she states defiantly.

"I know El," Louis responds.
"Louis, I love who you are. I love how you care for your friends, because I know you're real and that’s hard to find these days. But I want someone who knows how amazing I am as well,” she describes, "I'm going to head home. You should walk. Not because I'm mad, but because I don't want to get my parents' car dirty.

And then there is silence.

Later, Louis and Niall walk home from the dance. Even though Demi got a ride home and Eleanor offered Niall a ride as well; Niall, being the friend Niall is, chooses to travel home with his friend. Niall tells Louis all about his wonderful date with Demi: dancing and kissing her. And Louis explains his night with Eleanor and the drama that occurred due to his own mistakes.

But there is one part of the evening he does not tell his friends about, something spoken between Eleanor and Louis right after their fight:

"Can I ask you something?” Eleanor asked, breaking the silence, as they stood in front of the school, "Well, more tell you something."

"What is it?" He questioned, hoping this would smooth relations out between them.

"I'm going to mention this once, and I'm not going to bring it up again unless you bring it up, okay?" She stated nervously.

"El?" Louis asked now beginning to worry.

"You have feelings for Harry," Eleanor declared, looking confident that she finally said it.

"What, no I don’t." Louis tried to defend himself.

“Louis, look. If you like boys and girls, good for you. That does not bother me. I understand you can be bisexual and fully fall for one person. What bothers me is you liking someone else while being my boyfriend. The way you look at that boy, I wish you looked at me in that way. I don't know Harry’s sexuality or if he feels the same for you since I have not interacted with Harry much, but you're going to have to face this someday. You're going to have to ask yourself why you ran out of our date to see that boy, and why if I ever forced you to choose between me and him, I know you would choose him."

"I don't think I am..." Louis muttered looking down at his own feet.

"What you're doing with him is unsustainable. There's going to be a day of reckoning when you have to deal these questions and figure out if he's in this for the same reasons you are. If you happen to like boys as well as girls, that's perfectly okay. But being in love with your best friend is a whole other thing. I really care for you sweetie. I hope you get this stuff figured out," Eleanor declares. She walked up to him and kissed him softly on the cheek.

"I'm going to go find Demi and Niall. I'm ready to go," She walked back into the school.

Louis stood there in disbelief. He did not like boys, especially boys named Harry. She was just jealous and trying to make sense of the night. At least that is what he told himself. He did all he can to suppress that memory from his mind.
Don't know when the chapter will come out. I have a few chapters already written out, I just have to edit them. I'll do my best readers :) Finals are coming, hope ya'll understand
Chapter 6 Part 1: Secrets

Chapter Summary

As Louis and Eleanor's relationship dissolves, Louis opens up the idea that maybe him and girls just don't click. With support from Zayn, Louis enters into his experimental phase while attempting to figure out who he is and what he likes. This involves getting high, an awkward kiss, and talking to a new gay guy with the purpose of trying something new.

Chapter Notes

Things are finally getting ggggaaaayyyyy! Whoop I'm so excited.

There are some drug references in part, and it will probably be a reoccurring thing from now on. Not like hardcore drugs or anything though.

I'm going to be splitting this chapter into 3 parts because its so long. So expect a long first part, a short second part, and a long third part.

Song of the chapter: "Secrets" by Mary Lambert

Part 1

Winter break soon arrives, but it does not bring Louis much joy. Louis increasingly has a difficult time balancing Eleanor's need for prioritization while also trying to rid Harry of his fears of abandonment. This balancing act is continues into Spring.

Before Louis’s eyes, he watches puberty hit Harry like a train. Harry’s voice drops, his curls grow long, and he catches up to Louis in height, much to Louis's displeasure. This does change Louis's perception of Harry. Louis begins to see him as an equal, not as this little brother he must protect from the world. The fact Harry has developed deeper relationships with Niall and Zayn shows Harry is his own person, not needing Louis to form his identity.

Niall and Zayn are also maturing respectively. They are now also taller than Louis, making Louis the shortest in the group. Niall gains muscles as his soccer skills improve. Liking the attention, tank-tops became everyday fashion for him. Zayn's character darkens but not in a mean way. He expresses who he really is more openly and confidently. He figures out he looks really good in black skinny jeans and tight band t-shirts. While still being really shy (except around Louis, Niall, and Harry) he defiantly appears like the school bad boy, a stereotype he love being known for. Zayn begins smoking weed as a way for him to unwind from his social anxiety. But he is not one of those people who makes it their identity or forces it on their friends. Similar to how his friends respect that he is Muslim and do not try to change him, Zayn respects that his friends do not smoke. Though, he always reminds them they can try it with him whenever they want.
As Louis's relationship with Harry changes, so does his relationship with Eleanor. Louis and Eleanor start getting sexual with each other. A new frontier to Louis, but it is not something amazing as other guys described fooling around with their girlfriends. She would suck him off and he would finger her or eat her out. Much like the dancing, Louis feels like this is just something couples do, not something that he necessarily desires to do. It felt good, great even, but to him it appears like they are using each other for sex.

It is just so easy between Louis and Eleanor. They know and trust each other so well. It could easily be said that Louis saw Eleanor as his girl best friend. They hang out a lot, go on dinner dates, and tell each other everything about their days. Eleanor treats Louis like a giant Barbie doll. She would cover Louis in makeup, straighten his hair, and mix-match clothes with him.

But they are not in love. This becomes apparent to both of them, but neither are willing to address the issue, fearing that it could unravel their entire relationship. They would say love you when texting goodnight or when they finishing spending time with together. They loved each other, but they are not in love.

Their relationship eventually devolves into friends with benefits: fooling around with no real feelings attached to the actions.

Until one evening when they are having a usual date night. Eleanor lays on her bed reading messages from her phone while Louis washes off the makeup she had applied on him. He sits in front of the mirror attached to her dresser.

"This mascara is way too thick El, I don't think it's ever going to come off," Louis declares, scrubbing his eyelids roughly.

"This guy asked me on a date," Eleanor blurts out, not looking up from her phone.

"Who?" Louis asks.

"Aaron Reed, he's a senior at a school on the other side of town," She watches Louis struggle with removing the makeup, "Hold on. Let me help you with that."

Eleanor walks over to him and sits on her dresser. She confiscates the wet washcloth from his hands and starts wiping his face.

"Is he nice to you?" Louis questions.

"Very respectful. And he’s so fit! His arms are too die for," she giggles.

"Get it girl!" Louis smiles as she finishes removing the last bit of makeup.

"Louis?" She asks.

"Yes?" Louis questions back.

"We're nothing anymore, are we?" She inquires disappointingly.

Louis does not know how to respond, because he knows he is going to cause pain her no matter how he replies.

"I don't think so… What do you think?" He asks somberly.

"I love you Louis, but whatever we are doing, it’s not enough," she sighs.
"I love you too," Louis admits squeezing her hand, "But..."

"I know," Eleanor squeezes back.

"I'm sorry El. I never wanted to hurt you," he utters.

"At this point, it doesn't hurt. Just is the way it is," She responds.

"Now when I say this, I'm not being that douchey ex. Can we please be friends? I don't want to lose us," Louis requests softly, "Because I care about you so much. As a person you are lovely."

"You won't be getting any more action from me," Eleanor says with a wink, "If you can live with that."

"Ah babe, I'm already getting blue balls," Louis replies sarcastically.

"Sucks to suck!" Eleanor giggles madly as she smacks him in the balls. She runs away playfully.

"Oi, not so rough," Louis falls to the floor, his hands cupping his groin.

Later that night, Louis spends time with his personal therapist. It is late in the evening and they walk to a park near Zayn's house so Zayn can smoke without fear of being caught by his parents. Louis travels with him as he usually does, even though he does not smoke with his friend.

"While it was super obvious you two didn't like each other in that way anymore, I'm sorry it's over man," Zayn states while taking a hit from his joint.

"Like I should be sad you know, but I'm not. We really haven't been a couple for a few months now," Louis responds, leaning against a pole of a swing set.

"Well she deserves to have someone who likes her as much as she likes him. And you deserve that too," Zayn says with a small cough.

Louis watches his friend with a slight tingle of jealousy. Emotions flow irrationally through Louis's body. The breakup and questions about himself run wild. And there stands Zayn: cool and casual as can be with a wisp of smoke slipping from his lips. Louis would do anything to feel like that, even if it was only for a moment, "Hey mate?"

"Yeah Lou?" Zayn responds looking over at him.

"Could I try a puff?" Louis inquires. Louis has occasionally gotten a second-hand high just being around the stuff, but he has never officially tried it. Everything is changing, maybe this change in sobriety will calm him too.

"Wouldn't be the first time a guy has told me that," Zayn laughs as he hands Louis the blunt, "It's normal to have a coughing fit the first couple times you try it. After you inhale, hold it in and lightly breathe in with your nose for a few second. It will increase your high."

Louis lifts the blunt to his lips and inhales. He sucks in really hard and really fast, and within a few seconds he begins hacking up a storm. He hands the joint back to Zayn and hunches over while
placing his hands on his knees attempting to catch his breath.

Zayn laughs and rubs Louis's back, "Breathe man, get some oxygen into your lungs. I know it hurts your first time, but it'll get better I promise."

"What the fuck?" Louis cries in between coughs, "This is definitely not worth it."

"I coughed like hell my first time too," Zayn replies while taking another hit, "And I do just fine now."

Louis slowly stops coughing till he can talk and breathe normally again, "I don't really feel anything."

"Common for your first time. It may take a few times before you get high," Zayn explains, "Want another hit?"

"No! that hurt like fuck," Louis expresses a face of disgust.

"Fine more for me," Zayn declares finishing off the blunt.

As they begin to trek back to Zayn's house, Louis begins to feel funny. Like he can hear his own thoughts. He begins to describe the feeling to Zayn, then he freezes and busts out laughing.

"What's so funny?" Zayn inquires.

"I forgot what I was saying halfway through my sentence," Louis continues to cackle, "Wait, what am I laughing about?"

"I think I got you high," Zayn laughs.

"Zayn! I can hear my own voice!" Louis exclaims.

"What do you think if it?" Zayn asks.

"My voice sounds soooooo gaaaaayyyyyy!" Louis hollers as Zayn bursts into another round of laughter, "Do I sound this gay all the time?"

"I'm sorry man you do," Zayn drapes his arm around Louis's shoulder.

That walk home feels like it takes an hour for Louis, though the park is less than a mile from Zayn's house. Once they arrive, Louis runs into Zayn's kitchen and grabs all the food he can possibly hold in his little arms. He then carries it up to Zayn's room with Zayn following behind him picking up any food that Louis drops, which is at least half of what Louis attempted to carry.

So Louis and Zayn spread out on Zayn's bed. A food buffet lies between them containing chips, dip, Oreos, Cheetos, Cosmic Brownies, fudge mint cookies, and Goldfish. The television show Friends is on in the background, but most of their attention is focused on the food and each other.

Their conversation ranged from random thoughts that popped into Louis's head such as how Reece’s perfectly gets its peanut butter in the chocolate to deep intellectual discussion about existence and the purpose of life.


“Like what do you mean?” Zayn requests.
“Like that we are living in just one of an infinite number of universes. Like there may be some
universal physics and scientific law don’t apply the same way they do here. Like where instead of
gravity pushes things down, it pulls things up,” Louis explains.

“Oh, I don’t know. Guess I never really considered it. Like I’ve heard of the theory,” Zayn clarifies.

“But there also may be universes exists that are identical to ours except one fact is different. Maybe
in another universe we are all the same, but you are also Spiderman,” Louis offers.

“I like the sound of that. Maybe there is a universe where Liam and I are together,” Zayn responds.

“Babe you still on that?” Louis asks.

“I don’t know… he floats into my head sometimes. But we’re not in that universe, we’re in this one,”
Zayn confirms.

“Maybe there’s a universe where me and Eleanor worked out…” Louis brings up solemnly.

“You two just aren’t meant to be babe,” Zayn states.

"I don't know Zayn. Like it all seemed so good and easy at the beginning," Louis describes, lying his
head on Zayn's shoulder.

"You do know you are a freshmen, right?" Zayn begins, "Things aren't meant to last forever at this
age. This is the time of your life to experiment, make mistakes, and date around. I know it hurts
buddy, but that movie ending of marrying your high school sweetheart just doesn't happen."

"Maybe I briefly wanted it, ya know? Like I've never really been crazy about a girl, and I kept
hoping she'd be the girl to make that happen," Louis admits.

"You can't make love happen. Love is what it is. You keep saying ‘should’ and ‘hope,’ but why
don't you just do what comes naturally? Just do and don’t think why. You will find what you truly
want, and then perhaps love. Because someone is going to see how magnificent you are. Somebody
is going to love you, because you are a loveable guy. I know I love you," Zayn states as he squeezes
Louis close to him.

Louis leans up, looks into Zayn's eyes, and orders, "Kiss me."

"Whoa Louis when I said I love you I didn't mean-" Zayn defends as he slightly pulls away from
Louis.

"No, I know what you meant. And I repeat what I said: Kiss me," Louis demands while going in for
a kiss that Zayn easily dodges.

"Louis... you're high," Zayn awkwardly scratches the back of his head.

"So are you. And you're the one that said this is the time to experiment! You told me to do what
comes naturally, without thinking about it. Maybe I'm being me right now. And you're the person I
trust most in the world. I'm not scared you're going to tell everybody about this or say I'm a bad
kisser. If any guy is going to have my first gay kiss, I'd want it to be you," Louis declares sweetly
while staring into Zayn's eyes seriously.

"I trust you too... I mean, I know you aren't going to fuck me over. I've known you for so long. But
our friendship, I don't want to accidentally ruin it with this," Zayn confesses.
"Zayn, we cuddle, sleep together, ignore awkward boners. If those things didn't affect our friendship, I don't think this will either. In the past, those things actually made our friendship stronger. Couldn't this too?" Louis asks.

"You've never mentioned being bi before... Are you really sure you want to try this?" Zayn inquires.

"The first time I saw you, my brain thought you were man pretty. I don’t know why but it did. Cuddling with you or Harry seems more natural than whatever I did with El. Zayn, you're hot and so am I. And this will help us figure out if boys are really what we want. Like two friends helping each other out," Louis clarifies.

"It's just a kiss..." Zayn begins giving into Louis's desire.

"Just a kiss, and if we don't want to do it again or do anything else, we don't have too," Louis offers softly.

"Okay, let's do it," Zayn agrees while straightening out his posture.

Louis does the same as both of them try to fix their hair and make sure their mouths and lips are clean. Finally they look into each other's eyes as both Louis and Zayn feel the world has stopped spinning. Even though the television is still play in the background, the only thing they can hear is each other breathing and their own heartbeat. They slowly scoot closer together.

"I'm going to kiss you now," Zayn declares nervously.

"You better," Louis awkwardly chuckles.

"No going back," Zayn states as their lips approach one another.

"Why would I want that?" Louis asks while looking at Zayn's dark mouth.

"Me neither," Zayn now feels Louis's breath upon his lips.

"Zayn," Louis utters quickly.

"What?" Zayn stutters.

"Shut up and kiss me," Louis demands as he closes his eyes, grabs Zayn by the face, and slams his lips into Zayn's.

Zayn's eyes close when their lips touch, but their lips do not move. Each assumes that the other would make an additional motion on one another, but neither do. The odd mix of food that is in both of their mouths tastes horrid. They expected passion, a spark or flicker of light. But the kiss is cold, empty, and meaningless. It is actually hilarious. How could a kiss possibly funny? Neither of them knew how, but this was.

In unison, both Louis and Zayn slowly open their eyes and pull back from one another. Then large laughter erupts from both of them, shattering the silence.

"What the hell was that?!" Zayn nearly yells.

"I don't know. That didn't feel the way I expected it too," Louis agrees screeching just as hard.

"Look Louis, I love you, so much and to death. But I'm not in love with you. Holy fuck that felt weird," Zayn admits, grabbing Louis playfully by the shoulder.
"You're my brother Zayn. Nothing more and nothing less," Louis rests his head back on Zayn's shoulder.

"Well at least we now know we aren't secretly in love with each other," Zayn says trying to reassure that kiss was for nothing.

"Oh thank goodness, I was so scared," Louis laughs sarcastically, "And it won't affect anything like this?" Louis asks referencing the cuddling.

"If anything, I feel more comfortable about it, knowing that there is nothing behind how close we are," Zayn responds.

"Is there any way we can blame that kiss on the weed?" Louis pleads.

"Nope! You wanted to kiss me, and I won't forget it!" Zayn chuckles.

"Gawd Dammnit," Louis curses.

"So do you like kissing boys?" Zayn asks.

"I... I don't know. It felt okay, but it was also you sooooo," Louis answers.

"Oh, I ruined your first gay kiss?" Zayn pokes.

"Yes," Louis guiltily smiles.

"Well if you do want to try more, I do have a friend..." Zayn hints.

"A friend?" Louis asks.

"Yeah there's a guy named Stan in the 10th grade who I met in art class. He’s gay and talked to me for a bit, but it didn't go anywhere. Nothing wrong with him, we just did not click. I could give him your number or something," Zayn offers.

"I don't know... I don't want the whole school finding out about this as I try to figure it out myself," Louis explains.

"He's a pretty private guy too. You could just shoot him a text and see where it goes?" Zayn proposes.

"I got nothing to lose, I guess," Louis replies giving in.

"Yay! I love playing match maker," Zayn says smiling largely and jumping a little. He immediately pulls out his phone.

"Calm down Zayn, this guy may not even want me," Louis rolls his eyes.

"Says the guy who just called me and himself hot to get me to kiss him," Zayn giggles.

"You're going to hold this against me forever, aren't you?" Louis probes.

"Probably," Zayn answers, finishing his message to Stan.

"You mind not telling anyone about this, at least until I figure this out?" Louis asks Zayn.

"My lips are sealed," Zayn brings his fingers across his lips as if a zipper was there.
"I mean it, Harry and Niall included," Louis requests.

Zayn appears uneasy at what Louis requested, but agrees, "Can do Louis."

A week later Louis and Harry casually kick around their soccer ball on a field at the local park, talking about life as they usually do. Spring has arrived, turning the grass green and blossoms bursting from the trees and bushes. It is a cool cloudy day for early April, so Louis and Harry are wearing sweat pants and jackets. Mud stains the shins of their pant legs.

"So you and El still talk and hangout even though you two broke up?" Harry presses while passing the ball back to Louis.

"Yeah we do. It's kind of nice, not much has changed besides the lack of sex," Louis responds kicking the ball back to Harry.

"But you two don't have feelings for each other?" Harry inquires.

"I know I don't. I assume the same for her," Louis confirms, "Or I doubt she would not be okay with seeing me on a regular basis."

"That's weird," Harry replies bluntly.

"Why so?" Louis questions, stopping the ball underneath his feet.

"Don't know if I could be friends with someone I was in love with," Harry honestly answers.

"But me and her weren't in love," Louis counters.

"Then why were you with her so long then?!" Harry probes.

"I don't really know," Louis finally passes the ball back, "My life has been flipping upside down recently, to the point I don't know why I did what I did or what I'm even currently doing."

"Why's that Lou?" Harry asks softly, picking up the ball so he and Louis can focus on the conversation at hand.

Louis freezes since he has not told Harry about him questioning his sexuality yet. Telling Zayn felt easy since Zayn was also gay, but Harry is straight and that made Louis nervous for some reason that he could not explain.

"Just um… being single, it's a change after being with El for so long. My stability is gone I guess," Louis releases, half lying. Harry can sense it, but he does not want to push the issue since Louis appears so awkward about this situation.

Harry drops the ball on the ground and kicks back to Louis, "So did I tell you about what happened to Liam?"

"I do not believe so," Louis asks, "What happened to him?"

"I got out of rehearsal on Friday and could hear the track meet going on, so I decided to go over to it since I had some time to kill. When I approached the gates, I could see a crowd of people surrounding something on the track itself. I walked up to the crowd and could hear people gasping. Being the shorty, I pushed my way to the front to see what was happening. There, I saw Liam laying on the ground in agonizing pain. Apparently he was jumping the hurdles, tripped on one, and rolled
his ankle. It looked really bad, like his foot was not pointing the opposite direction it was supposed to," Harry describes with a sick expression on his face towards the end of the story, "It looked absolutely bloody painful."

"Holy shit is he okay?" Louis wonders, passing the soccer ball once again.

"I texted him later. He said he was at the doctor's waiting to get his x-rays back, but we haven't talked since. I guess I'll see him on Monday and see what the doctor told him," Harry answers.

"Aw, poor guy. I hope he is okay," Louis says, though if he was being completely honest, his emotional investment was low. Louis still felt salty about the way Liam exited the group, and specifically the affect it had on Zayn. His maternal instinct over Zayn kicks in whenever Liam comes up in conversation. He, of course, did not wish any harm on Liam, but the amount he cared about his well-being is low, no matter how blunt that sounded in his head. Louis pulls him phone once he feels it vibrate. A small smile arises from his face as he sees it is Stan.

"Who ya on the phone with?" Harry asks.

"Erm, I gotta go Harry," Louis states nonchalantly, "I forgot I made plans with my friend Stan."

"Stan? Who's Stan?" Harry barks defensively.

"A friend Zayn introduced me to," Louis hugs Harry as he leaves, "I'll see you around."

"Maybe swing by my house tonight?" Harry requests, "Would be nice to hang with you before the school tomorrow."

"I'll try Harry but no promises," Louis runs off the field. Harry watches Louis trot happily out of the park as he stands there alone in the cool spring air with their joint soccer ball.

This is not the first time Louis has spent time with Stan. Louis walked him home from school a few time, trying to obtain a better perspective on who Stan is. But this occasion will be the first time Louis and Stan would be in a house alone together. Stan's single mother works all afternoon, leaving the house to Stan. So why not invite over a cute Louis to preoccupy his time with?

Louis arrives at Stan's wearing the muddy joggers and covered in a layer of sweat for how fast he ran there. Stan offers him a drink and a change of clothes if Louis needed them. Louis agrees to both.

Louis receives the impressions that this is not the first time Stan has done this. His cocky, suave attitude in how he carries conversation while showing Louis to his room after giving a lemonade proves this. Stan pulls out a pair of pajama pants from his dresser and hands them over. Instead of leaving the room to give Louis the privacy to change, he sits himself on his bed and tells Louis to hurry up so they can watch a movie.

For the first time in his life, Louis feels self-conscious about changing in front of another guy. He turns his back to Stan, dropping his dirty pants and pulls up the pajama pants as fast as humanly possible, because he can feel Stan's eyes on his body. Stan would not be able to deny that he really enjoys the view of Louis from behind.

"Ready babe?" Stan lightly pulls on Louis's hand to get his attention.

"Uh, yeah, guide me," Louis mutters. Stan takes Louis's hand and leads him to his basement where a large television hangs perched on the wall.
"Does a horror movie sound good to you?" Stan inquires.

"Sure," Louis sits himself upon a couch. Stan puts a DVD in, takes a spot next to Louis, and starts the movie. As the movie plays, the two slowly move closer to one another till Stan's arm tightly wraps around his guest. Louis feels a little uncomfortable since he has only been talking to his boy for a couple weeks, but the flutter of butterflies in his stomach feels causes him to want more at the same time.

They both jump and clutch each other when a brutal scream ejects from the television. Louis buries his face into Stan's chest, so he does not have to watch the bloody scenes. After the killer drags the body away and the music deescalates, Louis pulls away to he can see the move again. That is when Louis realizes how close he and Stan actually are.

"Do you need another drink?" Stan whimpers, "You thirsty? Those lips look so dry. Maybe I can change that."

Louis’s heart pounds as he feels Stan's hot breath upon Louis's face. Before Louis can answer, Stan rushes in and kisses him. The kiss is hot and sloppy. Stan lightly bites Louis's lower lip and pulls the lip out. In response, Louis opens his mouth and let's Stan's tongue slip in.

This feels really different than kissing Eleanor or Zayn. It is not forced or awkward. Louis likes the roughness of the kiss, the peach fuzz on Stan's face that brushes against Louis's, and the taste of boy.

Yes, Louis definitely likes boys.

Chapter End Notes

Liam reenters the next part in case you missed him :)


Chapter 6 Part 2: Secrets

Chapter Summary

A Harry oriented chapter. Harry deals with his own insecurities about Louis branching out from their friendship with Stan. Liam comes to Harry in search of something he once had, but has now lost.

Chapter Notes

This is a pretty short chapter. Parts 1 and 2 are rather divergent from one another, but the storylines fuse into one in Part 3.

As I said in the previous story, Part 2 is very short compared to Parts 1 and 3.

Song of the chapter:
Secrets by Mary Lambert

Part 2

On Monday morning, Harry arrives to school on a mission. He says hello to his normal choir friends, but quickly leaves them to find Liam. He goes where Liam always is: the cafeteria where most of the jocks or cheerleaders gather. He sees Liam sitting at the end of the table with a caste wrapped around his left foot that extends to his knee. That cast is covered in signatures. While there are a lot of them, the messages appear rather generic. Clusters of jocky guys and preppy girls stand around the table but oddly not close to Liam.

"Hey Harry!" Liam's face lights up as Harry approaches him, "How are you?"

"Much better than you it seems!" Harry says pointing at Liam's caste. Harry sits down next to Liam as a few kids around the table gives rude glances to Liam about Harry. Harry does not seem to notice, as Liam shots a brief glare to people who were acting weird about Harry's presence. Liam returns his focus to Harry.

"Yeah, the doctor said I broke my ankle and fracture my Fibula bone. It will be awhile before I'm able to walk again," Liam explains.

"Shit that sucks, I'm sorry," Harry says not really knowing what else to say.

"It's okay, you didn't do anything," Liam smiles.

“You don’t know that. I could have sabotaged your lane on the track,” Harry jokes.

“That doesn’t seem like something you would do,” Liam responds.

"Do you need any help getting to class or whatever?" Harry inquires.
"Thanks for being the first one to ask! But I got a couple of the guys who said they'd help me around the school till I get better," Liam answers.

"Good Liam. You think you'll be able to play football again by next year?" Harry asks.

"At this point... I don't know. When I asked about play sports, the doctor did not look to positive," Liam replies disappointingly.

"I believe in you Liam. You are extremely strong-headed. If you want something, you get it. You don't wait for the world to give it to you," Harry reassures Liam.

"Thanks Harry, you should be a cheerleader. I need someone to yell that on the sidelines every game," Liam jokes, "How are the guys by the way?"

As Liam asks, the school bell rings and students rush to class. Harry says goodbye to Liam and walks off, until he hears Liam call his name again. When Harry turns around he sees Liam sitting there alone, all the other students gone from the table.

"Uh, I think they forgot I needed help to class. Could you please help me out here? I got someone in my next class who said they would help so I should be okay for the rest of the day..." Liam requests, looking a little embarrassed at being forgotten. This causes Harry to have a flashback of the first day he met Louis in the halls of that very school, when Harry said a nearly identical phrase to him.

"Of course, we better hurry I don't want to be late either!" Harry says, helping Liam to his feet and picking up Liam's backpack. Liam puts his crutches under his arms as they begin to truck it to Liam's class.

"You sure you're okay?" Liam prods, "Looks like something is bothering you."

"Uh yeah, just busy; Louis is busy with people, you know," Harry tries to say casually though Liam can tell Harry cares more than he lets on.

"Still you and Louis, huh?" Liam questions.

"Always," Harry replies avoiding Liam's eyes.

While Louis may like Stan and Stan may like him, they want very different things. Stan is looking for a relationship, something more serious. Still dealing with the aftermath of his breakup with Eleanor and figuring out his sexuality, Louis wants to figure out who he is before jumping into a commitment. He feels he cannot figure that out while also seriously dating someone else. But Louis loves kissing Stan because it feels like such a liberation that he can finally kiss the gender he is most comfortable with.

Louis would actually like to do more with Stan than just make out, but Stan acts really stubborn on doing anything more before they are in an official relationship. That does not mean Stan is not going to try to tease and tempt Louis into one. Louis will normally go over to Stan's house after school and have a steamy makeout session, which includes Stan hopping on top of Louis and grinding his hips into Louis's. Just before Stan appears as if he is about to reach for Louis's zipper, he stops and continues to grind and tease Louis. This usually ends with Louis becoming frustrated with a painful hard boner, and Stan mentioning how they could do more if they were dating.

This leads to Louis stressing out and taking time away from Harry. When Louis does see Harry, Harry can see the frustration in Louis, but Louis still is not comfortable enough to tell Harry about
what he and Stan are doing. Big surprise, this leads to Harry disliking whoever Stan is.

After more than a couple weeks of this, Harry finally goes to Zayn to figure out what is going on. While Harry tries to hold off the conversation so Zayn does not think he only asked to hangout to ask about Stan, Harry has been waiting for nearly a month. That is long enough as it is.

While they are both working on homework, Harry *casually* brings up Stan.

"So who's Stan?" Harry barks out of nowhere. *Very casual.*

"Stan?" Zayn looks up at Harry.

"Stan, the guy you introduced Louis to. Who is he?" Harry asks again.

"What has Louis told you?" Zayn questions, trying to gauge how much he can tell Harry.

"Louis won't tell me much. All I know he is a year older than Louis, takes up all his free time, and frustrates the hell out of him," Harry explains.

"Frustrates him?" Zayn repeats uncertainly.

"Yeah, after he hangs out with him, Louis will arrive agitated to me. Like if Louis goes home first and then sees me, he appears a little less bugged. But if he visits me directly after he sees Stan, he's like the fuse to a power keg," Harry explains.

Zayn understands what's going on: Louis is not getting any and goes home to masturbate to relieve the tension. But he cannot tell Harry that.

"I just thought after him and Eleanor broke up, I'd get back all my Louis time. Like before Eleanor with constant sleepovers, video game days, and movie marathons. And now he still hangs out her, also sees Stan, and I'm last…" Harry admits weakly.

Zayn looks at him with a smirk, but Harry can sense what Zayn is going to say.

"I know Zayn. I'm jealous and possessive. I've accepted that about myself. I just feel like Louis is out growing me... Replacing me with Eleanor and now Stan. I thought I understood him taking some of my time for Eleanor since that was his girlfriend. But this is just a friend he is seeing now. I thought I was the second most important thing in his life and now I feel like the third. And who's next? Will I be fourth?" Harry rambles.

"Have you told Louis how you feel?" Zayn questions seriously, though Harry rolls his eyes as if Zayn is joking.

"I know how absurd this sounds. How silly and immature it is that I'm this possessive and needy of him. Like it got better for a bit while Eleanor and Louis were still together. But since they became friends with benefits and then ended that it's became unstable again," Harry confesses, "I don't like it. I don't like feeling like I'm not good enough for him. I just want to know if I should prepare for a future where he's not my best friend."

Zayn laughs at how ridiculous Harry sounds which causes Harry to burrow his eyebrows into an angry face, "Harry, do you want to know why things got better between you two while Eleanor and him were dating?"

Harry shakes his head cautiously.
"Because I told him that you felt like you were being forgotten. I didn't mean to Harry, but the night of the winter homecoming, it slipped out. He didn't realize he was making you feel bad and once he did he fixed it. The only thing Louis wants is for you to be smiling. So if you are spending time with him and you're gleaming when in fact you're sad; Louis is not a mind reader, and he's going to assume that if you are smiling it's because he is doing something right," Zayn explains.

A sense of relief spreads across Harry while Zayn continues his declaration.

"You know what best friends do? Best friends tell each other what they actually think and feel without fear of persecution. If you think that you telling Louis you are jealous is going to drive him away, you are in for a surprise. If anything, it will probably make Louis feel loved since you are expressing that you care enough to feel possessive of him. And if you are honest with him, I'm sure he will be honest with you in return," Zayn finishes.

"You should have a talk show," Harry grins.

"A talk show?" Zayn asks.

"Or an opinion page where you explain how people should get their shit together," Harry responds.

"Call Oprah and I'm sure she'll give me a spinoff show for teenage boys," Zayn laughs.

While Harry agrees Zayn is right, actually doing what Zayn told is a totally different mission on its own. So for another week or two, Harry tries to word how he is feeling to Louis without sounding totally crazy.

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During a lunch period, Harry goes to the library write out what he wants to say to Louis. He could not focus much with the noise in the lunch room, and he does not talk to his choir friends about actual issues and problems like he does with his boys. As Harry sits at a table alone, he hears the main door to the library having a difficult time trying to open. When he looks up, he sees Liam struggling to push the door open and squeeze himself through with his crutches. Before Harry can stand up, the librarian rushes to help Liam, and then he hops on his crutches over to Harry.

"Harry..." Liam begins nervously.

"Hello, what's going on?" Harry questions, closing his notebook he was writing in.

"What you got there?" Liam asks, adjusting his leg as he takes a seat across from Harry.

"It’s nothing; nothing important," Harry lies while shaking his head.

"Oh," Liam sighs.

"Liam?" Harry asks, noticing there is something seriously bothering him.

"Nobody tells me anything anymore," Liam quickly admits.

"What do you mean?" Harry question.

"My friends... I don't even know to call them friends or not," Liam responds.

"Who?" Harry inquires.

"When I joined the football team, I was looking for a sense of community and belonging. And I had
fun with them, playing games, going to parties, award dinners, pancakes feeds, and such. But we never really talked about things. We talked about sports games, hot girls, but nothing serious or intellectual. I thought that is just what that clique did, movies always glorify being popular and in the it crowd. But since breaking my leg, I realized how much they don’t talk. Like we always did activities together, but with my leg broken I can't play games or keep up with them. I text them to see what's up, and it's so basic until I literally cannot carry on the conversation.

“When I told them the doctor said I would probably never be able to play contact sports again, I saw an emptiness in their eyes. They said if I try hard enough I'll get there, but logically I know it’s next to impossible. Whenever I ask them to help me carry my things, they act as if I'm this nuisance in their lives. They only cared about me when I could benefit them, and now that I can't it appears as if they don't want me anymore,” Liam spills, it being clearly obvious that he has not had anyone to speak his mind to.

"I'm really sorry that happened to you Liam. You're a great guy, I'm sorry they don't see that outside of the football field," Harry offers with concern on his face.

"I'm beginning to realize who true friends are... well were... All I wanted was to get away, but now that I'm here all I want is to go back home," Liam admits.

"What are you trying to say?" Harry attempts to clarify.

"I miss you guys... you, Louis, Niall, Zayn," Liam finally reveals, "And I feel like the biggest asshole coming to you like this, when I'm at the lowest point in my life so far. I'm sorry that it took me breaking my leg to realize this, but I get it now. I had the friends I always wanted."

"We miss you too Liam," Harry says comforting but does not know what Liam wants exactly.

"Do you think you guys could let me back into the group," Liam pleads looking down at the table. Harry cannot speak on the behalf of the entire group, but Harry can see how vulnerable Liam looks in this moment: Liam literally feels like he has to beg to get back in.

"I'm so sorry Harry. To you especially since I remember you really stuck your neck out for me to get into the group in the first place, and I flung it back in your face when this school year started. I abandoned you. I know you have different friends now and I knew you would be okay on your own, but it was still wrong of me to do such to you with all you've done is help me," Liam reminds Harry.

"Liam, the only thing that matters to me is that you came to the revelation. People make mistakes all the time and so many never realize all the implications or who they hurt in the process. You feel bad; you want to fix it. I'm not saying it's going to be easy, but this is a first step and I think it will mean a lot to the guys," Harry says actually very happy Liam wants back in.

"Thanks Harry, what do I do from here?" Liam demands.

"You gotta apologize to each boy. Louis, Niall... and Zayn. Especially Zayn. Liam, you do realize how much Zayn cared about you right? Like you owe him his own apology all together," Harry states firmly.

"I know, I know," Liam agrees, "He tried so hard with me, offering nothing but his time and devotion..."

"Well this is a pretty good start," Harry grins.

"How do I get their attention?" Liam points out, "I doubt they'd just randomly come over to my
"Give me a few days, I'll think of something," Harry reassures Liam.

"I know I'm asking a lot of you right now but can I ask one more thing?" Liam requests.

"Yes?" Harry dramatically sighs.

"Will you help me get to class? Like for the rest of the year until I've recovered? The office can give you a pass which lets you leave your classroom five minutes early and arrive five minutes late for helping me. I'd rather have someone who actually wants to spend time with me," Liam answers.

"Sure. Getting to leave class early and arrive late? See, you breaking your leg isn't all bad," Harry jokes.

"Harry?" Liam asks again.

"What now Liam?" Harry questions sarcastically.

"Thank you, for everything. And sorry again," Liam says sincerely.

"Don't mention it, ever again to me. I'm not going to hold you, formerly being an ass hat, against you," Harry answers.

Chapter End Notes

If you guys like smut, it's coming in Part 3:) I can't wait.
Chapter 6 Part 3: Secrets

Chapter Summary

After a heart-to-heart discussion between two of the pairings within the group of boys, the coming summer heat causes sexual tension to build then finally reveal itself between Harry and Louis.

Chapter Notes

If you guys have been waiting for sexual content, it is finally here. I had this done by Saturday but I did not want to post it back to back with the other part. Always going to try to wait a few days between publishing chapters. It killed me to wait.

If you guys like smut, it's going to be pretty smutty from here on out.

Song of the chapter:
Secrets by Mary Lambert

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 3

In the first weekend of May, Harry invites for Louis, Niall, and Zayn to his house for a casual video game day, unknowing to the rest that Liam would be at Harry's house waiting for them. The weather is finally warming up so the boys are wearing shorts and t-shirts. Harry lies by telling them that he has a surprise for them up in his bedroom. The guys think it is a new game system, so they unquestionably run in its direction.

Harry stops in front of the door before opening it, "So about my surprise..."

"Holy shit Harry I can’t wait another second. If the new FIFA game is not in your room I'm going to flip shit," Niall threatens, pushing Harry out of the way. The boys stumble into the room and then freeze when they see Liam sitting on Harry's bed whose caste is obviously apparent on top of its blankets.

"Ta-dah!" Harry declares nervously.

"Didn't tell us he'd be here, Harry," Niall says defensively, stepping in front of Zayn as if he is protecting him from Liam.

"I know, I asked him too," Liam says taking the blame away from Harry, "I didn't know if you guys would come if you knew I was here."

Harry steps into his room and pushes his door shut, not allowing for people to leave until they hear Liam out, "Liam has something to say."

"I know I am asking a lot of you guys, to have me here after not seeing you for more than six
months. I know I can't fix this with a one-time thing; that rebuilding your trust won't happen
overnight. But I'm sorry. I'm sorry for being a dick and thinking I deserved better than what you all
offered. I was wrong. What I came to realize was that you guys gave me what I deserved. I know I
don't deserve it now, but I want to improve myself to be a version that does deserve your friendship.

“Because I miss you all. I miss Niall coming into my house to eat all my food and his victory dances
when he wins a game. I miss Louis's dramatic death scenes whenever he loses to Niall and his foul
mouth. And I especially miss Zayn, how I would confess every immoral thing inside of me and he
would still accept me as someone who was no worse than him, and who I now realize is a lot better
than me,” Liam says trying to look as confident as possible but his vulnerability shows again.

Liam extends his hand out to Zayn, suggesting he step closer to Liam. Niall turns his head to Zayn as
in asking if that is what Zayn wants to do. Zayn nods, and Niall steps aside. Zayn shuffles to Harry's
bed, and Liam forcefully grabs Zayn's hand.

"Zayn, you tried harder with me than anyone else. Even after all of that, I rejected and ignored you.
Eventually you gave up, and I felt relieved because it alleviated my guilt. But then I noticed the
silence. Any new friends could not compare in the acceptance you gave me. I'm actually pretty
positive I may have scared off a few people because I was a little too open expecting them to all be
like you. If we can just be friends again that will mean so much to me. If you can't-" But before Liam
can finish, Zayn's arms wrap around him like a snake. Liam looks stunned at the sudden touch, but
his arms eventually grab Zayn's waist. Liam's head lays against his chest due to the height difference
from Liam still sitting on Harry's bed.

From Harry's point of view, he can see the back of Liam's head and Zayn's face. To Harry's surprise,
the expression upon Zayn's face is complete bliss. An expression that none of Zayn's friends have
seen in months, the months in which Liam disappeared.

"Zayn, I'm sorry," Liam apologizes.

"Shut up you twat," Zayn says still holding Liam as tightly as possible. Harry watches a tear run
down Zayn's cheek as Zayn's smile grows even wider, "I'm just happy you were strong enough to
say it. Takes a lot to admit you fucked up."

"Thanks Harry," Liam says turning his head around to face Harry, "Don't think I would have been
brave enough to do this on my own."

"I was just pushing you in the right direction, you did everything else," Harry replies with a pleased
smile. Niall smiles at Harry knowing the balance has been restored.

"So tell us about what happened to your leg," Niall orders as he sits on the bed next to Liam, lightly
slapping Liam's caste. That is the thing about Niall. As long as the tension is cleared, Niall is able to
go about life pretending no time has passed; as if whatever disagreement never occurred.

Harry looks up over to a smiling Louis who is watching his friends interact. He notices Harry's gaze
and smiles at Harry.

It took a lot of courage for Liam to do what he did when there was always the possibility of rejection.
It was scary, but it really paid off for him. For while it made have made Liam happy, it also benefitted
Zayn. This happiness would not have been possible without Liam putting his heart on the line for his
friends. Harry realizes this all. If Liam can do it, so can Harry. Harry glides over in the direction of
Louis.

"Can we please talk?" Harry whispers into Louis's ear.
"Of course Harry, what's going on?" Louis asks.

"In private?" Harry says leaving the room as Louis follows after him. Harry eventually walks into his backyard through the door by the kitchen. Louis comes out right behind him, shutting the door as he walks out.

"All okay Hazza?" Louis asks.

"Okay, I'm not that good at this whole saying my feelings and what I'm thinking stuff. But seeing what it did in there, maybe being brave can have its positive benefits. Can you just stay silent with me as I explain this?" Harry pleads to Louis.

"Totally. What are you thinking?" Louis says looking concerned.

"I'm coming to realize that I am jealous and possessive," Harry starts with.

"Well I could have told you that," Louis laughs.

"Shh, let me talk," Harry barks.

"Oh yeah," Louis agrees, quieting down.

"You're the closest thing I have to a brother, you're my best friend, and really... the only dependable guy I've ever had in my life. My father was an ass and because of him I think every guy in my life is just going to fuck me over when the next best thing comes around the corner," Harry pauses for a breath, "When Eleanor came into your life, I had this large identity crisis because you were gone a lot and I really did not know who I was here in this town without you. I knew why you were gone because she was your girlfriend, and I would probably do the same if I had one. I was scared that you were outgrowing me, and that you were looking for someone older and better. But Zayn helped me accept my place as your best friend and I am pleased beyond measure to have it. When you two broke up, I hate to admit that I was a little happy because I thought I'd have my Lou back."

Louis smiles at that comment.

"But as soon as you two broke up, you started hanging out with Stan all the time; this guy who I know nothing about besides the fact that you squeeze all your extra time to him and whenever you come back from him you act like a total twat. I don't understand why you want to spend so much time with someone who makes you so irked. But now it feels like he's your new best friend, which just leaves me here confused as hell... I'm terrified you're tired of me and now want newer and older-aged friends," Harry finally admits, "So please tell me what's going on in your life because I don't like this wall I sense. It's the most unnatural thing since I thought we told each other everything and you won't tell me a thing about Stan. If you two are such good friends, maybe we could hangout all together sometime, because if you like him there's a good chance I'll like him too. So we can grow and change together."

*Fuck* Louis thinks as he runs his fingers through his hair and tries to sort out all of what Harry said.

"Shit, I shouldn't have said anything…" Harry apologizes while now feeling stupid for opening his mouth.

"No Harry, don't say that. You didn't upset me; I upset me," Louis responds, "I didn't mean to do this again. Harry..."

"Louis?" Harry asks.
"Stan's not my best friend," Louis reveals, "I don't know if I'd even call him a friend."

"What is he then?" Harry asks, "Drug dealer, coach, fake name of a girl you're seeing?"

"Me and Stan make out sometimes..." Louis admits releasing a big breath, "Okay, honestly all we do is make out."

"Oh," Harry squeaks.

"Yeah," Louis replies.

"So he's your boyfriend?" Harry asks.

"No, no, no, no. I don't like him enough for that," Louis laughs.

"Then what are you doing?" Harry wonders to Louis.

"I don't know Harry. That's why I didn't tell you. I'm confused, lost... scared," Louis admits.

"Why are you scared?" Harry asks.

"Everything I knew about me, the world, what I wanted, has been flipped upside down. Everything I thought was secure and stable is now shaking," Louis answers.

"Louis, I love you," Harry declares, looking in Louis's eyes.

Louis's heart stops beating after Harry says that. Harry grabs Louis's hands, rubbing Louis's hands with his thumbs. Louis's cheeks go pink as he remembers to breathe.

"I'm not in love with you," Harry chuckles, "But I love you. And that's not going to change with whomever you love or whomever you make out with. No matter what Louis. Even if someday we grow old and go separate ways, I will always love you."

"That's never going to happen," Louis says defiantly.

"Well just in case," Harry says calming Louis's nerves, "Even if things seem scary and uncertain, the one thing you can depend on is me."

Things do not appear scary after Harry said that. Louis knows it to be true, and for the first time in months gravity kicks back in for Louis. As if all the chaotic asteroids in outer space found their orbit; as if peace was reestablished.

Louis thought that Stan made him less lonely, to think he found someone else like him. But as Harry holds his hands, he realizes how alone Stan made him feel and how whole Harry makes Louis.

One tear rolls down Louis's cheek. And another. And then another. Till Louis is full on balling in front of Harry. Harry pulls Louis in for a hug as Louis buries his face into Harry's neck. Another reminder how Harry is growing; Harry now tall enough for Louis to rest his head on Harry's shoulder without having to bend down or strain his neck.

"Shh... Shh... It's okay now," Harry coos as he strokes the back of Louis's hair. But that actually makes Louis cry harder because everything he was looking for was here the entire time. Well besides the sex of course, but everything else. Something kept telling him to look outward for some sense of self or completeness. He looked to Eleanor and then he looked to Stan. Both gave him a piece of something but not the whole thing.
Maybe Louis is looking for love. But maybe love does not have to be romantic. Nor does it have to be sexual. Maybe, just maybe, Harry is enough.

“I’m sorry for this,” Louis references his sobs, “I’ve just been hiding this for so long. To say it just feels so liberating. I feel so silly for hiding it from you in the first place.”

Louis’s crying fit begins to subside and he pulls away from Harry. The suns begins to go down as the streaks of pink stretch upon the sky. The same pink that stains Louis’s face freshly blemished from the tears.

"We’ll be okay now," Harry promises.

"Harreh!" Niall calls from the kitchen window.

Louis ducks his head into Harry's shoulder so Niall cannot see his snot-covered face. Harry puts one arm around Louis's shoulder and turns the opposite shoulder to face Niall.

"Yeah?" Harry yells.

"Feed me!" Niall demands.

"My goodness Niall, snack on some chips till I get inside," Harry orders.

"Already gone buddy!" Niall responds as he shakes the empty bag as proof.

"Five minutes, kay?" Harry asks.

"Ugh fine," Niall grunts as his head disappears from the window.

"I believe you," Louis says finally responding to Harry’s promise.

And it does become okay.

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Louis soon ends things with Stan. It really could not be called a break up since they were not anything in the first place. Unlike with Eleanor's break up when Louis and her stayed friends, Stan does not stay friends with Louis, much to Harry's delight.

This is followed by Louis coming out to his friends and family. Niall nor Liam appear that shocked, signalling everyone knew besides Louis. Louis's family takes a little more time to understand, but they soon realize he is the same boy he has always been.

Zayn and Liam quickly go back to being best friends. For how could Zayn stay mad at that cute face? By the time summer rolls around, Liam is back to walking. Slowly walking but walking the least. Harry and Louis go return to being inseparable as well.

The four boys would often have "double dates" together. Movies and dinners at someone's house, normally ending in friendly cuddling with each respected partner.

One day over the summer, Louis and Harry decide to go over to Liam's house expecting Zayn to be there anyways. They thought they would surprise them so neither Harry or Louis shoots a text to either of them, knowing Liam's parents would be at work anyways.

Harry knocks on the front door, but there is no response. They know at least Liam is home though, since they can see lights flashing from the window in the basement. After a few tries, Harry grabs the
spare key under the welcome mat and enters Liam's house. Louis can hear the faint hum of the television playing a movie from the basement. He hints to Harry to stay quiet, so they can scare Liam and Zayn.

Louis and Harry slowly and quietly creep their way down the staircase, the noise of the TV getting louder, obviously playing The Dark Knight. As they enter the cellar, they find an empty room lacking Zayn and Liam.

"Where are they?" Harry whispers to Louis. Louis looks around the room for any clues to where they could be. Then Louis sees the hallway at the other end of the room.

"There, Liam's room. Maybe they saw us coming, and now they're trying to scare us," Louis points down the hallway to the last door on the left which happens to be closed.

So Louis and Harry tip-toe to the door, both standing on one side of it.

Louis puts one finger in front of his lips signaling to be quiet, "3... 2... 1!" Louis grabs the door knob and opens the door as he and Harry scream *boo*. But what they see on the other side of the door is not what they were expecting.

There on Liam's bed is Zayn. Zayn is laying his stomach facing toward the doorway where Louis and Harry stand. His black t-shirt is rolled up to his armpit exposing his smooth dark-skinned back. Lower down his body, his jeans and boxers are pulled down below knees. On top of him his Liam, whose shirt lies on the ground and whose pants and underwear are rolled down to his ankles. Liam's hard dick grinds into Zayn's ass, slipping in between and on top of Zayn's ass cheeks.

"Shit!" Liam shouts as he rolls onto the floor in shock of being caught. Louis grabs the door knob, pushes Harry out, and slams the door shut. Louis and Harry stand there for a moment frozen, not knowing how to react to such a situation that they had just seen. Harry turns to Louis with a *confused as fuck* face, which causes a huge grin to spread across Louis's.

Before they know it, laughter is exploding from their mouths, for how else do people react to seeing their best friends naked on top of each other in bed? After a minute their laughter subsides as an eerie quiet settles in between them and the door. Louis and Harry can hear shuffling and whispering from Liam's room but cannot make out what is going on the other side of the door.

Finally after what feels an eternity, there is a soft *click* and the door swings open by a few inches. Louis takes the initiative and pushes the door open the rest of the way. Zayn and Liam are now fully clothed. Zayn sits on the bed, his cheeks bright pink in embarrassment. Zayn attempts to push down his hair, but it is obviously messy from whatever sexual exploits he was doing with Liam. Liam stands by his dresser facing away from Louis and Harry.

"Hi..." Louis says cautiously as Harry and he step into the room.

"Didn't know you guys were coming over," Liam states still refusing to face towards the door.

"Thought we would surprise you," Harry responds quietly.

"We sure did that, didn't we?" Louis says poking Harry as a quick laugh escapes both of their mouths.

"So what did you see exactly?" Zayn asks very slowly.

"We saw skin, lots of skin. Um Zayn's lovely bum and something of Liam's that happened to be slipping into Zayn's bum," Louis answers.
"Whoa I wasn't in Zayn's ass," Liam barks back.

"Then what was it doing back there?" Louis asks.

"Like were you guys having sex?" Harry also inquires.

"No, no, no," Both Liam and Zayn respond.

"Then what were you doing?" Harry asks.

"Me and my cousin did this a few times... you pretend one person is the girl and you grind into the other one like you were humping a girl. You don't penetrate, you just hump..." Liam explains feeling very dumb and self-conscious as he explains, "Like it's not gay as long as you're thinking of girls when you do it. I just don't have a girlfriend right now and..."

Louis and Harry can see a hurt look on Zayn's face as Liam explains, but with so many things happening at once they will have to ask about that later.

"How did this start?" Louis asks looking more at Zayn than Liam.

"Uh, I don't know really. One night we were hanging off and I was really horny for some reason. I wanted to get off. While he was asleep, I went to the other room and pulled out my laptop thinking I'd jerk off. I didn't realize he woke up and I already had my cock in hand. Next thing I know, Zayn sits next to me, pulls his dick and starts jerking along with me. I was going to protest, but then I was like eh why not so we both jerked off and came right there. After that it kinda just became a thing we did together," Liam explains, acting very confident compared to just a few moments ago.

"Ah. That's cool. Don't feel weird about it. Lou taught me how to jerk off," Harry declares very casually.

"Harry!" Louis exclaims to the laughter of Zayn and Liam.

"What really?!!" Zayn asks, sounding very interested, “Now you gotta tell us."

“No!” Louis yells.

"What? Now they don't have to worry about us telling," Harry comments to Louis, "We have their secret and they have ours. Stability has been restored to our group. Plus now they know they're not the only ones."

"So Niall is the only one left out of this thing?" Liam asks those in the room.

"As usual," Harry chuckles.

"Well Harry, why don't we give these lovely people a chance to finish and we'll go watch the movie," Louis says pulling Harry out of the room by the arm.

"Oh my gawd," Liam says rolling his eyes. Luckily Liam and Zayn have to courtesy not to do with their friends in the other room. The boys have a date night like normal.

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A week later Louis and Harry are sitting in Harry's front room watching a pointless movie. The movie has no plot, getting most of its production value from girls wearing short skirts and guys walking around shirtless for no reason. Lots of sexual puns and innuendos, but Harry nor Louis could possibly point out the plot of this film even if they wanted too.
It is late enough in the night when Harry's mother and sister are asleep in their rooms. Both Harry and Louis are exhausted, but their minds are still restless. They keep hoping that at some point the movie will become so meaningless they will just fall asleep from the boredom, but it never comes.

All the lights in the room are off as the television provides the only light for their strained eyes. They share a thin blanket sitting only a few inches from each other. Louis holds the blanket up to his neck as Harry leaves his shirtless chest exposed.

"Really funny about Liam and Zayn, huh?" Harry says snapping Louis out of his television-focused trance.

"Yeah I guess," Louis responds scratching his eyes.

"So it's not that uncommon for guys to do that kind of stuff together," Harry hints at.

"I guess not. Is it weird that I wasn't that surprised they were doing that? Like I mean it was totally weird walking in on it. But knowing they do that, it kinda makes sense," Louis tells Harry.

"I know what you mean. It'd be like if you and I did that," Harry chuckles.

"I don't know," Louis answers.

"What do you mean?" Harry asks.

"Well our ages," Louis replies.

"We're only one grade apart like Liam and Zayn," Harry argues.

"I'm still two years older than you. I don't want to take advantage of you or anything," Louis explains in a sleepy tone.

"Louis, I'm not a baby. I'm a human being just like you. We're both in high school now, is it really that weird?" Harry asks.

Louis ponders it for a minute. Harry is right. Louis cannot keep seeing Harry as a child. If his and Harry's friendship is going to keep growing, he has to let Harry grow as well.

"It means a lot Louis, it really does, that you have this need to protect and shelter me. But I can do what I want. I can make my own decisions. I'm not that lost boy you helped get to class the first day of school. I'm like a man now," Harry demands.

"A man now?" Louis laughs but not wanting to sound cruel.

"Lou... you know what I mean," Harry says rolling his eyes, "Can you please trust in me that I can decide what I want and do not want to do?"


"So is it really a weird concept that two high school boys might masturbate together occasionally?" Harry asks again.

And again Harry had a point. Louis had read enough sex stories online. Guys do that together sometimes; Liam and Zayn a perfect example.

"Lou?" Harry prods.
"No it's not weird if two guys decided to do that," Louis admits.

"So applying that answer, it wouldn't be that crazy if you and I did?" Harry demands.

"Well..." Louis begins.

"Louis," Harry pushes.

*Why is Harry so needy about this* Louis wonders. "No, if you and I jerked off together it wouldn't be a bad thing. Probably a good thing," Louis says giving in.

"Thank fucking gawd," Harry declares, throwing the blanket off of him. In a swift move, he pulls his shorts and boxers half way down his thigh, grabs a hold of his erect cock, and begins pumping his member while watching at the sexual movie.

"I've had a boner for the last half hour. It was beginning to get painful," Harry explains jerking his dick away.

Louis sits there frozen in shock of what he is seeing. There next to him his best friend Harry, who once used to be a baby in Louis's eyes, is now manning up. Harry is not hairless anymore. Harry is actually kind of hairy. Dark pubes cover his groin with a small trail leading to his belly button. Harry's dick has grown since Louis last saw it. Like Louis has seen Harry naked multiple times, but Louis is actually admiring Harry's changing body: muscles are defining and his dick is now as long as Louis's, if not longer. Louis is still thicker, but he does not know for how much longer that will be at the rate Harry is maturing. And how could Louis not get a boner watching this pretty boy jerk his cock right beside him.

"Are you gonna join in or just watch the whole time?" Harry asks not breaking eye contact from the scene on the screen, though Harry’s eyes have a natural inclination to drift over to Louis in anticipation.

*Fuck it* Louis thinks as he copies Harry's motions of throwing off the blanket and pulling his pants halfway down his legs. Louis grabs his cock and begins to pull it. Louis tries to focus on the screen, but most the scenes includes girls, which he is quickly losing interest in. His eyes begin to divert to Harry, which Louis feels guilty about. But come on, it is either watch some occasional boob action or watch the live show next to him. Pretty obvious what the choice would be.

Harry recognizes where Louis's attention lies, and a smirk finds its place among Harry's face. Harry finds it very hot that someone was getting off to the image of him as his self-confidence explodes in that moment. Louis can sense Harry’s observation, but figures if Harry is not objecting to it then it must not be a horrible thing. Harry then notices how attractive (?) Louis looks in that moment. Sure, Harry is straight, but it is wrong for him to spot how striking a person can look, even if the person is a male? Harry cannot help but admire how dark and sun-kissed Louis’s skin looks compared to his own; the way Louis’s lightly bit his lower lip in concentration; the natural movement in which Louis rocked his hips as his hands rode up and down his length.

It is quick and fast as they both erupt within a minute, cum shooting all over their stomachs. They both breathe heavy as Louis and Harry recover from their orgasms. Harry wipes a thin layer of sweat from his forehead, accidentally flicking some cum off his hand at Louis in the process.

"Harry really?!" Louis squeals sarcastically as he attempts to throw his own cum at Harry, but Louis's cum appear stuck to his hand as none hits Harry. Harry laughs at Louis's ridiculous failed attempt.
"Whoa Louis," Harry says as his laughter dies down, "I can't lie. That was very hot."

"Harry can I be honest with you?" Louis asks, though he would probably tell Harry even if he said not too.

"Yeah Lou?" Harry answers, though after jerking off together what is really holding them back?

"Even after all the sexual activity I had with Eleanor," Louis answers still breathing in deep breathes, "The best orgasm I've ever had was when I taught you to jerk off. Well, until now."

"I know," Harry responds, "We definitely gotta do this again."

"Agreed," Louis replies admiring the white, sticky mess they made all over each other.

And that is how Louis and Harry became jerk off buddies.

Chapter End Notes

I pretty much got the next chapter ready:) more smut when you're ready for it.
Chapter 7 Part 1: No Control

Chapter Summary

Sexual intimacy increases between Louis and Harry as lines blur due to their "joint activities." Louis calms Harry down before the first day of the new school year.

Chapter Notes

"No Control" from the new album is like my favorite song right now, and I think it applies to Louis and Harry during this chapter as they start doing ... whatever you want to call it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Part 1

With hormones surging and raging, Louis and Harry's masturbation situation becomes a very frequent and usual occurrence. It feels so natural and easy between them since they are already best friends and they do not hide things from one another. The sexual intimacy adds another lay of closeness to them, something they share with no one else. There is a line between what they can and cannot do with one another, but the line has not been defined. It is a more of a learn-as-they-go thing.

It is a hot summer night at Louis's house about two or three weeks after their initial jerk off together. Louis closes the laptop that lies in between them, turning off the porn as he places the laptop on the floor. Louis and Harry scoot a little closer together in the laptop’s absence; the hairs on their legs brushing against each other. Both are in only underwear that is lowered down to their mid-thigh. Their cocks are still semi-hard with cum pooled on their stomach.

"Man, I really wish your mother would keep at A/C on at night. I know it’s cooler than the afternoon, but it's not cool," Harry complains to Louis.

"Gotta save money somehow with all these childrens here! It was your idea to come to my room on the top floor in the first place," Louis charges lightly.

"Well excuse me if I didn't want your sisters to walk in on this in the front room of your basement," Harry says referencing their sticky situation.

"Fine, fine, I see your logic," Louis laughs, "What did you think of that porno? I told you you'd love it."

"You know me too well," Harry chuckles. There has been something on Harry mind for the past few weeks since this began, while they are on the topic of watching he might as well get on with it, "You didn't seem to like it that much."

"Oh I did," Louis reaffirms him.
"You didn't seem to be watching it," Harry says starting to get more direct.

"Uh well I've already seen it before so," Louis trails off.

"I kind of noticed you were watching me…” Harry says softly, trying not to scare Louis.

"No! No I wasn't!" Louis defends sharply, leaning up fast and pulling his underwear up to his waist.

"Louis, Louis, I'm not mad. I'm just asking a question," Harry says leaning up and placing his hand on Louis shoulder.

"I just don't want you to think I want you or anything…” Louis pleads with his insecurities obviously showing, "I don't want you to think differently of me just because of what gender I happen to like."

"I don't think that Louis," Harry tells Louis, "You're gay... or bi, or whatever. If there is a naked guy next to you, you're going to look. Just like I would if a naked girl was next to me. So I'm not going to blame you for having eyes. If we are being completely honest here, it's a major self-confidence boost knowing you're getting off to me. Like it kind of turns me on to be frank. I have no problem doing this with you, just as long as you stay honest with me. If feelings ever start to pop up, you need to tell me, like how we tell everything."

"Well aren't you cocky," Louis says lightly shoving Harry, "and you think you're my type?"

"I'm everybody's type, love," Harry jokes, "Promise me, you will tell me if."

"Promise," Louis confirms.

"I just do not want to lead you on, or anything, by doing this,” Harry explains, “but if this, is just what it is…”

““It is what it is,” Louis confirms with a smile.

““Well if you are primarily getting off to me, can I choose the porn at some point?” Harry requests.

““You don’t like what I got to offer?” Louis jokes.

““Well lesbian porn is quite hot,” Harry admits.

“Lesbian porn?” Louis checks.

““Yes, is there an objection?” Harry asks.

““That… that really turns me on for some reason,” Louis reveals.

“Lesbian porn?” Harry questions.

““No… the idea of getting off to you while you watch lesbian porn,” Louis explains as his dick twitches.

““You have very weird turn-ons,” Harry chuckles, “But I’m not going to question it.”

““You- you wanna watch it right now?” Louis says picking up his laptop from the floor as Harry notices Louis’s growing erection. And the fact Louis is turned on further turns on Harry.

““Eh, why not,” Harry smiles as his dick swells and Louis hands him the laptop.
The summer winds on and high school approaches for all of the group. Louis and Niall prepare for soccer once again. Harry sings. Zayn paints. Liam begins boxing, as long as he is extra careful about not damaging his ankle. As the summer draws to a close, Harry's anxiety increases. Louis can see it in Harry's eyes. Louis tries to reassure him that high school is not as scary as the movies make it appear, but to no avail does Harry's worry retreat.

It is finally the day before school starts for the new year, and Louis has not seen Harry all day. Harry kept on making excuses about being busy and preparing, though Louis hopes on giving Harry a little pep talk before high school life commences.

Finally after ten o’clock at night, Louis receives a text from Harry: *I need you, come through my window.*

Louis tells Jay that he is going to tell Harry good night and that he will be back soon. He grabs his bike and rides over to Harry's house with the sun and all its light already gone from the sky. Louis arrives at Harry's home already wearing his pajamas, sets his bike on the side of the house, and then walks to the backyard where Harry's window is located. Harry opens up his window and Louis crawls in.

"Shhh, could you be any louder?" Harry whispers while pulling Louis inside.

"Why couldn't I come in the front door?" Louis requests.

"Mum told me to go to bed, so I'd be rested for tomorrow. But can't sleep. You fix it?" Harry asks innocently.

"I'll do all I can babe," Louis answers as Harry tugs him to the bed.

Louis lies down first and Harry crawls all over Louis, nearly lying dead weight on top of him. They lie there in silence: Louis's arms wrap around Harry while Louis continually blows Harry's curls out of his face.

"I don't know what I'm so frightened of," Harry admits.

"I'm not going to say you shouldn't be worried at all," Louis responds, "but high school isn't as bad as the media acts like it is. I actually prefer it to middle school. As long as you have a good group of friends you will be more than fine, and you do."

"I do?" Harry asks.

"You do," Louis answers, "High school is good, and you get to reinvent yourself. Whatever you didn't like about yourself in middle school you can leave behind."

"I already did that when I moved here," Harry says.

"So you're happy just the way you are?" Louis inquires.

"I believe so," Harry responds.

"Then don't change Haz," Lou says petting Harry's hair, "Don't ever change. You can be whatever you want to be. If I could keep you as my little Hazza forever, I would."

"Freeze us in time?" Harry asks.
"Exactly," Louis replies, "feeling any better?"

"I do, because you're here," Harry answers, "Don't know how I'll feel without you tomorrow."

"How about this," Louis ponders, "I'll walk you to every class, as long as you need me too?"

"Lou, I'm flattered, but I don't to make you late to class or anything," Harry hums.

"I know my way around the school Haz," Louis answers, "I won't be late. Even if I am, it's just the first day. I think you're worth a tardy."

Harry smiles and buries his face back into Louis's chest, but Louis can still feel Harry's heart pounding.

"Harry..." Louis says placing a hand near Harry's chest.

"It's not you, it's me. You're doing the best as a friend. It's my stress and anxiety, not a reflection on your effort. You couldn't have worded things better. I do feel less anxious, I promise," Harry swears while taking in deep breaths.

Louis wonders what else he can do. He cannot head home with Harry still having a very mild panic attack. He ponders on what he can do to distract his friend, till an idea pops in his head: a very good but dirty idea.

"You trust me?" Louis whispers.

"Of course, why do you even need to ask?" Harry answers.

"Okay, I got an idea, close your eyes," Louis demands as he pushes Harry off of him. He then moves Harry to the middle of the bed and has him lie on his back.

"What's going on?" Harry asks nervously.

"Keep your eyes shut, and trust me, kay?" Louis requests.

Harry nods and closes his eyes once again. Louis looks around the room and sees a bottle of lotion on Harry's dresser. He grabs the bottle and trots back over to Harry's bed. Louis sits beside Harry and lays the bottle next to Harry's waist.

Slowly, Louis rests his hands on Harry's chest, Louis's fingers stretching across Harry's pectoral muscles.

"Whoa whatcha doing there?" Harry chuckles uncertainly.

"Shhh..." Louis lays a single finger on Harry's lips signaling to end any and all sounds. Louis swears that Harry lightly kissed his finger once being placed upon his lips, but before he can dwell on it Louis returns his hands to Harry's chest.

Louis begins to lightly massage Harry, but over time his movements transition to running his hands up and down Harry's torso. Louis rolls Harry's shirt up to his armpits. Now on Harry's bear skin, Louis's finger tips drag down Harry's chest and then back up, sending sparks shooting through his body. Every time Louis's hands travel down Harry's upper body, they approach closer and closer to Harry's waist line, and then at the last second retreat from touching the family jewels. After a painstakingly long tease, Louis's fingers begin venturing into Harry's pants.

Louis brushes against Harry's pubes with an obvious boner growing in Harry's trousers. A smirk
forms up Louis's face knowing it is his actions that are turning Harry on. Louis is a tease, running his hands back up Harry's abdomen and then back down into Harry's crotch while not staying anywhere for long.

Harry's breathing has changed. It is still deep, but a lot slower than previously. Finally, as Louis runs his hands down Harry one last time, Harry instinctively thrusts into Louis's hand. *Harry is ready.*

Pulling down Harry's pants but not his underwear, Louis palms Harry's boner. Harry releases soft whimpers from his mouth as his hips continue to exhort little thrusts.

"Lou..." Harry pleads with his puppy-dog eyes. Harry's erection looks so large in his boxer brief, twitching every time Louis runs his hand over it. Louis believes the teasing has gone on long enough.

Louis grabs the waist band of his underwear and pulls it down. Harry automatically raises his butt off of the bed to assist Louis in his action. Actually seeing it makes Louis a little uneasy, knowing what he is about to do. Sure he touched Harry when he taught him to masturbate, but this was different. That time it was instructional; this time it is to give Harry pleasure.

But when Louis looks up to Harry's face, all he can see is the look of *need* in Harry's eyes. All apprehension leave Louis. His fingertips run down Harry's pink cock and it throbs once again, smacking itself into Louis's grip.

"Wow you feel huge," Louis compliments, tightly gripping Harry’s cock.

"Not as big as yours," Harry lightly moans.

Louis focuses his attention back on Harry's cock. Now with the lotion, he can easily run his hand up and down Harry's whole length. A deep moan escapes Harry's lips, causing Louis redouble his effort in speed and tightness.

"Fuck..." Harry groans throwing his head back.

"Keep it down buddy," Louis says briefly slowing down his speed, "Don't want your mum to hear."

Harry nods his head with his eyes shut and head still hanging back. Louis traces the veins on Harry's member as the head grows redder. As Louis pumps his hand, Harry's hips become more active. His thrusts increase in frequency and force. At first Louis increases his speed to try to keep with Harry's quickness, but this would often lead to them going in opposite directions. Finally, Louis gets the hint: he tightens his grip while keeping his hand still. Harry has complete control as his thrusts determine how much pleasure he receives.

*Shit,* this is really turning Louis on. A thin layer of forces Harry's curls to stick to his forehead. Harry look upon Louis's hand with complete desire, watching his dick disappear and reappear with every thrust.
"Oh yeah Harry, fuck my hand," Louis encourages him.

"Uh... Louis, I..." Harry tries to moan quietly.

"It's okay, don't worry about the mess. Just cum," Louis orders.

"I will," Harry breathes out as his thrust become less frequent but a lot more powerful. Louis watches Harry's ball retract closer to his body. His dick throbs harder and in longer time increments. Louis's pants feel so tight.

"I'm gonna-" Harry squeaks out as he bucks his hips. Looks takes this movement as a sign to begin pumping again. Harry's hips stop, and within a few strokes by Louis's hands, Harry erupts in orgasm.

"Oh fuck!" Harry moans as cum continues to squirt out of him. Louis slows the speed of his hand as he slowly milks out the last of Harry's cum from his dick. Harry's breathes are fast and deep as he recovers from his orgasm, "Holy shit that was amazing."

"Good that was the point," Louis says with a pleased smirk on his face. He releases Harry's dick and wipes the cum and lotion residue on Harry's blanket. He walks over Harry's laundry basket and grabs Harry a dirty shirt to clean up with.

"You feeling tired?" Louis asks as he hands Harry the shirt.

"Yes very much," Harry says wiping the cum away, "Should I give you one?"

"You don't owe me anything," Louis smiles, "Plus you need to get to sleep. You gotta big day tomorrow!"

"I guess I do," Harry yawns. Louis walks over to Harry's window and begins to crawl out of it.

"Sweet dreams Harry," Louis gleams up to Harry for the last time.

"I'll see you tomorrow Louis," Harry stands in front of the window, "Love you."

"Love you too buddy," Louis concludes he hops outside. Harry shuts the window and Louis walks around to the front yard. He grabs his bike and walks over with it to the side walk.

"Thanks for coming to check on my Harry sweetie!" A voice calls out surprising Louis. Louis turns back towards Harry's house to see Anne sitting on the front porch with a glass of wine, "I could tell he was really stressing. I'll drop him off at your house in the morning so he can walk with you. What time do you leave in the morning?"

"Uh, around 7:30," Louis answers nervously.

"Okay Louis. Will you text me when you get home so I know you made it there safe?" Anne requests.

"Will do, have a good night!" Louis calls hopping on his bike.

"You too Louis, bike safe," Anne commands as Louis disappears into the darkness.

Louis pulls out his phone to text Anne like she asked as he walks into his room. As he types the message, he looks up into his mirror and see a glob of lotion and cum sticking to the ends his hair near his right ear. Oh gawd Louis thinks I hope Anne didn't notice her son's cum in my hair.

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Harry and Liam quickly adjust to the high school lifestyle. Sure Louis walks Harry to every class the first couple days, but Harry soon redevelops his independence. It helps that the group of five has the same lunch period together, reminding everyone of their middle school days.

Louis and Niall start back on soccer, this time immediately joining the varsity team. Harry and Niall continue with choir. Niall has to remind Harry that he is starting all over again; Harry is no longer top dog. Something Niall had a hard time adjusting to his freshman year. Unlike Niall who splits his time between singing and soccer, Harry focuses all of his attention and efforts on choir, which leads to him accelerating up the choir hierarchy faster than Niall's first year. Zayn remains in charge of stage production. Liam hangs around with Zayn not really knowing what to do without sports as he tries to redesign his image.

Louis continues to go to every audition and choir show Harry has, and Harry attends every soccer game and theatre show Louis has. With Louis being a varsity soccer player and Harry being the rising star in choir, they became a version of a power couple. Students would joke that Louis and Harry are the Bro-TP of the school, and Louis and Harry wear the title with pride. If someone saw Harry, it is nearly guaranteed that Louis was close by. Occasionally students would tease them for being gay, but they would brush it off. Harry is such a flirt. He likes hitting on any pretty girl just for the heck of it. But it is quite obvious Harry playfully applies the same tactics to Louis. Harry always excuses his behavior because all best friends are a bit gay with each other, but a bit is turning into a lot.

"I finally found my calling!" Liam exclaims as he arrives at the lunch table he shares with Louis, Niall, Zayn, Harry, and a pretty, blonde-haired girl named Karlie that Niall is dating. Zayn lifts his feet off the chair next to him that he was saving for Liam. Liam sits down in the chair and Zayn sets his feet back onto Liam's lap.

"Your calling?" Karlie asks.

"I may not be able to play sports, but I can report on them! I was talking to Eleanor, and she mentioned they could use another sports reporter during fall and spring due to the high number of athletic activities taking place. Like I'm never going to have front-page articles, but it's something! It's a start," Liam explains with the biggest smile on his face, the largest smile since he broke his ankle.

"So proud of you buddy!" Zayn says leaning up to tightly grip Liam's shoulder, giving him a squeeze, then let's go and sits back in his seat. Liam smiles in response.

"Do a story on me! That's some front-page material!" Niall exclaims.

"Unless you're on the C-team, I doubt I'll get that pleasant experience," Liam responds.

As autumn progresses, the soccer team rises up the rankings. While not being undefeated, they are still performing as one of the best in the league. Louis and Niall are addicted to the rush of winning and bring glory to their names and the school's. As the end of the season approaches, the last game of the regular season is to be held at the high school, giving the team the home field advantage.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter 7 Part 2 will be posted by the end of the week:) which includes one of my favorite sexual scenes of the series.
Chapter 7 Part 2: No Control

Chapter Summary

Harry "congratulates" Louis after scoring the winning point in the final game. As Louis grows restless with his current living conditions, Harry definitely pushes beyond the boundaries in their physical relationship with a romantic act.

Chapter Notes

I had lots of fun writing this, well writing smutty material is always fun:) Hope you all enjoy it as well. Any thoughts or concerns let me know.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 2

The school hosts the last game of the regular season. This game will determine if they make it to the championship. Louis is nervous as hell, but he is also equally confident in himself and the team. Harry has been giving him a week long pep talk, holding Louis at night and whispering sweet nothings into his ear. Louis would be a mess without Harry this weeks and he knows it.

Louis walks out on the field as the crowd shouts seeing the players. The Sun approaches the horizon as streaks of pink shoot over the sky. Liam takes photos of the team from the side of the field. Louis looks up at the crowd to see Harry and Zayn holding a large sign with Louis and Niall's face on it. Louis's family and Anne sits next to them to give support to Louis and Niall. They scream and jump when they notice Louis looking at them. Louis grabs Niall's shoulder, whom is walking in front of him, to give attention to Harry and Zayn. Niall gives a big wave and a large smile with a blush to the two in the bleachers. Louis and Niall love having their own personal cheerleaders.

But in Niall’s opinion, they do not compare to the actual cheerleaders, one of which happens to be his girlfriend Karlie. She gives him a playful squeeze on the bum as the team trots on to the field, which causes him to lightly squeal and jump when he runs by.

The opposing team is just as skillful, if not better than the home team. Niall plays right forward and Louis play center midfielder. The Sun goes down but the heat is still on. The teams are constantly running up and down the field. No one has been able to score a point and everyone is already exhausted. Both teams are praying there will not an overtime.

The opposing team charges down the field. Louis pulls back towards "half point line" thinking if they all swarmed towards the ball it may drain their already empty energy. But out of nowhere, a defender steals the ball away from the opposing teammate and kicks it in Louis's direction. Louis nearly freezes until his couch yells Run! Louis turns the ball around and sprints down the field, traveling around the shocked defenders. The crowd is going wild as two defenders begin to come up on Louis. But Louis runs a little faster, the second he hits the goalie box he kicks it. The goalie jumps up to grab the ball, but it slips through his fingers and the ball hits the net.
If Louis thought the crowd was loud before, it does not compare to now. The entire team runs up to Louis and hoists him up in the air, chanting his name with the crowd soon repeating after. Five minutes remain in the game after the crowd and team settle down. The opposing team puts in extra effort now that it appears like there would not be an overtime, but to no avail the score does not change. Louis had scored the winning shot. They are going to the championship.

The scene is jubilant after the game, everyone wanting to congratulate Louis for the win. It is overwhelming for Louis. Sure he had received praise for doing well in drama performances, but there is a different level of pride due to the team aspect. During a brief lull, Liam finds his way to Louis.

"Louis that was wicked!" Liam yells giving Louis a bro-hug.

"Couldn't have it without the team!" Louis responds honestly.

"No this your night Louis, bask in it," Liam reassures him, "Can I ask you a favor?"

"Anything, Liam," Louis says loudly over the talking of everyone around him.

"The main sports reporter got sick this afternoon and couldn't make it to the game. With such an amazing show, I cannot let it go to waste. Could I interview you tonight please? If I can get this done, this will be really putting my name out there. And help you of course!" Liam asks.

"Sure buddy. Let me just finish talking to a few people first. You want meet by those benches near the main gate? It should be quieter there," Louis offers.

"Yes of course! I'll meet you there, thank you so much Louis!" Liam says trotting off to the table to prepare for the interview.

After a few more congratulations, Louis finds himself with his family, Anne, and Zayn.

"Oh darling I'm so proud of you!" Jay says giving a firm hug to Louis, "I'm the mom of the boy who won the game! I made you!"

"Oi Mum we're in public," He jokes hugging her back.

"Well your second mom says the same thing," Anne now says hugging Louis, "besides for the making you part."

"Where's Harry?" Louis asks looking around for his other half.

"He went looking for you about fifteen minutes ago," Anne says, "He said you were coming over to our place tonight."

"I think it's just assumed at this point," Louis chuckles.

"Well hurry up and find Harry. I got a date later tonight I need to get ready for," Anne says cheerfully.

"Oh I already promised I'd do an interview after this..." Louis admits.

"How long should it take?" Anne asks.

"I have no idea, but I don't want to make you late," Louis says.

"I'd offer to drive, but I really need to get the girls into bed," Jay admits.
"You know, don't worry about it. Harry and I will just walk to my place after my interview. It's closer and easier," Louis says.

"I don't want to make you walk after your big game!" Anne says worryingly.

"I'll be just fine, if all else fails Harry can carry me," Louis responds with a big smile.

"Thanks for understanding. Have a good night Louis, keep my Harry safe, and again good job," Anne says saying goodbye. Jay says nearly the same thing, then leaves while guiding the girls back to their van in the parking lot.

"Shit Lou, didn't know you had it in ya," Zayn says giving him a hug.

"Don't seem so surprised!" Louis laughs.

"Man, you reek!" Zayn exclaims, "Don't touch or stand in a 10 foot radius of anyone till you shower."

Louis lifts up his armpit to take a whiff, and if he had any contents in his stomach at the time he probably would have hurled, "That's just the smell of glory, my friend."

"If that's what you kids call it these days. But the game was amazing. I hate sports but that was remarkable. And if I say something in sports is remarkable, that's telling you something" Zayn says, "I gotta go Lou, my parents are out in the parking lot waiting for me. See you tomorrow or something?"

"Totally, thanks again for coming," Louis says affectionately squeezing Zayn's arm.

"Wouldn't miss it for the world. Don't keep Liam waiting too long!" Zayn says as he leaves the field.

Louis does a quick search for Harry but still does not spot him. He will have to find him after the interview. He finds Liam sitting beside a table with a recorder, pen, and blank paper lying out. This interview goes really well. It is easy to be open and for coming with a friend. The interview takes nearly half an hour till Liam realizes he has way too much material to go through.

"This is all really good, but I’d really like to get some sleep tonight," Liam jokes as he begins to gather up his supplies.

"Did you get all you need?" Louis asks.

"Oh yes, probably way more than I need actually," Liam states with a smile, "Louis thank you so much. Like fuck, this could be my big break."

"No problem Liam, it was my pleasure," Louis says standing up, "Let me know when you guys print so I can get your autograph. Someday when you’re a world-famous journalist, I’ll be able to say the Great Liam Payne’s first story was about me."

"Whoa there Louis, baby steps; It’s more likely you’ll be the world-renowned football player” Liam laughs, “Better hurry up for Harry!"

Louis quickly turns around in response expecting to see Harry, “Did you see him where is he at?”

“During the interview he waved at me then walked off. He’s around. Well I’m going to head home to work on this,” Liam says as he disappears walking down the road.

The lights turn off around the field as Louis trots to the locker room. By the time he arrives there, it is
nearly an hour after the game. The locker room has emptied out except for a couple teammates whom leave as Louis enters. Louis strips off his shirt as he walks over to his gym locker. He pulls out his phone and sees he has a message from Harry.

“Louis!” the couch shouts, causing Louis to toss his phone in the air by surprise. He fumbles with it a couple times before he has it firmly in his hands. He turns around to face the couch.

“That’s why you’re not our goalie,” the coach laughs, “Get your stuff, we gotta go.”

“Oh, I was going to take a shower real quick. I smell like death,” Louis says putting his phone back in the locker.

“Can’t you do it at home?” The coach asks, “Tonight is my anniversary with the Mrs. and I’m already late.”

“If you don’t believe me, take a whiff,” Louis says lifting up his armpit to the coach.

“I'll take your word for it,” the coach chuckles. He ponders for a moment then opens his mouth, “You’re a good kid… I could leave you the key and you could slip it under my classroom door. I don’t want to keep her waiting any longer.”

“Fine by me. I’ll only be here for 15 minutes anyway. Not like I’m going to throw a party in the boys’ locker room,” Louis says sarcastically.

“If anything is damaged in here Monday morning, you’re going to wish you didn’t have legs after the drills I’ll put you through,” The coach threatens firmly.

“I believe you. Scout’s honor. I’ll be out without a scratch,” Louis says raising his right hand up as if he was swearing an oath.

“You’re something else Tomlinson,” The coach laughs as he pulls the key off his key ring, “Here. Get out of here as soon as you can. Lock it, turn the lights off, and put in under my door. No one knows about this.”

“Got it,” Louis says taking the key.

“You did really well tonight,” the coach says grabbing his jacket and briefcase, “You should be proud, I’m proud. College scouts will be looking for kickers like that real soon.”

Louis hears the door shut, and he turns back to his locker. He pulls out a rag and wipes off the sweat from his face, neck, chest and armpits. Pulling out his phone, Louis texts Harry: *I'm going to take a quick shower, wait outside the locker room door?*

Louis presses send and places his phone back in his locker, but then he hears a soft ping echo throughout the locker room. He freezes in place because he realizes he is alone in the school. Or at least he should be. He peeks around the corners of the room.

"Hello?" He asks to the room, not really knowing what he would do if someone would have answered him back. Louis peers at the lockers, thinking maybe someone left his phone in the room by mistake. Another ping rings, but Louis could tell it came from the toilets this time.

Fear spreading through his body, Louis grabs a wooden baseball bat off the floor that must have been left out from a previous gym class. He can see only one of the bathroom stalls is closed but sees no feet below it. With his arm stretched out, he creeps closer to the door now only inches away.
"The text came from inside the school!" Harry exclaims in an eerie voice. He hops off the toilet and opens up the stall down, nearly smacking his best friend with the door as Louis hops backwards.

"Holy fuck Harry!" Louis breaths for the first time in a minute, "What the hell were you doing?"

"Scaring the fuck out of you it seems," Harry screeches like hyena laughing.

"I fucking hate you," Louis swears while turning away from Harry defiantly.

"Hey bestie, get back here," Harry orders as he pulls his best friend into his embrace from the behind. Harry rests his forehead against the back of Louis's neck, "I'm sorry. I was just so hyped from the game, got a little too excited. I'm not a murderer, I promise."

"Thank you bestie, for not killing me," Louis accepts leaning back into Harry. Louis had to keep up this jockey, masculine persona around everyone else for the win. But with Harry, Louis gets to take a deep breath and unwind. He does not have to act at all. Nothing feels safer than Harry's arms.

"That kick was the fucking shit," Harry whispers into Louis's ear.

"I can't believe that happened. I'm scared I'm going to wake up any moment and this all just be a dream," Louis admits.

"I'll pinch you to prove it real," Harry replies as he gives a sharp pinch to Louis's bum, which causes Louis to jump and a squeal escapes his lips. Louis turns around to smack Harry in the sac for retaliation, but Harry grabs Louis's wrists. He pulls Louis in tight, lightly restraining Louis by the wrist.

"I think you deserve a little something for that score," Harry hints darkly to Louis. The hairs upon Louis's neck stand up in response, "You're still all worked up from your game, and I kinda am too."

Harry slowly pushes on Louis, forcing Louis to walk backward across the room. His hot breathe spreads across Louis's neck, "You almost looked as good as the cheerleaders... Almost..."

"Harry, we're in locker room..." Louis whines in defense.

"Oh you don't want it?" Harry hisses. His lips only an inch from Louis's ear.

"I... uh..." Louis debates, feeling Harry's hardening cock against his thigh.

"How about after this?" Harry says as his hands move from Louis's wrists to Louis's hips. Louis then feels his back smack into his locker. In between light stings of pain on the backside of his head, Louis sense a wet warmness running down his neck: Harry's tongue.

Louis and Harry never kissed each other or any activity like that. It was just an unspoken rule of something they never tried. But Harry's mouth is biting Louis's neck, and it is pushing Louis over the edge.

"I remember you telling me how if Eleanor ever wanted it, all she had to do was suck love bites into your neck and you were hers. I thought I might as well see what all the fuss was about," Harry growls roughly with his mouth hovering above Louis's neck. Before Louis can respond, Harry returns to gnawing at Louis's jawline. Louis releases a low moan letting Harry know he is doing something right.

Fuck, Louis is tired, but Harry is overriding his sensory system. Sparks are flying through Louis's body due to the movements of Harry's tongue. Louis's dick quickly grows to full length as whimpers
continue to escape his lips.

"Wow that quick Lou? Didn't believe you to be that easy," Harry scoffs in between sloppy kisses along Louis's neck.

"No... I..." Louis tries to defend himself, but he could not. Harry is right; Harry found Louis's on switch. Harry releases his grasp upon Louis's hips and unzips his own pants, letting them fall to his knees. His boner protrudes outward in his boxers, twitching when Louis looks down upon it. Taken by surprise, Harry grabs Louis's wrists again, bringing them above Louis's head, and pins them against the locker. This causes Harry to bring his body against Louis's to retain balance. As their dicks collide, both of them release a sigh of sexual relief. Harry begins thrusting his cock into Louis's groin.

"Oh fuck," Louis moans as he also moves his hips along with Harry.

"You like that babe?" Harry asks devilishly. Lips greet Louis's neck once again.

"Harry, Harry, Harry," Louis rambles. Harry turns Louis into pudding; he is melting. One of Louis's legs wraps around Harry trying to find support.

"Getting weak in the knees?" Harry asks.

"Shut up," Louis sighs desperately. Harry grabs Louis's thighs and folds his legs around Harry's waist. Harry's dick digs itself in Louis's groin, causing more moans and swearing. The dry humping becomes less dry as precum leaks through through underwear. Louis's arms wrap tight around Harry, putting all his weight and friction onto Harry. Harry's ass flexes and clenches with every thrust into Louis.

"Oh fuck, Haz, I'm close," Louis says trying to sound calm, but his lips expel it frantically.

"Only by a little dry humping? My, my Louis," Harry whispers into Louis's ear, then dropping Louis down on the floor, "Nope, not yet."

"What?" A desperate whine escapes Louis's lips. He wants more. He needs more.

"Follow me," Harry commands turning from Louis as he peels his shirt off. He walks in the direction of the showers while he throws his pants and underwear in the direction of Louis. Louis gawks at the naked Harry walking across the locker room so confidently, his erect cock swinging with every step he takes. The sound of the shower turning on brings Louis out of his trance. He quickly follows after Harry while stripping off the remainder of his own clothes.

Steam fills the room as Louis finds Harry standing under a shower head, water running down his body, but Louis can only focus on the water dripping off his cock. Louis strolls to Harry and joins him under the hot water. They stand in front of one another with their dicks lightly touching each other while water rolls off their chest. Harry's fingers begin to rub circles Louis's chest as a comfortable smile spreads across Louis's face. Louis begins to trace Harry's developing muscles.

"Been working out Styles?" Louis asks.

"I gotta do something while you're at soccer practice," Harry giggles.

"Not waiting for me on hand and foot?" Louis requests mischievously.

"Wouldn't you like that?" Harry says taking a tug on Louis's dick. A deep groan escapes Louis's mouth as Harry places their cocks on top of each other and wraps his hand around both of them.
"You're full of surprises tonight," Louis groans.

"Mhm, make us cum," Harry orders.

"What?" Louis demands.


Louis grabs onto to Harry's hips for support and thrusts in Harry's hand. Harry eventually adds his other hand after realizing his one hand could not contain both of their cocks with Louis's motions. Louis's dick slides up and down Harry's as he picks up speed. His thrusts are sloppy but powerful.

"Oh fuck Louis," Harry whines softly. This gives Louis to motivation to move faster as he feels his dick slide in and out of the grasp of Harry's hand. The occasional throb from Harry's member makes Louis throb in response. Louis is so turned on right now, he does not think he has ever been hornier in his life.

"Harry I hope you're close. I can't last much longer," Louis whimpers. Harry's hands begin to move across their cocks. In response to Louis's statement, Harry bites down firmly on Louis's neck.

This sends Louis over the edge. His cum squirts hot juice all over Harry's cock and groin. A squeal leaps out of Louis's mouth as Harry follows in suit. His cum shoots over Louis's balls and legs as his head falls on to Louis's chest. Harry milks the last out of their cocks.

"Good things we're already in the showers. Easy clean up," Harry chuckles into Louis's chest. Louis's arms wrap around and Harry steps closer so his entire body weight is on Louis.

"Where did this come from Harry?" Louis asks.

"I dunno. Just thought you deserved it; I wanted it. You know," Harry replies.

"I'll have to score winning shots more often then," Louis jokes.

"Yeah you will," Harry hums.

While Louis does not score another winning shot for the year, but that does not decrease the number of sexual encounters between Louis and Harry.

The soccer team makes it through the first round of the playoffs, but not past the second. The team is let down by the loss, but it is their first time going to it ever thanks to Louis.

The rest of the school year goes uneventfully smooth. Niall and Karlie continue to date becoming more and more serious. Niall is so content, all the boys can see it. For someone who previously would date a lot, the fact he is so monogamous for such a long time comes as a surprise, but they guess he just needed to wait for the right person.

Liam dates girls off and on. Much to the dismay of Zayn, who is doing his best to keep a strong face, but Louis can see the hurt look in Zayn's eyes when over and over again Liam would choose someone else over him. Liam always comes back though, whenever it does not work out, Zayn is there waiting for him. Louis wants to tell Zayn that Liam is not worth all the energy Zayn gives to him, that he deserves someone who will choose him first. But whenever Liam comes back, Zayn cannot help himself. The overwhelming joy of Liam, his missing puzzle piece, overrides Zayn's logic and, in Louis's opinion, Zayn's self-respect.
Louis and Harry do not date though. Not that they both do not have offers, because they both get asked out on dates and occasionally they do go, but at the end of the night the only person they want to go home with is each other. While they refuse to admit it to themselves and each other, they have all the benefits of a relationship while having none of the drawbacks. They get to have sexual passion, a comfortable partner who will always be there, but still being able to flirt and casually date without the boundaries of monogamy.

But Louis is getting restless: not of Harry or his friends, but of life and its scenery. Louis has wanted to get out of his town since middle school, but now this urge is beginning to consume him. He has never been outside the country, let alone his region of the nation. Niall was from Ireland and still went back there for vacations, and Zayn had visited Pakistan a few times with his family. Trying to change his reality, he becomes obsessed with foreign films. While Harry and Zayn are not against foreign films, that is all Louis will let them watch and they are becoming very tired of it.

That is when Louis begins to look for ways to leave. Not necessarily permanently, but he needs to go somewhere, anywhere. When discussing the issue with Karlie, she mentions how her church takes a mission trip to Nicaragua for volunteer every summer. After six weeks of volunteering in the country, the mission travels through some of the other Central American countries for enjoyment. This immediately peaks Louis's interest, as he studies the trip and the countries it includes.

After many attempts to convince his mother to let him go, she allows it. He begs Karlie to go with him so he knows someone there and she says yes. Liam, thinking he would take some amazing pictures and perhaps a front page story for the school paper if he went, decides to join them as well.

Louis attempts to get the rest of the group to join them, but it does not work out for the rest. Niall's family was planning a trip to Ireland for a couple during the summer so he could not go. Harry's mother will not let him, fearing the safety of her baby boy. Zayn just flat does not want to go. Zayn may give a lot to Louis, but he does not want to give up his summer.

The date to leave is in the early morning of June 1\textsuperscript{st}. Too much of Harry's dislike, May 31st comes way too quickly. Jay agrees to drive Louis, Karlie, and Liam to the airport in the morning, so the five boys stay at Louis's house so Harry, Niall, and Zayn can ride with Jay to see Louis, Liam, and Karlie off.

By now it is 2 a.m. in the morning and Louis is way too wired to sleep, so he decides to stay up all night since they are leaving in a few hours anyways. Niall, Zayn, and Liam are passed out across Louis's basement floor as Harry chooses to stay up with Louis, of course.

Somehow Louis and Harry wind up outside, lying on the ground gazing up at the stars in Louis's backyard. They rest very close together with their hands intertwined between them.

"Do you think the stars will look different in Nicaragua?" Harry asks.

"I assume there will be less light pollution there, and being a fourth of the globe south of here, maybe I will see some stars I can't see from here," Louis answers.

"You're so lucky, take picture for me?" Harry requests, looking up at Louis.

"Don't think my camera is as good as one from NASA," Louis chuckles.

"So I won't be able to see what you see..." Harry says quietly.

"But you never really see what I see," Louis argues.
"Normally I'm right next to you though," Harry explains. Now Louis gets what Harry is getting at. Harry and Louis have always done everything together. And it scares Harry that Louis will be making memories without him. Louis is going to see things Harry has not seen nor will ever see.

"Harr-ey," Louis coos as he grabs Harry's far arm and pulls it over him, so Harry now lays across Louis.

"You'll be back before August 1st?" Harry inquires, though he has asked Louis this question nearly a hundred times.

"Just two months. You think I won't?" Louis asks back.

"All you talk about is wanting to get away from here... from me..." Harry whispers into Louis's chest, "We've never been apart for more than a week since we met."

"I have never said I wanted to get away from you!" Louis exclaims defensively.

"But all I hear from you is about how much you want to leave here, you're so bloody focused on the future you're not enjoying the present... it feels like you don't enjoy me," Harry admits.

"It's not you Harry. You're the one of the only reasons why I don't want to go on this trip. This urge inside me is not a reflection of you, it's a reflection of me. I feel like there is this hole, something that is kind of there but not quite. I don't think a person can fill it, because I feel so loved by you and Zayn and Niall and my family," Louis explains to Harry, "I'm sorry if I made you feel that way, but Harry you're like the best thing to ever happen to me."

Harry then does something he has never done before. He looks up to Louis, his eyes wide in fear and admiration. Something Louis said struck him, and this urge overwhelms him. Louis moves to lay a light kiss on Harry's forehead, to calm Harry's nerves like he always does. At the same time, Harry surges over Louis like a wave. In a swift quick motion, Harry's lips land upon Louis's. Someone would think that in such speed, Harry would have crashed into Louis. But this kiss is light, soft, and angelic.

Louis is taken aback, but he does not break the kiss. Harry moves so Louis's lower lip is in between his two lips, but their mouths do not open nor exchange tongues. Harry finally pulls back to observe Louis.

"Harry..." Louis breathes.

"Friends sometimes kiss friends, right?" Harry asks ever so sweetly.

Louis wants to tell him no, that friends do not normally do that. But the vulnerability in Harry's eyes as he gazes up to Louis is too much. He cannot break Harry's fragile heart after such a move.

"Yeah... sometimes they do," Louis falsely reassures him.

"Good," Harry answers simply as he lays his head back onto Louis's chest. Louis places his left hand on the back of Harry's head and lightly strokes his hair. His right arm moves behind his lead to give him some cushion from the firm ground. All Louis can think about, see, feel is Harry's lips, or the memory of them. Harry stays quiet till it is obvious that he is asleep. And before he knows it, Louis sleeps too.

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"There you two are!" Niall yells, waking up Louis. Louis opens his drowsy eyes to see Harry sitting
up from the call as he rubs his eyes. Louis and Harry look up to see Niall, Liam, and Zayn standing around them looking down.

"We've been looking all over for you two," Liam says helping Harry up.

"Thought you two may have made a run for it," Zayn says chuckling.

"Think I'd pussy out?" Louis questions, taking Zayn's arm for support.

"You're all talk Louis," Zayn says helping Louis up.

"Oh gawd are we late?" Louis asks looking a little panicked.

"No, no. We're right on schedule, but you need to hurry up. Let's get in the car," Liam barks walking ahead of the group.

The car ride to the airport is quiet, even after picking up Karlie with her and Niall saying how much they are going to miss each other in the backseat. It annoys Louis beyond belief to be honest. Louis cannot tell if Harry is just sleepy or if he now feels weird about the kiss. They do not say a thing to each other the entire drive which is very unlike them.

Even though the sun is just rising, the airport is busy with people coming and going. Jay pulls in front of the terminal and everyone hops out of the car. Louis, Liam, and Karlie gather their luggage from the trunk and then stand in front of those who are not going inside with them.

"Oh goodness my baby is leaving the states. Don't do anything stupid please. I know lots of exciting new things and people, and I know the mission trip will keep you safe, but err on the cautious side please, always," Jay pleads not wanting to let go of her son.

"I know Mom I know," Louis repeats a number of time to her, "I love you and I'll call you all I can."

"You better or I'll beat your ass when you get back," she says placing a kiss on his cheek, "Love you too."

Louis hugs both Niall and Zayn goodbye. It finally hits Louis that they are not coming either, the two people who he had known the longest, had always supported him, and had been on nearly every adventure as well. Louis is actually beginning to feel a little scared now.

"Take care of Harry," Louis whispers into Zayn's ear, to which Zayn nods his head.

The last person in the line is Harry, who is looking at Louis very blankly.

"You go on and come back to me in one piece please," Harry mumbles while sticking his hand out for a handshake. That is not how Louis and Harry operate.


"I'll miss you more Lou," Harry says as he let's go.

"Come on Louis!" Liam yells from the main entrance door of the airport.

"Every day," Louis says to Harry with a smile, "I'll be back sooner than you think."

"I hope you’re right," Harry says as Louis disappears into the crowd of people walking through the airport gates.
Chapter 8 is super long. Over the summer I went through a really rough breakup, and I channeled much of the emotions from that into this, so this upcoming chapter means a lot to me and why it is so detailed. I'm definitely splitting it up into 4 parts (for the one person who commented about Niall, this part is really focused on him).

And with finals coming, publishing this maybe a little sporadic comparing to the past month. But after finals I'll have a lot more time to write and edit, so this maybe finished up by the end of winter break:) we'll see. Stay tuned!
Chapter 8 Part 1: Niall's Turning Page

Chapter Summary

Louis must prepare for a new reality once he return back to his hometown after his summer in Central America. Harry now has a girlfriend which causes behaviors to change between Louis and Harry. Niall, now grappling with the possibility of two major losses for his summer, may not have all of his mental stability under this pressure. But deep under it all: Niall is still Niall especially when naked, and Harry has to figure out what is most important to him. The choice is obvious.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is pretty smutty and with decent amounts of nudity if that's what you're into :)

Like I said, this is going to be a four part chapter. I would like to think that by this age, the boys are really maturing so they will be grappling with some serious emotional issues and dilemmas. You will be seeing more of their mental processes and how they think.

I put much of my rough breakup from this summer into this chapter so that's why it is so long and means so much to me. I hope ya'll enjoy it. I'm getting busy with finals and term papers, so posting will probably be more sporadic than the previous month, but this is a way for me to destress so I often write or edit for a small period of time everyday so we'll see how this goes.

Song of the Chapter: "Turning Page" by Sleeping at Last

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Part 1

White clouds wisp past the window of the airplane as Louis watches them fly by, or as he flies by them. Liam sits next to him falling in and out of sleep while a girl named Danielle curls up on Liam's shoulder. Louis is on the plane ride back home after his two month incursion in Central America. It was amazing; he does not deny that. He helped rebuild houses destroyed from a hurricane, assisted in cooking for orphaned children, and made various costumes for a talent show the mission trip hosted on the last night.

But there was not a day that he did not think about Harry. Especially how soft Harry's lips felt against his.

Harry is Louis's partner in crime. There were so many times Louis would turn to his side to tell something to Harry, then realize Harry was not there. Liam was Louis's go-to-guy for the trip, and he is a great friend, but he is no Harry.
With no internet signal in the rural areas of Nicaragua, Louis could only talk to Harry when he went to the capital city, which was not often. As Louis rambled on and on about all he was doing, all Louis got from Harry's life was that he now had a girlfriend. Louis does not know how he feels about that. Sure, he and Harry did a lot of sexual things with one another, but that kiss felt different. Did Harry now regret the kiss? Did Harry get a girlfriend just to cover up the kiss? Would their friendship now be fucked by an awkward kiss? Kiss Kiss Kiss. Just some of the many thoughts running through Louis's mind as the plane flies closer and closer to his hometown and Harry.

"Please fasten your seatbelts, the plane will be landing shortly," the intercom calls across the airplane.

"Liam," Louis pokes into Liam's side, "Wake up, we'll be landing soon."

"Erm what?" A groggy Liam asks.

"Buckle up mate, we're almost home," Louis smiles as he buckles his seatbelt. Liam follows in suit, making sure that Danielle does the same thing too.

The rest of the flight goes smoothly after which Louis, Liam, Karlie, and Danielle exit the plane, leave the terminal, grab their baggage, and wait for their rides. Danielle remains nuzzled into Liam's neck obviously staying in her sleepy state. Karlie looks nervous and a bit irritated.

"Where are they?" She barks.

"I just turned on my phone. Having no service for about two month has my phone overloaded by all the text messages I missed," Louis answers, "Give me a sec." Most of the texts are from Harry. Karlie groans in the response.

"Hey guys," A deep voice sleepily calls from behind them.

At first Louis does not recognize it. He turns around to a tall individual with long curly hair. As his eyes continue to adjust to the light of the rising Sun, Louis finally figures out who the boy is.

"Harry!" Louis yells, dropping his luggage and wrapping his arms around Harry's neck. Harry's arms grab Louis by the waist. He then stands up straight, pulling Louis up till Louis can only feel his tip-toes touching the ground.

"How did you?" Louis asks.

"Had another growth spurt," Harry answers.

"This isn't fair," Louis says grabbing onto Harry a little tighter, "Didn't expect to come back to this."

"You think I grew with the purpose of just pissing you off?" Harry chuckles.

"It wouldn't be unlike you," Louis laughs as Harry sets Louis back on the ground.

"Oh my baby!" Anne calls pushing Harry out of the way to hug Louis tight and place too many kisses upon him, "You're alive!"

"You think I wouldn't be?" Louis questions hugging her back while trying to avoid her kisses.

"You never know," She responds finally letting go.

"We were never in any danger, no worries," Louis tries to reassure her of their safety.

"Did everybody else have a good time?" Anne asks to Liam, Karlie, and Danielle. Each of them
attempt to reply, but most of the responses come out as exhausted grunts.

"Katie darling!" Niall calls out as he runs over to her and cradles her in a big hug.

"Niall, put me down," Karlie orders unenthusiastically.

"Oh sorry babe," Niall says touching her gently as possible, "Can I put your stuff in the car?"

"Yeah sure," She replies pushing around him to walk over to the car.

Niall makes a confused look at Louis, to which Louis replies, "We barely slept the past couple of days. She'll be back to her perky self soon." Niall nods with a smile on his face as he picks up Karlie's bags and follows close behind her.

"Where's Zayn?" Louis inquires Harry.

"Over the summer he got a job at the Dillions between his house and yours. He had a late shift last night so he said he'd just catch up with you and Liam later on today," Harry answers grabbing one of Louis's bags.

"Sweet! Does that mean one of us finally has wheels?" Louis prods Harry.

"Not Zayn, says he doesn't get why he'd need a car when his job is walking distance from his house. Niall does though," Harry guides Louis toward Anne's van.

"Of course, of all of us, Niall does," Louis rolls his eyes while carrying his second suitcase behind Harry.

The ride home is pretty quiet due to the earliness of the morning. Anne cannot help but shout a number of questions, though Louis is too beat to give complex answers. But during a lull in conversation, Harry leans over to Louis.

"Hey, I know you must be terribly homesick and just got back, but me, my mom, and sister are going to be heading out of town this weekend to visit some family in the next state over. We're staying at a hotel with a pool, and I think if you came with me it will be an excuse for me not see my relatives. Think you'd be interested?" Harry whispers into Louis's ear.

"Yeah buddy of course, don't even have to ask," Louis answer. Louis then rests his head on Harry's shoulder and closed his eyes. Oh he missed this.

Louis needs to recuperate. For two days he just lays around his house watching television and eating. While his friends missed him greatly and want him to go on numerous adventures with them, all he does is groan when they suggest anything involving moving his legs. So they lay next to him, sprawled out watching the movies that came out over the summer in his absence.

Harry rarely leaves Louis's side, but Harry is a lot less cuddly than before Louis left. And that scares Louis a lot. Louis knows he has no right to judge Harry for it since he himself pulled away while dating Eleanor, but it still hurts. Louis finally understands the grasp of Harry's emotions during those previous times when he was seeing her and Stan, which makes Louis want to wrap fully around Harry and tell him he is never going anywhere. The possibility of rejection though is just too much for Louis. Maybe Louis will just have to adapt to their new relationship. Louis can see Harry texting a lot, assuming it to be his girlfriend.

"Hey I'm going to head home and pack a small bag, take care a few things. We'll come pick you up later tonight?" Harry asks Louis.
"Yeah totally I'll see you then," Louis responds, opening his arms up to Harry for a hug goodbye. But either Harry does not notice or Harry flat out ignores him as he leaves the room. Louis sits there in a form of shock as his arms slowly recoil back to his sides in a frigid loneliness.

Later Louis is packing his own bag for the trip when a car horn echoes through his house. The sound startles him, especially since it is way too early to be Harry. At first Louis ignores it, thinking it must be for the neighbors or something. But then the horn blares again, finally capturing Louis’s attention. Louis strolls over to his window and opens the blinds, to see Niall sitting in his new red truck with patches rust upon the hood, looking up to Louis’s room. Niall gestures for Louis to come down and Louis happily complies.

Louis hops into the obviously old truck, really happy to see Niall. But Niall does not look to happy to see him.

“Wanna go for a ride?” Niall asks, already putting the truck into reverse before receiving a reply from Louis. Niall speeds down the road, and before Louis knows it they are already on the edge of town. Angsty rock music blares from the sound system. Niall pushes past the speed limit as dust flies behind the truck; Louis constantly looks over his shoulder expecting at any moment to hear the sirens of a cop car blare for committing what is obviously a felony for the speed they travel out of town.

“Where’d you get the truck from?” Louis asks lightly bracing himself on the sides of the vehicle.

“My Uncle, who already lived here in the states before I moved here, left it for me in his will,” Niall answers not breaking eye contact with the road ahead.

“His will? … He’s dead?” Louis asks slowly.

“Yeah… yeah he is… been kind of a rough summer,” Niall answers quietly, “He’s actually the person who convinced my family to move here. I was so excited back then.”

“I’m sorry. I know it doesn’t make anything better, but I’m sorry,” Louis says lightly squeezing Niall’s shoulder, “How did he die?”

“They couldn’t have stopped it even if they wanted too. He had an aneurysm in his sleep. And that’s what scary, you know? We could literally drop dead at any moment and there is nothing we could do about it,” Niall tries to act calm and collected, but Louis could see the hint of fear and anxiety in Niall’s eyes.

Thunder rips across the sky. Louis and Niall look up to see a small storm forming upon the horizon.

Niall pulls his truck over on the side of the road and quickly hops out. He sits upon the hood of the truck and smacks it, signaling to Louis to join him. Louis hops on next to him as they watch the storm approach. The wind gusts up ahead of the storm as the lightning grows brighter and closer.

“Since when did you become a storm chaser?” Louis inquires.

“Wanted to be a weather man on TV when I was younger, remember? Till I realized that would involve me doing math on a daily basis,” Niall chuckles.

“Oh yeah I remember, your dreams were crushed. You threw your calculator on the ground in a rage and broke it,” Louis says watching the storm approach. The clouds twist around another, swirling ominously in the sky.
“Looks like there’s some rotation up there, huh?” Niall points up at the sky.

“Yeah, it’s quite beautiful,” Louis comments.

“You aren’t scared?” Niall calls out over a gust of wind.

“You haven’t steered me wrong yet. Well besides that one time you nearly broke my arm trying to flip me over my couch in 7th grade,” Louis recalls.

“Your mother was madder about the scratch on the wall than your arm!” Niall howls in laughter, for the first time since his friends arrived back from their trip.

“It’s a very nice wall! Well was a very nice wall,” Louis agrees, patting Niall’s back.

“If a tornado does spin out, I’ll just push you into the ditch. You’re safest there,” Niall tells him, pretending to push him off the hood of the truck. But Louis feels extremely safe and cared for by the comment. Even in the Niall sort of fashion, the way Niall thinks of Louis’s safety before his own reminds Louis how much he has missed his best friend.

Without warning, it downpours. Louis and Niall both scream out in shock as the water soaks their hair, skin, and clothes. They run back into Niall’s truck and pull their phone, wallets, and keys out of their clothes to try to keep them dry. But the damage is done, their clothing sticks to them in a tight wetness. The rains drums a loud beat onto the roof as a crack of thunder lightly shakes the truck.

Just as soon as the rain began, it is gone again. Niall and Louis get back out of the truck as the clouds from the storm flee to the eastern sky. The sun reappears and begins to evaporate what the storm left behind.

“That came out of nowhere,” Niall says peeling his rain soaked shirt off of him.

“What are you talking about? We totally saw where that came from,” Louis laughs. He takes his shirt off too realizing Niall probably does not want their clothes to get his seats wet, “Man this weather feels amazing.” The summer heat quickly dries their damp chests.

“If it was just a bit warmer, it’d be perfect streaking weather,” Niall comments looking down the dusty road.

“Go for it bro!” Louis jokes, but the next thing Louis knows Niall is throwing off his shoes.

“Come on, let’s go!” Niall yells as he runs into an open field.

“Niall, what are you doing?!” Louis calls out while he begins to follow after his friend.

“YOLO!” Niall shouts as he unbuckles his pants during his run.

“Shit,” Louis says to himself. With the stress of his uncle dying along with his best friend and girlfriend being gone all summer, Niall may be approaching a mental breakdown, and Louis cannot simply let one of his oldest friends run around naked in a random field alone. Maybe Niall needs this. Louis begins to sprint after his friend.

“Louis! I think there’s a small lake behind those trees! Follow me!” Niall says discarding his pants in the grass behind him.

“Gawd damn it Niall!” Louis hollers behind him, also throwing off his pants.
Louis looks behind him to see a scattered trail of clothing reaching back towards to the truck. The truck looks so far away, realizing how fast and how far Niall appears to be moving. It is going to be one hell of a walk back once their adrenaline wears off. Luckily their bread trail line of clothes will be able to lead them back home.

Once he looks forward to Niall, Louis notices that he nearly steps on Niall’s underwear. Looking further up, he then notices Niall’s whiter than snow ass running quickly in front of him.

“Slowpoke!” Niall calls out as he disappears into a line of trees. There is then a large yelp from Niall.

“Niall!” Louis yells very worryingly. He sprints into the trees, fearing that Niall may have twisted his ankle in the excitement. As soon as he arrives in the next clearing, he must quickly slam on his breaks. Louis finds himself on the edge of a decent sized ledge. Peering down, Louis spots Niall floating in the water.

“Hey buddy! Get your ass in here, it’s great!” Niall waves.

Louis pauses as he glares at the water. It looks rather brown and dirty, and he does not want to get into it. But Niall needs this Louis thinks to himself.

With a sigh, he flings off his underwear, “Cannonball!”

Water splashes around the tiny pool.

“My hair!” Niall screams.

“Really Niall? That’s your top concern right now?” Louis says sarcastically rolling his eyes.

The two then comfortably float in the water for a long time. The sun’s heat makes the air really hot, but the water remains cool, so there exists another reason to stay submerged in the pond. Their chest and junk peek out of the water as their hair, legs, and arms remain underwater.

What is odd is how it feels to be naked with one another. When Louis was naked with Harry or Niall was naked with Katie, there was always a sexual rush received from the nudity. But with each other, it feels like nothing. Not that being naked was not hot, there is always an odd thrill from being nude. But the fact they were naked with each did not seem to affect the other, which was very enjoyable in its own way. Like it was so common or natural, it did not even deserve a second thought to if this should be awkward between them.

While Louis really wants to hear about Niall’s summer and what he has been going through, Niall keeps asking questions about his vacation. Louis is more than thrilled to ramble about his trip for hours, but that is not what Louis is concerned about. Finally Niall begins to open up about himself.

“Did you know Harry can song write?” Niall questions Louis.

“What really? I knew he was talented but-“ Louis answers.

“That kid just has creative juices flowing through him. We wrote some sick love ballads, in Karlie’s absence or whenever he couldn’t see Taylor,” Niall rambles, “I don’t know… he said they were about her but they didn’t feel that way…”

“Is she nice?” Louis inquires, “Pretty, smart, everything Harry deserves?”

“Taylor? Yeah she’s pretty. So into Harry, maybe a little more than she should be,” Niall reveals, “But I guess he’s never had someone act so obviously into him though.”
“What does she look like?” Louis prods.

“Skinny, tall, blonde hair, hazel-green eyes, I guess kind of the opposite of you,” Niall explains.

“Oh… That’s nice,” Louis says, feeling jealously in his gut but not knowing why.

“I don’t know. Harry can just turn his inspiration on whenever he wants. Me though… I gotta be feeling some major emotional distress to do some writing… Had a lot of that this summer luckily though…” Niall says very softly, “Before I picked you up I was writing a very good one actually. I’ll have to play it for you later.”

“What were you writing about today, Niall?” Louis asks.

“I-“ Niall starts, “I… I think Karlie is about to dump me.”

“Hey… she’s probably just tired. Like even I’ve still not fully recovered yet,” Louis says trying to comfort him.

“No, it’s more than that,” Niall says staring up at the sky, “Whenever I talk she only looks annoyed; she snaps at me easily. I missed her so much, missed her more every day. And now I see her again, it feels like she’s putting up with me, like if I was not there it wouldn’t really make a difference. I kiss her and empty eyes stare back at me.”

Louis does not know what to say back. At the beginning of the trip, Karlie would talk about Niall every day. Then every day after a little less and a little less. Till by the end of the trip, whenever Niall would come up in conversation, she would not smile or add anything to the discussion. She repeatedly told Louis that she was learning a lot about herself during this trip: who she is, who she wants to be, and where she wants to go. But Niall being involved with whoever she wants to be never seemed like an option, or at least she never discussed it.

“I really love her Louis,” Niall admits, “Like I want her to be my everything. I can’t remember who I am without calling me her’s.”

“Tell her that Niall. Maybe the distance put something in her head, but let her know how much she means to you,” Louis instructs.

“I surrender who I’ve been, for who you are. For nothing makes me stronger than your fragile heart,” Niall sings to the forests.

“Turning Page by Sleeping at Last,” Louis hums in agreement, “One of my favorite love songs.”

“I wish I could have written those words,” Niall explains, “Describes exactly how I feel about Karlie.”

“I’m here for you buddy, no matter what,” Louis says peering over to Niall.

“I can see that. Sorry about this, I don’t know what’s gotten into me,” Niall explains, referencing their nudity, “Since my uncle’s death I’ve become very restless. And I love Zayn and Harry, don’t get me wrong. But they’re very chill and mellow guys. I had fun with them, but all summer I couldn’t wait for my Louis to get back since you’re the one I go on adventures with. You will just match anybody’s energy level because you can and you want them to be just as happy. So maybe after waiting two months I got a little carried away, but if I’ve learned anything over the last couple months it’s what is there to wait for?

“I want to do some crazy stuff I may regret tomorrow, because I know I will regret it more if I don’t
have a story to tell. Louis someday when we are both like 75 and roomed together in our nursing home, I want us to be able to look back at that one dumbass time we went streaking then skinny dipping in a random lake, thinking that those were the days. I’d rather have too many memories than not enough, especially with the people I consider my family,” Niall concludes.

Louis is very moved my Niall’s revelation. It is one of the most sincere things he has ever heard or been about it. Because when it comes down to it, Niall is a pretty amazing guy. Even during all the shit he has gone through or currently going through, he still has a way to wear a smile on his face and laugh like an idiot as he runs naked through a field.

“I really missed you Niall. I’d be giving you the biggest bear hug right now if we weren’t stark naked,” Louis chuckles.

“Since when has that stopped us?” Niall replies as he stands up in the waters, picks up Louis, and brings him in for a tight hug.

“Oh gawd our friendship is weird,” Louis laughs as he hugs Niall back.

“Heh, all best friends are a little gay together,” Niall says as he dunked Louis underneath the water.

“You whine about your hair and then you mess up mine?! Well if you ever want to go on any crazy adventure, you let me know and we’ll go. Nudity makes even boring things interesting, so it is greatly encouraged,” Louis says swimming away from Niall.

“Oh don’t you worry, I made an adventure list in your absence,” Niall reveals, “It’s starting to cloud back up. Think we better go? In case another storm arrives?”

“Yes sir, let’s see how fast it takes to get through town without a speed limit,” Niall says hopping in his truck.

By the time Louis and Niall reach Louis’s house, Anne’s car is parked in front of the house with the entire Styles family waiting for him with Jay and a couple of Louis’s sisters on the lawn.

“Hey buddy thanks for being totally ridiculous with me today. To be honest, it may have been the most fun I have had all summer,” Niall says to Louis.

“I’m happy I could be a part of it,” Louis chimes in, “We’ll hangout when I get back after this weekend. I’m back in the states now, if you need anything just shoot me a call or a text.”

“I know I know, love you bud, travel safe,” Niall says giving Louis a parting hug. Louis exits the car to greet the impatient Styles family.

“I’m so sorry guys, I misplaced my phone earlier and totally lost track of time,” Louis explains.

“Just grab your bag,” Harry says looking very irritated. As soon as he gives his command, Harry walks to his mother’s car and gets in. Gemma gives a confused shrug to Louis as she follows after
her brother.

“Oh don’t feel bad Louis, we’re in no rush. We were just a little concerned about you. Harry’s been in a grouchy mood all afternoon I don’t know what’s gotten into him,” Anne says lightly squeezing his shoulder as he goes into his house to grab his disorganized bag. The four of them soon make it onto the highway and head to their next destination. Harry remains extremely quiet and distant for the ride. Louis cannot tell if Harry is mad at him for being late or what. Occasionally Harry will turn to Louis to say something, open his mouth, pause, and then looks back out the window. Louis watches Harry for a long time till the darkness overcomes Louis. His head falls against the window, asleep.

“Darling?” Harry whispers, lightly shaking Louis’s shoulder, “We’re here, want to come inside?” Louis stretches as a light whine escapes his drowsy lips. Harry’s face is overwhelmed by a smile caused by admiring his best friend while Louis attempts to lean up, but then fails as his face crashes into Harry’s lap.

“Cute Lou,” Harry grins, “You need to actually wake up this time though.”

“We’ll sleep here,” Louis says into Harry’s lap.

“Come on,” Harry orders as he grabs Louis’s arms and sweetly pulls him out of the car. Louis walks under Harry’s arm, resting his head under Harry’s chin as they walk to the hotel room. When they enter the room, Anne has her suitcase on a bed unpacking while Gemma sits on the same bed texting.

“I and Gemma will take this bed, and you two can share this bed if that’s okay? I can ask for a cot if you need me too,” Anne offers.

“No it’s fine the way it is,” Harry answers as he guides Louis to the bed. Louis does a belly flop on the mattress and tries to stay asleep, but the brightness of the lights and the sounds of the Styles family wake him up just enough to keep him conscious. Louis hears Harry gather their bags from the car and unpack, taking care of Louis even when he appears asleep.

“I’m exhausted sweetie, Gemma and I are about to turn in to get up at a decent time in the morning. Are you too?” Anne asks Harry.

“I’m way too wired. Think I’ll go for a swim or something,” Harry tells her.

“Yeah me too!” Louis declares, startling both Harry and Anne.

“No Louis, you’re sleeping,” Harry states.

“I was sleeping,” Louis quips, “Let’s go swimming.”

“Are you sure?” Harry asks, “If you’re tired you don’t need too.”

“Already up,” Louis says grabbing his swim trunks out of his bag, “Someone’s gotta keep you safe out there.”

“Yeah sure, you will keep me safe,” Harry replies rolling his eyes.

Louis really does not know why he decided to go with Harry since he hates swimming to begin with and had already gone earlier in the day, but alas he floats in the pool as Harry sits with his feet in the water looking up at the stars.
“Whenever I get stressed I go outside and watch the stars,” Harry breaks the calm silence between them. “All my problems seem so small compared to that of a star billions and billions light years away.”

“You got problems young Harold?” Louis asks swimming over to Harry.

“I had 99 problems, but now a girlfriend ain’t one,” Harry answers not looking away from the sky.

“You two broke up? Oh Harry, I’m sorry, that really sucks,” Louis says, not knowing how to comfort Harry during a breakup since this is his most serious relationship yet.

“Don’t say sorry, I broke up with her,” Harry orders casually.

“Why- Why is that?” Louis squeaks.

As Louis waits for an answer, Harry dives into the pool. He quickly swims to the opposite end, turns around, and then uses his feet as a spring board against the wall to return to Louis. When his head shoots out of the water, Harry shakes his curly hair like a dog, soaking Louis’s face in Harry water.

“I don’t know what that means,” Louis laughs, wiping the water off of him.

“She was really clingy. You know I’m a pretty independent spirit. When you were gone I’d see nearly her every day. I hadn’t seen her since you got back, but I’d still be texting her all the time though. We met up this afternoon, but she was being so passive aggressive, it just slipped out of my lips and next thing I know she was crying,” Harry explains.

“Oi Harry, that sounds really rough. Sounds like she didn’t take it too well,” Louis coos to Harry, struggling to stay afloat compared to Harry whose feet could easily reach the bottom of the pool.

“She asked what she did wrong, and I told her she did nothing wrong, just that we were too different people that wanted different things,” Harry relays to Louis.

Louis then swims the little distance between him and Harry. His arms wrap around Harry 1) to give him something to hang onto in the water and 2) to hug Harry, “You know I’m here for you no matter what.”

“Yeah… Yeah I know,” Harry breathes into Louis’s neck; his arms wrap around Louis in response. That is the closest Louis has felt to Harry since his return. Louis melts into Harry’s embrace, absorbing every essence of Harry that he missed while on his trip: the smoothness of Harry’s skin, the smell of Harry’s hair, and the tightness of Harry’s hugs to name a few things. But what Harry missed is what Louis is becoming. It is almost as if Louis is growing elderly. Louis now appears tiny compared to the lanky Harry: with his little hands, his little legs, and his little arms. Dang, Louis just needs Harry to stay afloat without struggling.

“Late at night while I was in Nicaragua, I would sneak out and look out at the stars, imagining that you were looking up with me. Not next to me but I’d pretend you’d be in your backyard watching just as I was, so even though we were hundreds of miles away from each other, the stars could unify us,” Louis says very softly since there was such little distance in between them.

“That’s…. that’s really sweet Lou,” Harry replies nuzzling Louis.

“Harry, Nicaragua and Central America was beyond amazing. It really solidified what I want to do with the rest of my life: travel. Because what I realized was that this place does not feel like home. Even though I have lived in the same town my entire life, I would never call it home. It took all that distance to come to the understanding that, Harry: you are home. You’re like my brother, but closer,
different than brother but that is the closest analogy I got. I don’t want to see the rest of the world without you, because while I was gone I felt like I was missing something, but I knew it was not the physical place of home, it was you. Along with Niall and Zayn of course, but you more importantly,” Louis says not breaking eye contact with Harry during his speech.

Harry quits breathing. He just looks deeper and deeper into Louis’s eyes trying to figure out how to respond. But something so heartfelt that flew out of Louis’s lips, Harry’s words could never compare. Harry’s heart beats furiously which Louis’s could feel against his own chest. Louis then looks up to Harry urgently wanting a response, fearing what he said was just too much for Harry to understand. Or what Louis fears most is that Harry does not feel the same way Louis does.

Desperate lips crash into Louis’s. Louis’s eyes jolt open in shock, but then calmly relax into the kiss. This is the kiss Louis had been thinking about his entire trip. Every night when he would look up at the stars, he would imagine Harry next to him then the surprising clash of nervous lips. But this kiss is not nervous. It is planned and known. Louis senses Harry biting at his lips, trying to see if Louis would let him in. Harry would lightly bite Louis’s bottom lip then pull it down, Louis feeling Harry’s lips brush against his teeth. Then after letting go of Louis’s bottom lip, Harry’s tongue would gently run along Louis’s lips and teeth as if Harry’s tongue is knocking on a door.

Louis’s lips finally open in response to Harry’s request. Harry’s tongue dives into Louis’s mouth with a small moan escaping Louis. Almost in animal instinct, Louis’s legs wrap around Harry’s waist as Harry’s tongue enters Louis. Harry’s cock hardens in reply to the new closeness. The hardening of Harry is all Louis needs for his dick to enlarge too. Louis’s hands make their way up to Harry’s hair as he grabs to make sure Harry’s lips will not be leaving him anytime soon. Harry’s arms snake around Louis, one of his hands holding onto Louis’s lower back and the other placed on the back of Louis’s head, carefully holding him in place for easy access to Harry’s tongue. Harry slowly walks to the edge of the pool in the heat of their make out session.

“Ow,” Louis says into Harry’s mouth as his back hits the edge of the pool. Louis waits for an apology from Harry knowing how guilty Harry gets about hurting someone, but instead of a sorry Harry’s lips latch on to Louis’s neck.

“Oh, fuck, Harry,” Louis whimpers as he throws his head up at the sucking from Harry’s mouth. Louis’s neck, his weakness. Louis does not stand a chance. In an animalistic reflex, Louis’s legs tighten around Harry’s hips and Louis moves his waist against Harry’s throbbing cock.

“Shit Louis,” Harry moans into Louis’s neck. Harry’s face remains plastered to Louis’s neckline though his lips quit moving. Harry’s attention then shifts from his mouth to his pelvis as Harry’s hips thrust against Louis’s groin.

“Oh my gawd,” Louis whispers. Then the slam of a hotel apartment door startles them. Louis quickly latches off of Harry and turns around to look where the sound came from. Louis and Harry watch a man walk to his car, pop the trunk, pull out a suitcase, lock his car, and then return to his room with another slam of the door. Louis and Harry breathe deeply once the fear of being caught passes out of them.

“Shit that was close-“ Before Louis can finish his sentence, he feels Harry’s large hands forcefully grab him by the waist and slam him back against Harry’s dick. A surprised squeal escapes Louis’s lips as Harry’s dick slides against the crack between Louis’s cheeks, both of them being bound by the tightness of their wet swimtrunks.

“Ohhhhh shit…” Louis moans as his head lowers to the rim of the pool. This is Louis’s first real experience with anything close to anal play, and Louis loves it. The feeling of Harry’s long cock thrust against him while approaching Louis’s hole is overwhelming. He pushes his ass out to give
Harry as much access as he can.

“Gawd Lou, your ass is amazing,” Harry whispers to Louis, lightly biting his ear as he pulls back. And Harry could not lie. Louis has a gorgeous bum. The way it barely fits in Louis’s skinny jeans gives girls a run for their money for what gender has the better ass. Louis’s ass muscles flex when Harry’s dick slides up his crack, as if Louis is trying to pull him in even closer.

Water splashes in between their bodies as Harry’s thrusts become more forceful. Louis’s moans quicken as Harry’s speed picks up. While this is all the stimulation Louis really needs for the time being, one of Harry’s hands finds its way to the front of Louis’s swimwear. Harry sloppily undoes the knot of the swim trunks and pulls out Louis’s cock. He begins to quickly jerk off Louis as Louis’s moans become very low in pitch.

“Harry Harry Harry,” Louis pants as he tries to balance his urge to grind against Harry while also wanting to fuck Harry’s hand.

“Louis I’m getting close,” Harry says attempting to sound manly, but his words come out very desperately.

“Thank fucking gawd, I can’t last much longer. You’re too much for me Styles,” Louis replies to Harry.

“Uh, Uh, Uh,” Harry whines with every thrust.

“Shit, here I-“ Louis explodes out of Harry’s hand as he pushes his ass up as high as it can possibly go, causing Harry’s dick to poke against Louis’s hole. With the new angle, Harry too shoots cum all over the inside of his swim trunks.

Harry head slowly lowers against Louis’s back as he breathes very deeply, “I missed you, I missed you, I missed…” over and over again in between lightly kisses that he places upon Louis’s shoulder blades.

“I missed you more Harry, more than you can imagine,” Louis admits as he recovers from his orgasm. Harry’s arms wrap around Louis’s torso as he pulls Louis in backwards for a hug. Louis’s arm wrap around himself and are placed upon Harry’s flexed arms. They stand in silence as the only things they can hear are the sounds of the water slapping against the rim of the pool and the chirping of a few crickets. Their minds begin to return to reality as their orgasms pass.

“Did I just jizz in a pool?” Louis says with an unbelievable giggle.

“Oh my gawd, we just did. At least I came in my shorts,” Harry says softly biting Louis’s ear.

“You’re the one who pulled my cock out!” Louis smiles, lightly jabbing Harry in the ribcage with his elbow.

“You didn’t stop me,” Harry jokingly defends.

“Maybe we should head back before we do get caught,” Louis suggests.

“That’s probably would be a good idea,” Harry answers as he let’s go of Louis and walks towards the steps to get out of the pool. Louis pulls his pants back up and follows after Harry.

They return to the hotel room with Anne and Gemma sound asleep in their bed. Louis and Harry quietly go into the bathroom and change out of their swim trunks and into pajamas. Too exhausted to shower off the chlorine, they decide to wait and do that for tomorrow. They get into bed ready to
pass out, but both wonder how cuddly they should be with Anne and Gemma in the room. Harry then reaches over to grab Louis’s hand under the covers from across the bed. And that is good enough for now.

Chapter End Notes

Part 2 coming soonish!
Chapter 8 Part 2: Niall's Turning Page

Chapter Summary

Louis and Harry find enjoyment in exploring a bed together. Louis and Zayn try to find a way to comfort Niall in the wake up his breakup with Karlie. Louis relies on a time proven method for a distraction.

Chapter Notes

Yeah it's been awhile, I have one final left so thought I'd take a break and post something. A smutty beginning to this part, but a pretty somber end which deals with how people perceive breakups and how they deal with them. High Niall is cute, but in light of the events also pretty sad.

I wish I would have shown more of Niall and Karlie's closeness so the reader would understand why he is so upset about their breakup, but I can only write so much, and only so much time to dedicate to certain story lines. This series is mainly focused on how the boys react to each other, not really how the boys react with people outside of their group. And to be honest as a gay man I do not know that much about how straight couples interact. I know a lot more about gay stuff... being gay and all xP

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 2

The morning sun arrives in the hotel to much of Louis’s displeasure. He looks over in the direction of the window to see that Anne and Gemma are no longer in bed, and from the silence Louis can assume they are not in the room at all. Louis rolls over the face Harry. It startles Louis how close Harry already is to him, but the movements of Louis awake Harry. A wide smile spreads across Harry’s face in reaction to the nearness of Louis.

“I missed waking up with you next to me,” Harry yawns.

“Me too, where’s your fam at?” Louis asks.

“Woke up really early. Seeing you were asleep, I was able to convince my mum to let you rest. And of course I couldn’t leave my guest here alone all day, so I was then forced to stay with you,” Harry answers.

“Forced? Oh Harry, I woulda been just fine in this hotel room without you. There’s television, Wi-Fi, room service, and a pool outside. Call your mum and go,” Louis says rolling away from Harry.

“You’re kicking me out of my own room? You’re not a nice guest,” Harry groans.

“Who said I was nice?” Louis sasses.
Harry then rolls over and slings his arm around Louis’s stomach. He pulls Louis tight against him as he releases a breath down Louis’s neck. Chills run through Louis’s body as he reflexively rubs against Harry. Louis then feels Harry’s member throb against the lower part of Louis’s back.

“Uh Harry,” Louis hints at.

“Sorry,” Harry mumbles as his dick continues to throb, “Okay, maybe I’m not sorry.”

“I just woke up Harry,” Louis tries sounding confident but it comes out as a low moan.

“If you say no, I know no means no. If you don’t want it, all you got to do is say the word,” Harry whispers into Louis’s ear. The room goes quiet as Harry awaits for a possible response from Louis, but Louis does not say anything. In fact after a moment, Louis’s hips grind against Harry. That is all the ‘yes’ Harry needs.

Before Louis knows it, Harry has flipped him onto his stomach and yanked Louis’s underwear nearly off in one quick motion.

“Whoa what are you doing there?” Louis asks nervously, wondering if Harry is wanting sex, because Louis does not know if he would even want to turn Harry down if he asked.

“Remember that thing we walked in on Liam and Zayn doing? Well last night gave me some inspiration,” Harry says as he pulls of his own underwear. Harry then crawls on top of Louis. His knees settle next to Louis’s hips while Harry’s dick points at Louis’s body like an arrow about to be launched from a bow. Louis looks over his shoulder to see Harry in this positions and shivers run down Louis’s spine to how sexual Harry looks right now. Louis pushes his butt a little higher in the air and Harry take this an invitation. Harry slowly lowers himself until his entire body is on top of Louis. Harry’s dick pulses against Louis’s back as Harry’s hips move for the first time.

“Oh my gawd,” Harry moans into Louis’s neck, “You feel so good. How do you have such soft skin?”

“I bathe in the semen of 30 virgin males on a weekly basis,” Louis jokes.

“I’m just going to pretend you didn’t say that,” Harry laughs, but it is obvious to Louis that Harry’s main focus is not on their conversation right now. Harry’s hips grind roughly upon Louis. Like it feels good but Louis fears it may be causing pain to Harry.

“I think there is some sample lotion from the hotel on the bathroom counter if you want to put it on me,” Louis suggests to Harry.

“Oh, am I hurting you?” Harry stops moving abruptly.

“No, not at all, feels very nice actually. I was more thinking about you,” Louis answers.

“Oh, no I’m good. But might as well try it to see what it’s like,” Harry says hoping off of Louis and then walking over to the bathroom counter. Harry’s dick waddles back and forth with his steps, Louis admiring from afar. Harry jumps onto the bed next to Louis with the bottle in hand. Harry’s weight causes Louis to rebound into air. Louis squeal as he flies, which makes Harry laugh so hard he howls like a hyena.

“Ow! My dick!” Louis yelps grabbing his crotch.

“Aw, want me to kiss it to make it feel better?” Harry asks while opening up the lotion bottle. Louis stops breathing due to that comment, because until that moment Louis did not realize that is all he has
ever wanted.

Harry pours the cool liquid on Louis’s back, making Louis tense up. Ecstatic goose bumps pop up all over Louis’s body. But Harry’s large warm hands calm Louis’s apprehension as the lotion turns warm due to Harry’s touch. Harry lightly massages Louis’s lower back as he spreads the lotion around. Long deep breaths escape Louis’s lips as his hips lightly grind his dick against the bed, desperately needing some attention. Harry drags his fingers down Louis’s back one last time, down to his ass, and then roughly grabs Louis’s bum.

“Ahh,” a feminine moan echoes out of Louis’s mouth. Harry grabs the lotion bottle and squirt some on his own cock. He slowly lowers himself back onto Louis, not knowing what to expect from the feeling of the lotion. But shit it feels great. Harry puts all his body weight on Louis as Harry’s cock sits in between Louis’s ass cheeks. They both lie there, just enjoying the feeling of one another’s body in such an intimate way.

“You don’t think this is weird, Harry?” Louis asks cautiously.

“I don’t know… like we saw Zayn and Liam doing this, right?” Harry tries to reassure Louis.

“Yeah, you’re right, we’re not alone,” Louis agrees as he lays his forehead against the pillow in front of him. Warmth radiates from both of their bodies. After a while their breathing patterns match up. When Harry inhales, Louis inhales. When Louis exhales, Harry exhales. The rising and sinking of their bodies is in sync.

“You feel so good Louis, so good,” Harry moans to Louis, “Too good in fact.” Louis can hear Harry’s breathing becoming erratic, his thrusts feeling more powerful, and the constant throbbing of Harry’s member against his ass.

“Shit, Louis, I-“ Harry tries to articulate, but before he can form a sentence, he cums all over Louis.

“Oh fuck Harry.” Louis moans as Harry’s orgasm squirts up his back. High pitch moans leave Harry’s lips as the pace of his hips moving slows down considerably. Harry feels plastered to Louis’s body as the cum sticks to Louis’s back and Harry’s abdomen.

“I’m so sorry Louis, I didn’t last more than a minute, this is so embarrassing,” Harry says while breathing deep.

“Don’t be. We were trying something new, you got a little excited, very ordinary,” Louis says comforting Harry while very enjoying being covered his cum.

“I’ll go get a towel to clean you up,” Harry says leaving the room to get a towel. He returns and sits next to Louis. Louis lays on his stomach calmly as Harry wipes up and down Louis’s back till nothing remains of their sexual exploit. Louis turns over on his back to smile at Harry, just so happy he is back with his best friend.

“Oh I totally forgot about you,” Harry says gesturing to Louis’s groin. Louis looks down himself and sees his boner is still erect, laying up against his stomach.

“It’s fine Hazza, I don’t need to get off,” Louis says acting as if his boner is not there.

“Nope, I get off, you get off. It’s only fair,” Harry hums as he climbs back on top of Louis, “How did you feel about the kissing?”

“I love kissing. And wow, for you being so young-“ Louis starts.
“Can you please quit pointing out how young I am? It makes me feel like you don’t treat me as an equal, when I feel I deserve to be at least that. Is that okay?” Harry asks.

“Oh, yeah, sorry I didn’t think of it like that… Um, what I mean is you are very good for someone who is not very experienced,” Louis corrects himself.

“And what makes you think I am so unexperienced?” Harry asks slyly. “You were gone all summer you silly goose.”

“Fine, you are very good at kissing,” Louis says rolling his eyes, though the tiniest bit of jealous flares inside him at the thought of Harry kissing someone else for long periods of time, though he does not know why he would feel that, “How do you feel about the kissing?”

“Um, I don’t know, it’s nice. I’m not against it by any means. I guess I just have to be in the mood for it,” Harry answers.

“Are you in the mood for it now?” Louis asks, softly biting his own bottom lip.

“Are you?” Harry asks back.

“Yeah, please,” Louis requests. Harry then lowers his head and softly kisses Louis on the lips. But a peck becomes a kiss, and a kiss becomes French, and then they are swapping saliva is if they had not drank water in days. Harry’s hand wraps around Louis’s dick in the process and begins to gently tug at it as Harry’s own hips move in response. Harry’s lips travel to Louis’s neck.

“Oh Haz, my weakness, that’s not fair,” Louis moans as he bends his heads to give Harry the maximum amount of neck possible to suck on. Sloppy sounds escape Harry’s mouth as his tongue attempts to touch every square inch of Louis’s neck. Louis’s hips buck up in response. Harry’s lips wander down Louis’s neck to his chest, and then to his stomach. Soft kisses press all over Louis’s abdomen. Harry’s right hands jerks Louis off as his left land plays with Louis’s balls. Louis’s legs spread to make room for Harry in between.

Louis looks down at Harry to see his face in between his legs. Harry’s face is eye level with Louis’s cock. Harry seems hyper-focused on Louis’s groin, Harry’s eyes staring and rarely blinking as his hand pumps away. His mouth appears to move closer and closer to Louis’s dick, until Louis can feel the warmth of Harry’s breath spread over the head of his cock. Louis is doing everything in his power not to buck his hips up into Harry’s mouth, because Harry’s lips look so inviting. The thought of how Harry’s tongue would feel on Louis’s dick after knowing what it felt like in his mouth is almost too much for Louis to handle.

Harry looks up to see Louis’s face soaked in frustration. He then grabs the lotion and pour into on top of Louis’s cockhead. Jerking Louis off becomes a lot smoother as a hiss of pleasure comes out of Louis’s mouth. Harry then places wet kisses on Louis’s thighs, sending Louis over the edge.

“Harry watch out,” Louis calls out as he erupts all over himself and Harry. Louis tightly closes his eyes while he throws his head back into the pillow. By the time his orgasm passes, he looks down at the stunned Harry, who happens to have a couple drops of cum running down his face.

“Oh Harry, I’m sorry,” Louis says leaning himself up assist Harry, but Harry wipes the drops of semen off his face as if it is nothing.

“Kinda my fault Lou, I was the one who was putting my face inches away from your dick,” Harry chuckles, “Just give me a little more warning next time, yeah?”
“Yeah,” Louis answer, “You look really hot covered in my cum.”

“Shut up you perv” Harry laughs as he pulls himself up from Louis. Harry flops on top of Louis in a tired post-orgasmic collapse, Harry’s face tucked under Louis’s chin. Louis likes how even though Harry is larger than him now, Harry still allows himself to be vulnerable enough for Louis to hold him like when they were younger.

“Again, Harry?” Louis says as he feels another poke from Harry.

“What?” Harry smiles into Louis’s neck, “It’s your fault. You’re the one who just had the sexy orgasm.”

“The orgasm you gave me,” Louis quips.

“We’re going in circles Lou,” Harry responds.

“Then let’s get straight to the point,” Louis says as he wipes some his cum off his stomach and lathers it on Harry’s exposed cock.

And that becomes an afternoon of sexploration. Louis and Harry explore every inch of their bed that day while enjoying passionate make outs, sloppy hand jobs, forceful grinding, and playful wrestling. Of course they have to make up for their two months apart and calm crazy hormones surging through their bodies due to puberty. Sheets would ride up and down the bed, all the pillows would fall to the floor then get picked up only to happen all over again, and occasionally they would have to calm themselves after the bed began shaking a little too loudly.

As the sun begins to set, they decide they should probably shower to remove the smell of sex from the room. They bathe together to save time and water and to help reach spots they cannot reach by themselves. They get out of the shower, dry off, and clean the room of any sticky evidence. Just as Louis throws away the last tissue and Harry hides any cum stained clothing, Anne and Gemma arrive back to the room.

“Just in time,” Harry winks to Louis.

The rest of their weekend goes smoothly as Harry and Louis feel like HarryandLouis again. But things cannot stay perfect forever. As they are packing up the hotel room to head home, Louis receives a text from Zayn: Lou, Karlie dumped Niall. He’s a mess L hurry home please. We need you.

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Louis tries to enjoy the rest of the trip with Harry and his family, but Niall is on his mind. Because Niall is so happy and carefree, and for Zayn to text Louis to say Niall is not fine is not a good sign.

As soon as Louis arrives back in town, he immediately leaves for Niall’s house, telling Harry he’ll fill him in on the rest of the details after he gets them. Louis walks into Niall’s room to see Niall sitting nearly inches away from his television playing FIFA, as Zayn sits on Niall’s bed drawing a picture of him playing.

“Son of a bitch! This game is rigged against me!” Niall yells, throwing his hands in the air in a fit of rage.

“Can’t be rigged Niall, the game is programmed to point out sucky plays,” Louis quips.

“Lou!” Zayn hugs Louis as he walks past the bed.
“How you doing buddy?” Louis asks Niall, squatting down next to him.

“Been better honestly, but I have been breaking records in all my games! Which reminds me, we need to go buy me some new games,” Niall answers as the game screen loads to a new level.

“No, we don’t. You’ve been playing video games for the past 48 hours straight,” Zayn rolls his eyes, obviously bored of comforting Niall for the past few days.

“You forget pee breaks and naps,” Niall points out as the new level starts on the television. Louis then stands back up and returns to Zayn.

“How is he really doing?” Louis whispers.

“As I said, he hasn't done much besides sit in front of that TV. I’ve been here except for going to work for half a day yesterday and then a shift morning.”

“Has he talked to you about it?” Louis inquires.

“He gave me the brief run through, but nothing in depth. He more described the actions than the emotions,” Zayn elaborates on, honestly wanting to know more information himself, “I’m scared he’s just going to snap and throw his controller through the tellie.”

“He needs an adventure, needs a distraction… Do you happen to have any weed on you?” Louis begins to formulate a plan.

“Well, I do, but-” Zayn is cut off.

“Niall, we’re going out!” Louis calls out.

“Cool, see you guys later,” Niall answers while not looking away from his game.

“No, you’re coming too,” Louis declares.

“But video games,” Niall whines lowly.

“Come on, let’s go. You don’t have an option in the matter,” Louis orders, lifting Niall up by his right arm.

“I hate you guys,” Niall groans.

Zayn drives Niall’s truck as Louis instructs Zayn where to turn and go without revealing where the planned destination is.

“Pull over here,” Louis points to a sign in the road that looks like the marker for a former hiking trail.

“We’re in the middle of nowhere,” Niall barks as the sun begins to set below the trees. Zayn stops the truck as Louis commanded. The boys look across the road and see a thick forest that goes up in elevation, assumingly a pretty steep hill.

“We’re exactly where we need to be,” Louis explains, pushing Niall out of his truck.

Louis leads Niall and Zayn through the forest as night overtakes the light in the sky.

“There’s no path Lou, you’re leading us to our death,” Niall moans.

“I know exactly where we’re going, trust me,” Louis replies.
“That’s what everyone says before they disappear into the woods and are never seen from again. You are just asking for us to be massacred by a man with a machete,” Zayn supports Niall’s claim.

“Shh, the mass murderer is going to hear you if y’all don’t shut it!” Louis chuckles, “Here we go!”

Louis pulls Niall and Zayn by the wrist into a clearing. That is when they realize they made it to the top of a hill overlooking their town. All the sunlight has fled the sky as the city lights cast a warm glow across the horizon.

“Whoa, Louis,” Zayn gawks.

“Yeah I know,” Louis agrees, enjoying the view as well. He tosses a blanket he carried up over a fallen log that faces towards the city. Louis pats the log signaling for Niall and Zayn to sit next to him.

“Our town looks so small,” Niall comments, looking across the city.

“Our town is small!” Louis retorts, "It's not even on most maps!"

“How’d you find this place?” Zayn asks.

“Uh… Harry and I were exploring and just walked upon it,” Louis lies. Louis leaves out the part that he and Harry were looking for a private place to jerk off while still enjoying the exhibitionism. but that probably is not too important…

“Exploring?” Zayn attempts to confirm.

“Yeah. We like going to abandoned houses, lost trails, stuff like that. I don’t know, we enjoy it,” Louis answers.

“You guys are weird… but you go well together,” Zayn comments while pulling out a cigarette.

“You smoke now!?” Louis exclaims, nearly smacking the cigarette out of Zayn’s hand.

“Hey! Those are expensive!” Zayn barks, recoiling the cigarette into his chest, “This is what happens when you leave us alone for too long!”

“So it’s my fault that you're smoking now?” Louis reiterates.

“I don’t see who else to blame,” Zayn reassures as he raises the cigarette up to his lips.

“Never gonna let me going to Nicaragua go, are ya?” Louis asks.

“Nope, never, not till you learn your lesson,” Niall mumbles.

“So I can’t ever leave you guys?” Louis questions.

“I think he’s starting to get it,” Zayn nods to Niall.

“What if we wait for Harry and Liam?” Louis suggests.

“What do you mean?” Niall barks.

“We have no fucking idea what we want to do with the rest of our lives yet,” Louis explains, “What if we wait a year for them? Like after we graduate, we work for a year, save up money and stuff, they graduate, then do what we want, together.”
Niall and Zayn go quiet as they analyze Louis’s proposal.

“Yeah,” Zayn agrees as he takes a long drag, “What else do I have better to plan for?”

“Girlfriends may come and go, but you guys are forever,” Niall confirms, “Well girlfriends for me at least.”

“Sweet let’s celebrate! Zayn bring out the joint!” Louis orders.

“Calm down, calm down,” Zayn chuckles as he pulls the joint out of the inside pocket of his leather jacket. He lights it and take a hit, then passes it to Louis. After Louis takes a puff, he then hands it to Niall.

“I don’t smoke guys, you know that,” Niall defends.

“Niall, come on, if there is any time to try this, it is now,” Louis urges, but not wanting to sound too forceful.

“I don’t know…” Niall whines.

“You said you wanted spontaneous adventures, right? It’s an adventure, but a relaxing adventure,” Louis explains.

“We’ll keep you safe, we promise,” Zayn reaffirms.

“Just one… for you guys,” Niall seizes the joint from Louis. Niall breathes in his first hit, which is followed by a massive coughing fit. Louis laughs loudly as Zayn rubs Niall’s back trying to soothe Niall's contracting body.

“Oh my god, how do you guys do this!?” Niall hacks.

“I said the same thing my first time,” Louis howls, “Just give it a little time.”

“I don’t feel a thing,” Niall declares. But then Niall begins to sense it. He feels a little light headed and spacey. His mind begins to race, trailing between various ideas that have little connect to one another, unable to make sense of the trail his mind has created.

Niall looks up to the sky and begins making shapes out of the stars, as if every old constellation created by former civilizations is finally understood. His puzzled face fluctuates as the constellations change form and dance. Louis and Zayn watch Niall with wide grins across their faces, since getting out of his head is exactly what Niall needed in this moment.

“I think he’s feeling it,” Zayn giggles.

“Okay, I kinda get why you guys do this now,” Niall hums, barely paying attention to his friends.

They sit on the log starring up into the sky in a comfortable silence while they pass the joint around until none is left of it. Finally Niall’s mouth open.

“She said she has not been feeling it for months,” Niall reveals softly.

“What?” Louis squawks, unable to hear him.

“Katie said she has not been feeling our relationship for months, maybe not since March,” Niall explains, “She said she did not realize it till she was away from me. One day, she just realized she did not miss me anymore.”
“She talked about you a lot then one day stopped…” Louis replies.

“That… that doesn’t make me feel any better. Just like… what the f**k though? She said that she felt like we were drifting for months, and I kind of felt the same way, but where were we supposed to grow to? We weren’t going to get engaged, married, or have kids anytime soon… So why is she worried about going forward when we have nowhere to move forward to?”

“It sounds like you two were looking for different things in a relationship,” Zayn answers.

“Then why didn’t she tell me that sooner?! After I said I also felt like we were drifting, she asked when it stopped for me. But I told her it never stopped for me, she still gave me butterflies when I saw her. Like, I wouldn’t trade these last 6 months with her for anything, but what the f**k was I doing as everyday I fell more and more in love with her as she just stopped loving me?” Niall tries to keep it together, but it is obvious to Louis and Zayn in the increasing speed of Niall’s words that he is reaching his breaking point.

“It’s not that she quit loving you. She did and still does. But maybe she felt like she should have been feeling more by this point and it seems pretty obvious you two were not on the same level of intimacy for each other. She stayed with you this long for a reason,” Louis explains.

“She said she kept hoping that her feelings for me would kick back in one day, but they never did… Guys, I was so happy and secure and safe and strong. She gave me so much and I changed so much, letting go of my negative attributes just so I could gain her positive ones. And now she’s gone and I don’t feel like I’ll ever be the same again,” Niall ramble as a tear roles down his cheek.

“Babe, I’m really sorry that she does not see all those amazing things about you, but we see them. I know we ain’t no girlfriends, but you are going to remember those amazing things about you too, given time. And I know dating is the last thing on your mind right now, but someone else will also see those things about you too: how funny and exciting and adventurous, and how hella fine you are. She did love you for a reason, correct?” Zayn declares.

“Did,” Niall reiterates.

“But she did love you, because she realized how great you were. And even though it’s gone now, at least you had like a year of happiness, correct?” Zayn asks, "Which means if you felt it once, you can feel it again, even if it is not with her."

“Yeah I did… I just miss her so much, you know, and it’s barely been a few days.” Niall says as he lays his head on Zayn’s lap so his friends would not be able to see his face when he cries. Zayn begins running his fingers through Niall’s hair to calm him down as Louis squeezes Niall’s hand.

“Shh… it’s okay babe, we’re right here. There is nothing to worry about. And there is nothing wrong with you, nor did you do anything wrong. She stopped feeling and selfishly moved on months before she told you. You were okay before she came into your life and you will be okay after. Because you are strong, with or without her. Because you’re Niall fucking Horan,” Zayn coos into Niall’s ear.

“I was just so happy, literally like three days ago, and now it feels like I’ll never be happy again. Like rationally I know that I will, just in the moment it doesn’t feel like I’ll ever be the same again,” Niall cries.

“You aren’t going to be the same again Niall,” Louis explains, “Her love changed you, and that’s good. It’s so good because I sure have never had that before and I wish I had. I have seen you so happy this past year, happier than I had ever seen you before, and it was amazing. And no matter
what she does from this moment on, she can’t take those moments away from you. You were in love. Just because it is over now does not make those moments mean any less then or any less now.”

Niall nods into Zayn’s lap as Zayn’s continues to pet Niall’s head. But silence from Niall eventually translates to him no longer being there with Louis and Zayn.

“Did that fucker fall asleep?” Louis chuckles.

“Gawd damnit,” Zayn sarcastically groans, though both boys really appreciate how cute Niall looks in his sleep and the fact that their best friend, one of the happiest persons on earth, has quit crying. With the sun’s heat gone the woods turn cool, as the breeze that had earlier kept them from being hot now makes them feel a bit chilly.

“Let’s do something crazy!” Niall shoots up, returning from his drug coma with a new surge of energy.

“Like what buddy?” Louis asks looking up at his friend.

“Let’s streak again! That’s a thrill!” Niall proclaims.

“Again?!” Zayn demands looking at Louis.

“First of all Niall, it’s pretty cool out here so it might not feel as good as you want it too. Second, we nearly walked into 10 spider webs just hiking up and I’m pretty sure you don’t want those on your junk,” Louis explains.

“Okay, okay, valid points. Something else something…” Niall speaks to himself, “Let’s… dye my hair blonde!”

“What?!” Zayn squeals with a laugh.

“Blonde, dye my hair blonde,” Niall repeats, “What’s the problem?”

“Don’t know if you should be making dramatic life decision spontaneously while you're on your first high,” Louis chuckles.

“No it’s not spontaneous at all!” Niall explains, “I’ve always wanted to do this. I feel like I’m blonde you know? Kind of like being transgender, but instead of being born in the wrong sex, I was born with the wrong hair color.”

“I don’t think it’s the same thing mate,” Zayn laughs.

“I’ve been wanting to do it for the past year, but whenever I’d bring it up to Karlie, she’d tell me no because she liked my brown hair, but she’s gone now so…” Niall trails off. Louis and Zayn shoot each other a look, having a telepathic conversation as if they were Niall’s parents deciding what is better for their son.

I don’t know man, Zayn thinks.

Come on, he needs this, something spontaneous symbolizing his new found freedom, Louis thinks.

He’s going to blame us in the morning if he regrets it, Zayn thinks.

He may never have the courage for this again. I think he’ll regret it more if we don't let this happen. Besides, better to do this with our supervision than him accidentally turn his hair green trying to do it alone, Louis thinks.
“Guess you have a point there,” Zayn thinks as him and Louis nod in agreement to each other.

“You’re wish is our command,” Zayn gives into to Niall.

“Woooooooo!” Niall shouts throwing his arms into the air to celebrate his victory, “Let’s go!” Niall runs in a random direction into the forest.

“Gawd dammit Niall! That’s not even in the direction of the truck,” Zayn yells, “Louis, pick up the blanket, I’m going to chase down Niall because there’s a chance we’ll never see him again if I don’t.”

“What are you waiting around here talking to me for? Go!” Louis orders as Zayn disappears into the forest as well. Louis gathers up their things and follows the path back to the Niall’s truck.

When Louis arrives, he beats Zayn and Niall there. He looks around the truck hoping they are hiding somewhere close to scare him, but he finds no trace of them. Louis does not have Niall’s keys so he is trapped out in the open without them. This is definitely how horror movies begin, I’m so dead Louis thinks to himself.

“Ahhh!!” Niall yells from somewhere in the woods.

“Niall? Zayn?!” Louis calls out, not knowing if he is legitimately feeling scared or if the weed is irrationally creating fear. This does appear extremely similar to a horror movie he has seen before though…

Finally, Niall rolls out of the forest and lands in a ditch on the side of the road a few yards away from Louis. Niall is covered in leaves and spider webs, and now a layer of dirt from the ditch.

“Niall! are you okay?!” Louis exclaims, sprinting over to him.

“I thought I was going to be lost forever,” Niall moans as he lets Louis help him to his feet. Louis smacks all the dust and leaves off of Niall.

“Where’s Zayn?” Louis asks.

“Uh, I don’t know, this monster thing was chasing me, maybe it already got him,” Niall expels looking exhausted.

“A monster?” Louis questions.

“Yeah, maybe a ghost. It kept yelling my name and trying to grab me,” Niall answers.

“Niall, I’m going to kill you!” Zayn screams as he appears out of the same trees Niall fell from, also now covered in leaves.

“It’s the monster!” Niall yells jumping behind Louis.

“You’re going to wish I was a monster by the time I’m done with you!” Zayn growls, “When someone yells your name and tells you to stop, fucking do what you’re fucking told too!”

“I thought you were going to kill me,” Niall whines.

“I still might,” Zayn quips.

“You both are here and safe, that’s what we need be thankful for,” Louis says trying to calm the boys.
“Feed me,” Niall says to Louis, “Then make me a blonde.”

The boys make their way to Dillon’s to do their shopping so they can use Zayn’s worker’s discount to save a little money. They buy cheap hair dye and various snacks to feed their cravings.

“I want this and this and this…” Niall chants as he walks down the isle, throwing one of everything into the cart behind him. Louis and Zayn push the shopping kart, removing more than half of what Niall puts into it. They know he could not possibly eat all the food he was grabbing. Well knowing Niall he probably could, but it would not end well for whoever bathroom he winds up in.

They then go to Zayn’s house since he has a bathroom attached to his bedroom to do Niall’s hair. Surprisingly, Louis and Zayn do not horribly ruin Niall’s hair, but the hair dye does stain Zayn’s shower. By the time they finish the process, they are all exhausted and pass out on Zayn’s bed, arms and legs intertwined with one another.

The next morning, a groggy Niall makes his way to the bathroom to take a leak. When he goes to wash his hands, he keeps his head down focusing on his actions. But when he finishes, he looks up at the mirror. His eyes widen as he sees what has happened to him.

“Ahhhhh!” Niall screams, quickly awakening Zayn and Louis. They run to the bathroom, fearing Niall had hurt himself or something.

“What, what?!” Louis pushes open the bathroom door.

“My hair!” Niall squeals, not being able to look away his reflection. Laughter erupts out of Louis and Zayn, watching their friend’s reaction to his own decision.

“What have I done!?” Niall asks himself.


“What are you freaking out about babe, you look great,” Zayn answers.

“You… you think so?” Niall asks turning towards his friends for the first time.

“You’re a natural blonde,” Louis responds, squeezing Niall’s shoulder in reassurance.

“You’re going to get all the girls,” Zayn agrees with Louis.

Niall then looks back in the mirror, once again examining himself. He runs his hand over his head, as if he is looking at each blonde hair individually.

“Natural blonde…” Niall repeats. Niall never lets his hairs go brown again.

It is not like Niall’s broken heart is fixed by different hair color. Niall tries to act strong in public, but his friends can see his struggle. Louis, Zayn, Liam, and Harry take Niall out on various adventures, including but not limited to: graffiti art, dance raves, streaking, getting high, and going to various parties.

But when going to social events, Niall at first has a good time. But as the evening progresses, Niall becomes silent, talks to less people, and then sits watching people interact. Because all he can imagine is Karlie sitting next to him, like they always did, whispering jokes in each other’s ears, as if they were alone in the world at a large party. So the boys will take Niall home once they can see he
is so far gone. They will arrive back home, put on a movie to distract him, and Niall will just watch, occasionally muttering about Karlie’s disappearance. Niall thanks whatever being there is up in the sky for summer vacation’s existence so he does not have to see Karlie, but the new school year is quickly approaching.

Chapter End Notes

I just finished chapter 9! Which is sketchy because the last part of it requires lots of visualization which is something I have a hard time writing about... But I've been building up this plot for a while so I can't wait for you guys to read it! Next section will probably come out this weekend? And remember how I said this may all be done by the end of winter break? Yeah I lied, no way that is happening.

Next part is mainly about how Niall deals with accepting reality and Karlie moving on faster than him. I'll be hinting heavily about the next big arc coming for this series in the next part.
Chapter 8 Part 3: Niall's Turning Page

Chapter Summary

Zayn helps Niall reach some closure for his breakup with Karlie, but another crisis is looming over the horizon.

Chapter Notes

This is the shortest part of this chapter. It's more about wrapping up the Karlie arc to prepare for the next one. And Part 3 really is about what I went through during my breakup. I wish my closure was clean as Niall's! Haha, but seriously I can't wait to get out the last part of this chapter out to you guys:

Song of the Chapter: "Turning Page" by Sleeping at Last

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 3

School starts horribly for Niall because he now has to face Karlie every day. It hurts seeing Karlie so okay with their breakup. It is not like he wants her to be sad, but how can she smile so brightly when all Niall can do is sulk? Occasionally they will do a polite wave to each other, but normally Niall and Karlie just ignore the other. Not that Niall does not feel her presence there, but he does not always want to be the first one to acknowledge the other. Being ignored aches in its own way, because before they had been each other’s everything, and now they were nothing to one another. Just a memory of a passed life.

Niall tells his friends that he does not want her back. He says that he wishes she had not broken up with him in the first place, but he could not imagine them going back after all that occurred. After a month of seeing her on a usual basis, it begins to hurt less and less every day. Sure his legs still feel a little weak when he sees her, but now it is because he links her image to pain, not because he misses their relationship.

Until one night in early October. The five boys plan to attend a costume party, all dressed up as different superheroes, looking coordinated and cute as hell. Liam is Batman, Niall is the Green Lantern, Zayn is Spiderman, Louis is Superman, and Harry as a male crossover of Wonder Woman. The party starts out very well; it is packed full of people, boozes, and ear-busting music.

“Wonderful thighs babe,” Louis giggles to Harry, both of them already a little intoxicated.

“You really think so?” Harry replies, flexing his leg muscles, “I guess I’m starting to get into running. Not that I’m really fast, but my legs make naturally long strides.”

“Didn’t shave though, I see,” Louis runs his eyes up and down Harry’s legs.

“Would you prefer my name be Wonder Man?” Harry chuckles, “I don’t know, long legs, kinda
scared I’d cut myself if I tried to shave.”

“You’d look beautiful darling,” Louis compliments as he runs the back of his hand along Harry’s exposed thigh, “You’d feel even better.”

Niall, Liam, and Zayn look incredibly uncomfortable at the contact between Harry and Louis. Liam take a long drink from his beer as Zayn and Niall look for any distraction to focus their attention on.

“I, uh, think I need a drink. You want anything Zayn?” Niall asks.

“You always forget Muslims don’t drink,” Zayn comments, “And I’m the DD remember?”

“Oh yeah, okay, be right back,” Niall replies reentering the stranger’s house.

Niall makes his way to the kitchen the grab another beverage when he sees the back of Karlie’s very revealing honey bee costume. He briefly pauses at the entrance of the kitchen and takes a deep breath, attempting to clear his mind of poisoning thoughts. He snakes his way through the room attempting to avoid her gaze, but his eyes cannot help but be drawn to her. So when she turns around to face Niall’s direction with a fond smile upon her face, he cannot help the flutter in his chest due to the surprise of her supposed affection.

But then Niall sees this boy walk from behind him and join her group of friends. Niall does not get a look at his face, but he does notice the shirtless costume of being a boxer on him. And then the worst possible thing Niall could have imagined happens: the guy’s hand lightly rest on her lower back right above her bum. And she grins so fondly at the boy. That is when the world stops spinning. All Niall can see was the guy’s hand on her back, the same place his hand used to place itself time and time again.

“Hey dude, you’re block the fridge,” someone in a mummy costume reminds Niall. Niall briefly nods his head in response, and then backs out of the room with his eyes not moving from Karlie’s body.

It is almost as if time and sound have stopped moving around Niall. The only thing he can hear is his breath despite the loud music, and all he can see is Karlie even though his eyes are open to view the entire room. He makes his way outside till he bumps into Spiderman.

“I know I said I’d be the D.D., but you only had one beer and I wanna get stoned. You okay driving tonight?” Zayn questions while handing Niall the keys. Niall takes the keys and nods once, but something is not right, Zayn can feel it.

“You alright buddy?” Zayn asks.

“You’re ready to go?” Niall mumbles while shaking the keys softly, appearing nearly zombified.

“No, I want to smoke,” Zayn explains slowly to Niall, to make sure he understands.

“Oh okay…” Niall answers with no emotion in his voice. His eyes looking glassed over, foggy even.

“Do you want to go, Niall?” Zayn inquires softly. All Niall can do is nod. His cheeks are turning pink, and his lips quiver while trying to hold back a sob.

“I’m going to tell the guys we’re heading out, go wait by the front door for me, kay?” Zayn commands while looking Niall in the eyes, though Niall avoids to Zayn’s gaze.

“Yeah… front door,” Niall emptily comments, then walk through the house while avoiding the
kitchen during his trek. Zayn says goodbye to all his friends; them asking if he would be returning
soon. Zayn answers yes but he feels like he is lying. He has never seen Niall looking so devastated,
he does not know what to expect from the boy once they get a chance to talk.

“Ready to go, Green Lantern?” Zayn asks as he shuts the front door behind him. Niall sits on the
porch of the party’s house looking up at the stars above.

“Whenver you are, Spiderman,” Niall replies as Zayn’s helps Niall to his feet. As they walk down
the sidewalk to Niall’s truck, their hands remain interlocked, first Niall not noticing but then
appreciating the comfort only a close friend like Zayn or Louis could provide like this.

But then the warmth shared between their hands reminds Niall of how Katie’s hand felt. How it
made him feel protected and safe. A tear runs down his cheek as Niall’s grip releases from Zayn.
Zayn turns to Niall and sees the struggle on Niall’s face, like he is fighting a silent battle within
himself against himself.

“Niall…” Zayn stops both of them in their tracks a few yards away from Niall’s truck, “Come here.”

Zayn grabs Niall softly and pulls him in for a hug. Then Niall does something neither of them were
expecting. Niall balls, like a baby for an exact comparison. High-pitched screams shoot out of Niall’s
mouth as he buries his face into Zayn’s chest.

“Babe…” Zayn scratches Niall’s back trying to consul his best friend, but he feels powerless. Niall
just grabs on tighter as the squeals continue and tears stain Spiderman’s suit dark blotches.

That is the night it all became real for Niall. The thin wall he had constructed to keep himself safe
from the reality that hurt him came tumbling down. He had ignored reality for three months. He had
ignored that flutter in his chest every time he saw her at school. He ignored those urges at night to
sneak over to her house and get into bed with her like he previously did. And he ignored all the signs
that were obviously there: She moved on. And now he saw it.

Because maybe what was holding Niall together was the rare thought that she was a mess too. That
maybe she missed him even a fraction of the amount he missed her. But she does not. And he could
clearly see that in the way she smiled at that new boy and the way it looked so right with his hands
on her.

“It’s real,” Niall chokes out, “Why does this hurt so much? Reality?”

“Because love isn’t rational,” Zayn answers, “And when love meets reality, this is what happened.”

“Can we go home please?” Niall begs, "I don't want her to see me like this, so weak."

“You aren't weak; you're in love. Actually, letting yourself feel this is one of the strongest things a
person can let themselves do. So many people will lock this away and repeatedly destroy themselves
over and over again to prevent this from happening. You're human Niall, and letting yourself feel
that is so brave. But of course, let's go home,” Zayn says while guiding Niall to his truck.

The car ride seems long as Niall cannot look at Zayn. Niall feels pathetic, crying over a girl who
dumped him months ago. He has not sobbed about her in two months and was so proud of himself
because of that. He thought he was finally moving on. But no longer.

Snot is running down his face along with a trail of tears. Tiny cries linger out of his lips as he tries to
hold himself together. Zayn cannot see Niall’s face that well. He watches him as he drives, only
seeing the sparkling reflection of his tears when they drive under street lights.
Zayn pulls Niall up to his room and sets them both on Niall’s bed.

“Can you rip my heart?” Niall pleads softly, “I’m sick of feeling.”

“I wouldn’t do that even if I could,” Zayn chuckles, “Your heart makes you who you are. Even if it’s feeling shitty right now, at least you feel, and how you’re reacting now proves that you felt something amazing. Love is like a drug, now you are craving that rush again, which is why it hurts so much now. But if she made you feel that good at one point, it proves it is possible for you to feel that way again. With or without her. Love is from within. If you could love her, you can and will love somebody else.”

“I hate you using logic,” Niall sighs, resting is head on Zayn’s shoulder, “You don’t have to stay here with me. You can head back to the party if you want. I’m fine here alone.”

“No, I’m good. I wasn't really in the mood to party to begin with,” Zayn responds.

“You told me before we left that you wanted to get wasted,” Niall reminds him.

“Yeah, I wanted to get stoned, because I wasn’t having a good time. I’d much rather just hang out with you than go to some party where I’m only talking with people because we’re mutually not sober. You and I can talk without any of that. Plus you know I get uncomfortable with groups larger than five, another reason I wanted to smoke,” Zayn explains.

“You mean it? Just me and you?” Niall asks weakly.

“Mhm. I should have told you Karlie could have been at that party. I heard it was possible, but it was very iffy. I didn’t want you to be looking over your shoulder then entire time. I wanted you to have fun without over thinking like you have been recently,” Zayn describes.

“Did you know she had a boyfriend?” Niall inquires, though he does not really want to know the answer.

“… Yeah, we went to a party two weeks ago when you were out of town. We saw her there with him, talked to her for a bit. Niall, I’m not kidding, she took a major step down. He’s hella less cute than you, by far, and he does not really talk, or laugh, or anything. Like I’m not sure how he could compare to you,” Zayn tries to clam his friend, “I should have told you, I know that, I just knew it was going to hurt no matter what. Perhaps I should have given you more time to prepare, but you know I’m not good with confrontation… and… I’m sorry Niall.”

“It’s alright. I don’t know what I would have done in your situation either. It sucks either way,” Niall admits.

“Well from here on out, if there is a party that Karlie is going to be at and you don’t want to go, we won’t go together, kay?” Zayn offers.

“You don’t need to sacrifice your good time because I can’t handle the facts on the ground,” Niall admits honestly.

“Niall, you are my best friend, so you know I’m stubborn as an ass. I'm not backing down from the declaration,” Zayn reminds him, “And I know you’d do the same for me.”

It is not long before Niall falls asleep against Zayn's warmth.

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It felt like it was the first day after the breakup all over again. Niall wakes up with a light pounding in his head as Zayn lies passed out on the ground next to his bed. All the memories and emotions flood back from the previous night, the images in his head replaying over and over again. He is so relieved it is finally the weekend. At least he does not have to face her again for another day or two. Does she know that he left the party because of her? Would it even matter if she did? Niall's mind races from thought to thought.

“Hey buddy,” Niall feels a warm hand on his back, “I’m hungry, make me breakfast.”

“Zayn, you know how to cook,” Niall rolls away from his friend.

“Yeah, but I’m your guest. You don’t want to be a rude host,” Zayn quips.

“Let me lie in bed and wither away,” Niall pleads with his face buried in a pillow.

“Nope, you’ve forced yourself to be numb for months. It kept you safe, but it can no longer. Time to start facing things, even if it hurts. And you can’t face things lying in bed while your best friend starves next to you,” Zayn convinces him.

“I dislike you with a burning passion of a thousand suns,” Niall says as he pulls himself up in his bed, though both friends know that statement is a pile of B.S.

“That’s more like it!” Zayn cheers, “You’re like a tenth of the way there!”

“I’m going to lay back down if you don’t shut up,” Niall growls while throwing his legs out from underneath the covers. Zayn remains quiet as he follows Niall to the kitchen.

And yes, Niall goes through another week of hell. But unlike last time where he kept telling himself that he did not want her back, he actually let himself say I do want her back. But when he imagines being with her again, what Niall realizes is that he could never trust her again. She lied to him for nearly six months, and if they ever got back together he would always wonder if she was lying again.

For the first few days after the party, he lets himself think of all the positive things from their relationship: the security and confidence she gave him, how she felt when she wrapped herself around him as they slept, her religious devotion, and the way they danced in the dark.

But after that he begins to imagine what he would want differently from a relationship, such as not lying to him for six months; that she actually would have told Niall what she was feeling; a girl that might say how good he looks everyday like Niall would for Karlie; and maybe he would like a girl that would smoke with him every now and again (something she was very against).

With a combination of actually allowing himself to miss her and thinking what he would change about her, Niall makes real progress. After a couple of weeks of self-revelation, he goes nearly half a day without thinking about her. He sees her in the hallways, and he can wave with an actual smile, unlike the ones he would fake when he greeted her previously.

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The end of Karlie came nearly a month after the party. Zayn invites the boys to this Free and Equal event where a gay couple who is suing the state for marriage equality would be speaking at. Liam brings Danielle, Louis and Harry come together (late as usual), while Niall tags along with Zayn. Niall and Zayn sit in the front row as most of the seats are already taken by the time they arrive. The hosts of the event bring in more chairs to line the sides of the wall for the surplus of people.
The couple comes center stage and starts to talk about how they met, in the very town at the local community college. They explain how it began as an awkward friendship. There was always some tension between the two, but they could not explain why it was there. It only made them spend more time together, until they needed to touch each other as if it was a reason to breathe.

It is then when Niall sees in his peripheral vision a couple coming to sit down on the chairs lining the walls of the room. He tries not to look, but he knows who it is. It is Karlie with her boyfriend. Niall’s heart rate races as he tries to focus on the lovely soulmates in front of him, but he physically cannot. He can see they are not sitting close to one another. There is some distance between them as if they were trying to be afar apart from one another as possible. Finally, Niall breaks and slightly turns his head just enough so he could see them in his direct line of vision.

He sees a boy. Well a teenager of course, but he was just a boy. Niall had put so much fear in whoever this boy could be: a super model, a beefed up quarter back, or some suave hipster. But there was nothing particularly special or intimidating about the boy. He had some fuzz on his face, he was nice looking but nothing extraordinary. His hands fold into his sides, removing any chance of holding hands with Karlie. Karlie body is turned away from him, looking at the couple on the stage.

Spontaneously, images explode within Niall’s mind. He imagines Karlie and her boyfriend smiling at one another. Niall pictures them dancing, lightly kissing, being happy. And Niall smiles. He does not know why, but he is overtaken by a feeling of joy he had never felt before. Niall is happy for Karlie, because he loved her. He wants her happy. And if that boy made her blissful, there is nothing else better he could ask for.

Niall turns his attention back to the reason why he is there: the happy couple explaining why love is love no matter its form. Niall looks over to Zayn with a smirk on his face. Zayn rolls his eyes at Niall but smiles back, causing an even bigger grin from Niall. The event finishes off well, the couple raising money for their upcoming court battle.

Niall and Zayn wonder around the crowd afterwards, making small talk here and there. Harry and Louis show up in the back of the room looking all blushed and flustered (wonder what they were doing…) Liam and Danielle eventually leave to go out for dinner, so Zayn decides it is time for Niall and him to leave as well.

As Niall and Zayn head toward the door, they bump into Karlie and her boyfriend also leaving at the same time.

“Hey,” Niall calmly waves to the couple with a smile that has been missing for a while.

“Hi…” Karlie replies awkwardly as she and her boyfriend walk out the door first, followed by Zayn and Niall.

And that was it. Zayn brings up a discussion about the new set design for an Irish play the theater department will be presenting soon and requests from Niall if he would like to be a consultant for the designing of the set. Karlie and her boyfriend make inaudible small talk as they all exit the building. Karlie and her boyfriend turns left, and Niall and Zayn leave to the right. Niall looks back over his shoulder one last time to see his ex and her new lover lightly hold hands with one another. A smile returns to Niall’s face as he refocuses back on Zayn.

Karlie and Niall’s story comes to an end as Niall accepts that this is one of the many times they will be heading in the different directions from one another. The love story has come to an end. And even though it was not the ending Niall was hoping for, at least he was in one to begin with.

“So is that a yes or a no to my request?” Zayn repeats, throwing his arm around Niall’s shoulder.
“Of course mate, like you even had to ask,” Niall agrees, his arm wrapping around Zayn’s shoulder as well.

Things finally feel sane and stable for the group. Harry and Louis were back to their usual overly-attached versions of themselves. Niall’s confidence and overall happiness had returned as well. But this state of completeness could not last forever. The last breakup, after Harry/Taylor and Niall/Karlie, rapidly approached on the horizon. This break up would include Liam… and Zayn.

Chapter End Notes

Now that I think about it... the next part might do well enough to stand on its own. So expect what should have been Part 4 to be its own chapter:) it’s pretty momentous, I think it deserves its own chapter.

I've been leading up to the next part for a long time... and it was so fun writing it. It's so cute. I'm editing it right now, hope to get it out to you guys before the end of the week.
Chapter 9: Habits & Amnesia

Chapter Summary

Liam's breakup sets Niall out on a collision course. Once he hits it, Niall doesn't know how he hasn't hit it before.

Chapter Notes

This was previously supposed to be part of Chapter 8, but I thought due to its length and the length of the entirety of Chapter 8 I thought it could stand on its own. Along with its importance to the series as a whole. Hope all enjoy it:)

Songs of the Chapter:
"Habits" by Tove Lo
"Amnesia" by Five Seconds of Summer

The story begins one Monday afternoon during the guys’ lunch period at school. Three boys sit at the usual table with a vacancy left by Liam and Zayn. This puts Louis on edge because if anyone in their group is ever sick, they always tell one another by text in the morning. But this morning no such text arrived from Zayn or Liam.

“Okay, am I the only one who is a little anxious right now?” Louis asks Harry and Niall.

“What do you mean?” Niall questions looking up from his lunch tray.

“Zayn and Liam, where are they?” Louis clarifies.

“They’re big boys Lou,” Harry pokes Louis’s side, “Super precious how you worry like a mother whose kids are five minutes late to being home, but they’re prolly just sick.”

“No, I got a feeling. Something is off,” Louis replies, “I called Zayn, and it went straight to his voicemail. Who turns their phone off in this day and age?”

“Got a feeling? You’re psychic now?” Niall probes.

“Watch your rude mouth. Or I’ll throw this milk in your face with my telekinetic powers,” Louis threatens while flipping the hair out of his face, “But seriously. I’ve Facebooked Zayn twice and he hasn’t answered. I never have to text Zayn more than once, he always replies back to me.”

“Look over there, there’s Liam,” Harry says pointing to the other end of the lunchroom, “If anyone knows what’s up with Zayn, it’ll be him.”

Louis, Harry, and Niall stand up from their table and snake their way around the lunchroom to make their way over to Liam. As they get closer they can see Liam is sitting next to Danielle, holding her hand as they talk to each other and her group of friends.
“Hey buddy, what’s going on?” Niall asks Liam as they arrive at the table.

“Oh hi guys!” Liam says with a smile on his face. Danielle makes a similar greeting as she squeezes Liam hand tighter, “Sorry I’m not sitting with you. Um I made Danielle my girlfriend and thought it’d be best if I sat with her, you know?”

“Congrats Li!” Niall slaps Liam on the gently back.

Yeah, it’s pretty great,” The new couple smiles at one another.

“Have you heard from Zayn?” Louis breaks up the joyful mood, “I haven’t heard from him for a few days.”

Liam’s face goes pale as he appears very uneasy. He let's go of Danielle’s hand and starts to stand up, “I’m going to go get a drink, you need anything?”

“Nah babe, I’m good, thanks though,” Danielle turns back to her friends as Liam walks away with the boys.

“Uh, we got in a fight, I guess,” Liam reveals nervously.

“What kind of fight?” Louis quickly questions.

“About Danielle…” Liam admits, “I guess he does not like her that much.”

“It’s not about Danielle dude,” Niall shakes his head in disbelief.

“I know… I feel really bad, but I don’t know what else I could do,” Liam whines.

“When did this happen?” Louis demands sternly.

“Saturday afternoon…” Liam replies.

“Two days ago! And you tell us now?!” Louis nearly yells.

“Calm down!” Liam exclaims looking around the lunchroom as if he is embarrassed by his group, “I didn’t know what to say… but seriously Louis, you know I care. I feel horrible… but I don’t like Zayn the way he likes me.”

“Next time, you better tell us a lot sooner,” Louis growls as he pokes Liam forcefully in the chest. Louis then storms off from the boys with smoke billowing out of his ears.

“We’ll take care of it,” Niall tries to alleviate Liam's guilt, “Don’t worry Liam. Next time don’t lead someone on for so long... Go enjoy your girlfriend, kay?”

Liam nods nervously, “You guys don’t hate me?”

“Never. I mean, Louis might, but you know he can’t stay mad for more than a few days,” Harry shrugs.

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Immediately after school Louis, Harry, and Niall rush to Zayn’s house. They walk into the house without knocking as usual.

“Hey boys,” Zayn’s mother welcomes with a warm smile while sitting on the couch, “It’s good to
see you, but Zayn isn’t feeling well.

“We know,” Niall responds, “That’s why we’re here. Is he okay? Can we see him?”

“Um…” She explains nervously, “I really don’t know. I haven’t seen him leave his room since Saturday… Hopefully he comes out while I’m asleep to eat something. I ask him what is wrong, but he never gives a direct answer. All he says is that he’s sick.”

“Yeah that sounds like Zayn. He’ll be okay; we’ll make sure of that,” Louis states as he, Harry, and Niall walk up the stairs to Zayn’s room. Louis knocks firmly on the door.

“Go away!” Zayn moans, his voice muffled due to the barrier of the door.

“Don’t care, we’re coming in!” Niall exclaims as he pushes open the door. They are greeted by the sight of Zayn wiping tears off his face, wrapped in his blanket on top of his bed. Used tissues litter the bed and the floor around it.

“What are you guys doing here?” Zayn sighs as he tries to clear his nose of snot, straightening up his posture.

“We tried to call, but you didn’t answer,” Harry answers.

“Oh, I guess it died yesterday and I forgot to turn it back on…” Zayn lies weakly. Louis, Harry, and Niall take seats on Zayn’s bed around him.

“How are you?” Louis inquires.

“I… I don’t know,” Zayn admits looking down.

“Well we already know the obvious stuff Zaynie,” Niall coos, “Just start from the beginning, your side of the story.”

The room goes quiet as Zayn breathes in deep trying to hold back his depressed cries. Niall takes Zayn’s hand and gives it a squeeze, Harry places his big palm on Zayn’s back and rubs soft circle into it, and Louis wipes a tear off of Zayn’s cheek. All of this gives Zayn the confidence to finally open his mouth.

“It happened Saturday… We were hangout at my place as usual, I was kind of horny… We hadn’t fooled around in a while. I start to do what we usually do, when he announced he had to go because he has plans. I get mad, because I rarely see him anymore. I had an entire night planned for us, and I booked him more than a week ago. He finally admits he has a date with that girl Danielle. I became more angry. He calls me clingy, I call him flaky. This escalates till he finally declares that he wants her to be his girlfriend, and he doesn’t want to do whatever we are doing anymore. I asked if he loves her and he said he doesn’t know… I asked him if he loves me… and he side no. I just lost it. I don’t remember what exactly I said, something probably really mean against her... I didn't mean it, I was just mad... He then said something along the lines of I was a fun to fool around with but nothing more than that. I begin crying, and he quickly apologizes, saying he didn’t mean it like that. But I yelled for him to get out, and after enough times he finally did. And yeah that’s about it…” Zayn's tears begin to flow as he ends his story.

“Babe…” Louis wraps around his arms around Zayn.

“Is that all I was to him? Just something to play with till something better came along?” Zayn whimpered.
“Zayn, he cares about you, don’t think that he doesn’t. I could see it in his eyes, he feels bad, guilty,” Harry answers.

“Good, he should. Not bad enough apparently,” Zayn hisses.

“It’s not your fault he’s straight,” Niall states.

“What he did wasn’t very straight of us!” Zayn says nearly laughing at the irony of the statement.

“You know there is a difference between sex and sexuality,” Harry explains while looking at Louis, “Love and sexual desire are two very different things.”

“I know… I actually loved him, you know? And for him I was just some desire in the moment,” Zayn cries again as his friends wrap tighter around him.

“Shh… It’s messy, I know.” Niall tries to comfort Zayn, “He’s in the wrong. We know that and he knows that. It’s no secret you had feelings for him. He can’t play that card.”

Zayn clings onto Niall, resting his head on Niall’s stomach. They continue to talk through the evening as it becomes darker outside.

“Uh, Niall, we got choir practice we have to get too,” Harry reminds him.

“And remember you agreed to pick up Lottie from her friend’s house before that?” Louis commands right after.

“Louis, why don’t you take my truck for the night, and then pick up me and Zayn tomorrow morning on the way to school?” Niall offers as Zayn remains coiled around him.

“What? Are you sure?” Louis questions.

“As long as you don’t drive it anywhere you aren’t supposed too, and it better not come back to me with some white splattering on my steering wheel!” Niall chuckles.

“You don’t have to do that,” Zayn says to Niall, “You got stuff to do, I’ll be okay.”

“I know you’ll be okay,” Niall looks down at Zayn wrapped around him, “But you were there for me during my breakup, and I’m going to be here for you. Plus I’ve never missed a choir practice once in my life. One time won’t kill me.”

“If you wish,” Zayn tries to hide his pleased grin from the fact that is best friend would sacrifice his evening for Zayn’s well-being. Louis and Harry wish them well and that they will see them in the morning. As the two leave, Zayn’s mother yells up to the room that dinner is done.

“You know she’s very worried about you,” Niall reminds Zayn.

“I just don’t want her to see me like this, because then she’s going to ask why,” Zayn explains.

“You still haven’t told your parents about… you, yet?” Niall whispers.

“Nope, still pretty scared how they’ll react,” Zayn replies.

“They love you,” Niall confirms.

“I know, but what if it’s not enough?” Zayn whimpers with another tear in his eye, “Wasn’t enough for Liam...”
“Big difference between those two situations,” Niall adds while wiping away the tear, “Let’s go eat.”

“I’m not hungry,” Zayn complains as he flops back down in bed.

“You aren’t going to make me eat alone with your family, are you?” Niall pokes Zayn in the ribcage.

“Maybe I will,” Zayn playfully smacks the hand away.

“Come on. If I go down there without you, it will only raise more questions. If you eat with us, at least I will be able to steer the conversation into safe directions. Please, they miss you,” Niall pleads.

“Ugh, you are the absolute worst,” Zayn gives into Niall's relentless demands.

Dinner flows smoothly as Niall does everything in his power to make Zayn laugh and smile so his parents think that Zayn is just sick, not that he is depressed. His parents really appreciate Niall’s company because they missed their baby boy’s smile very much. Niall asks if he can spend the night so he can make sure Zayn gets up into for school in the morning, in which Zayn’s parents quickly agree. The boys then head back to Zayn’s room after his parents’ blessing.

“Do you mind if I shower real quick? I usually shower at home before choir practice, because I feel totally greasy after gym class,” Niall requests.

“Knock yourself out,” Zayn turns his attention to finding the cord to charge his phone.

Niall enters Zayn’s private bathroom, turns on the shower, and undresses. The room quickly fills with steam as the warm water covers Niall’s body. Niall begins to quietly sing “Amnesia” by 5 Seconds of Summer to himself, but then Niall hears the bathroom door open and close quietly.

“Hey buddy, I don’t know what you heard but this ain’t no free show,” Niall jokes.

“You wish. I just need to smoke,” Zayn answers as Niall watches Zayn, through the blurry shower curtain soaked in water that alters Niall’s vision, pull out some weed as he sits on the closed toilet seat.

“You can’t smoke in your room?” Niall pries.

“It’ll smell it up. The carpet holds in the stank. The fan and steam in here dilutes the smell,” Zayn explains. Niall peaks his head around the shower curtain to see Zayn packing up a pipe, then Zayn reaches below his sink to pull out an empty, used roll of paper towels.

“What’s that for?” Niall questions with his wet hair plastered to his face.

“I learned this from my friend Ed. You stuff the roll full of used dryer sheets. When you take a hit, you exhale into the roll so it captures most of the smoke and smell. Do you want a hit?” Zayn describes while raising both the roll and pipe towards Niall.

“I’ll pass this time, thanks,” Niall nods.

“Fine, more for me,” Zayn says taking a puff and then sings, “High, all the time, to keep you off my mind…” Niall observes the sadness in Zayn’s eyes. How Zayn is not even close to being done crying yet, but he was literally too tired to cry after sobbing for two days straight. But high Niall tends to put a smile on Zayn’s face… for Zayn Niall thinks.

“I change my mind. I want it,” Niall extends his hands towards Zayn. A wide smile does spread upon Zayn’s face, as Niall predicted, “You’re going to have to hold and light the pipe for me. My
hands are too wet. I don’t want to drop and break it.”

“Sure, or is it because you’re a lazy baby-stoner who doesn’t want to do it himself,” Zayn teases.

“Call it what you want. Easier for me,” Niall responds with a smirk.

Zayn walks over to Niall holding the pipe and roll, “When you exhale, put it all in here. Take a deep breath.” Zayn raises the pipe up to Niall’s lips and lights it. Niall takes in a deep breath from the pipe while trying to hold it in as long as possible. Zayn hands him the roll and Niall quickly raises it to his mouth, but not fast enough. Niall coughs. The smoke goes around the roll, largely missing it completely.

“Oh my god, Niall!” Zayn laughs, “You had one job!”

“It’s harder than it looks,” Niall quickly regaining control of his repertory system.

“Wow, coughing less than 15 seconds this time, maybe you aren’t a baby stoner after all,” Zayn sits back down on the toilet as he lights the bowl for himself.

Niall pulls his body back into the shower as his head spins. He focuses on the rhythm of the water flowing from his head to his toes. He lightly hums “Amnesia” again to fill the calmed silence.

“You okay in there, Nialler?” Zayn breaks Niall out of his trance.

“Uh, should I not be?” Niall slowly articulates.

“You’ve been standing there humming for like fifteen minutes,” Zayn chuckles.

“Oh... I can feel every drop of water on my body,” Niall looks at his pruney hands, “I think I’ll get out now.” As Niall turns around to turn off the water, he looks down to see a yellow staining near the drain, “You don’t clean your shower often, do you? How long ago did we dye my hair?”

“No I do, I left that their on purpose. It’s kind of like a tattoo for my house, a memory of us, you know? Like, I know it was a rough time for you, but I loved that night. I missed you, it sounds selfish, but I was happy to have you back,” Zayn softly explains, “I left a towel for you on the sink. I’ll be in my bedroom.”

Niall hops out of the shower the second the door shuts with Zayn’s exit. As Niall dries himself, he gazes back down at the blonde dye stain. It causes a little spark in his heart. He does not know why, but he finds it endearing. It was an ugly blotch that kind of looks like piss. But Zayn kept it because even for its ugly color, the color means Niall.

He removes every drop of water from his body as his yellow hair hangs down over his eyes. All he can see is the dye. Yellow, yellow, yellow. He puts on the pajamas and tank top Zayn left for him. When he steps into Zayn’s room, Niall sees his friend dubbed over his cell phone his an emotionless face.

“All okay mate?” Niall sits down next to his friend, causing Zayn to bounce in the air with how hard Niall landed.

“I finally put my phone on the charger before I interrupted your shower. When I came out I heard a ping from my phone. It was just Louis checking up on me, but my wallpaper is Liam. We look so happy, you know? Why wasn’t it good enough?” Zayn weakly tells Niall.

“Might be time to change your wallpaper,” Niall suggests.
“To what?” Zayn asks.

“You and me! Let’s get our selfie game on,” Niall declares, grabbing Zayn’s phone out of his hand and opening up the camera app.

“No please, I haven’t slept in like two days. I look like total shit,” Zayn whines.


In the first picture, Niall grabs his chin and look deep in thought as Zayn pouts. In the second picture, Niall sticks his tongue out to the side while Zayn rolls his eyes.

“Zaynie! You gotta smile!” Niall barks.

“Make me,” Zayn challenges, sticking out his tongue in protest.

“Got it!” Niall cheers. Niall brings the camera back up while Zayn sulks at first, but as Niall presses the “capture” button, he turns towards to Zayn, sticks out his tongue, and plants it on the side of Zayn’s face. Niall licks Zayn from the edge of Zayn’s jaw bone up to his hair line. As the camera flashes, Zayn’s eyes slam shut and a wide smile stretches along his face. Niall pulls away to look at the picture he took.

It is exactly what Niall wanted, “Smashing!” Zayn is smiling.

“Holy fuck, your breath reeks!” Zayn wipes Niall’s slobber off of his face, though it still holds a stupid grin.

“Last thing I ate was your mother’s cooking!” Niall quips.

“Don’t bring my mother into this!” Zayn laughs as Niall changes the wallpaper in Zayn’s phone to the picture of Niall licking Zayn. Niall then sends the picture to his phone. He pulls his phone out of his pocket.

“What are you doing?” Zayn questions.

“See? We’re the same,” Niall shows his phone that now has the same background picture as Zayn’s.

“Aw Nialler!” Zayn hugs Niall tightly.

“I can’t find Liam in your phone. What’s his name?” Niall demands with his attention focused back on Zayn’s phone.

“What?” Zayn mumbles.

“He’s not in your phone under the name Liam. If you didn’t change your wallpaper photo, I doubt you deleted his number. So what’s his name in your phone?” Niall requests again.

“Well aren’t you the little detective…” Zayn whines.

“Zayn,” Niall demands.

“Uh… King Liopold…” Zayn admits obviously embarrassed.

“I don’t even want to know what kinda freaky sexplay you guys involved that with,” Niall grunts.

“No, no, it wasn’t like that I swear!” Zayn attempts to defend himself.
“Mhm, whatever you say Prince El-Zayn-ibeth… Now, I want you to change his name from that to Liam P,” Niall suggests handing Zayn back his phone.

“Niall…” Zayn whimpers.

“I know, it sucks. It really hurt when I had to change who Karlie was in my life, but it is the first step to moving on. It’s necessary,” Niall opens up honestly, “You gotta change his identity, from a person you love to just another friend.”

“What if I don’t want to move on…? He came back once before…” Zayn quietly argues.

“If your happiness is dependent upon someone else's return, it will never come back for good,” Niall states.

Zayn swallows a sob and slowly changes the name in his phone. After much hesitation, he presses the ‘save’ key. They watch the name move from the ‘k’ section of Zayn’s address app to the ‘l’ section. He tosses his phone across the bed and buries his face into Niall’s neck. A few cries escape Zayn’s throat again as Niall pulls Zayn in tight.

“I just want to be good enough… for once,” Zayn admits.

“What the hell?!” Niall exclaims, “What do you mean not good enough?”

“I can’t compare to this girl… she must be pretty, smart, preppy like Liam… doesn’t smoke… talented…” Zayn whispers.

“Zayn you shut your fucking mouth. Just because Liam cannot see how amazing you are doesn’t mean you aren’t. His fucking loss because you are one of the most amazing people I know. You’re so funny, and intellectual, emotionally deep. And while you act cold, your heart is so big, bigger than you can handle sometimes. You gave so much of yourself to Liam, and the fact you did that is so beautiful. And you’re so beautiful! Someday someone is going to give all of himself to you just as you will do for him. And I’m sorry that Liam isn’t that person, but someone so much more worthy than him will get it someday. I feel like we have had this conversation before... But just wait, it’s coming, I promise,” Niall rambles at the beginning sounding very mad, but then ends his speech very sweetly as he holds Zayn’s face by the chin.

Zayn slowly pushes himself up and looks deep into Niall’s eyes, “You think I’m beautiful?”

“Of course I think you’re beautiful. Who wouldn’t?! I mean, if I was gay I’d totally-“ But before Niall can finish his sentence, a soft but assertive mouth lands on Niall’s lips. Due to shock by the unforeseen situation, Niall’s eyes open wide upon Zayn’s kiss. Niall does not kiss back, but he does not end the kiss either. Niall’s body moves backwards in the direction of the kiss by Zayn’s weight. Hoping to not to give the wrong impression, Niall places his hands on Zayn’s arms to brace Zayn from pushing him off the bed.

Zayn finally pulls away as the paralysis of Niall’s lips becomes apparent. He again looks into Niall’s eyes to see an uncomfortable gaze staring back at him. Fear and guilt quickly spread across Zayn’s face. He just snogged his straight best friend.

“I’m such a fuck up!” Zayn starts sobbing once again as he quickly quits the physical contact between the two.

Niall remains frozen because a guy just kissed him. Not any guy: Zayn. One of his best friends whom he met on a playground, whom Niall got in his only fight for, whom rehearses songs with Niall even though Zayn hates to sing himself, and whom took care of Niall during his own broken
heart. When Niall remembers all of those things, he realizes a kiss does not change who Zayn is or all that he has done for Niall.

Just as Zayn is nearly out of Niall’s reach, Niall quickly grabs Zayn’s wrist and forcefully yanks him back into Niall's embrace. Zayn’s body smacks in Niall’s, causing some whiplash on his neck.

“Niall…” Zayn whimpers.

“Shh… Quiet babe, quit crying, this isn’t worth a tear. I’m right here, you can feel me, it’s okay. I’m not going anywhere. Why you crying?” Niall coos while rocking Zayn in his arms as if Niall is trying to calm a child.

“Because I ruin everything… and I don’t want to lose you too. I can’t lose you, oh gawd Niall, please don’t leave, I’m sorry!” Zayn cries with tears running down his cheeks.

“I hate to ruin your plan, but I’m staying right here. You really think I’d let one desperate kiss ruin our friendship? I’ve known you since we were kids. You’re a part of me. I love you. You’re my Zaynie, and that’s never going to change. You’re going through one of the hardest times of your life so far, and I’m not going to judge you as I hope you didn’t judge me while I went through mine. Because you saw me at my worst and weakest and you didn’t leave me, and I will do the same for you,” Niall describes as Zayn begins to calm down.

“I still feel like I owe you an apology,” Zayn says wiping his nose.

“For what?” Niall questions, still a little confused.

“A boy… kissing you,” Zayn replies.

“I guess when it comes down to it, the gender thing doesn’t really matter. It’s not nice for someone to kiss someone else without permission though, that’s the only part you should feel anything about. I’ve had my share of awkward kisses with girls. You’re emotionally vulnerable, and I’m someone who provides stability. It’s understandable how it happened,” Niall elaborates while also attempting to sound sweet.

“In my defense, I really haven’t slept in 48 hours,” Zayn chuckles.

“Zayn!” Niall exclaims like a worried parent.

“I just keep getting high so I won’t think about Liam… but then I get so high I can’t sleep,” Zayn reveals.

“How about this… How about we don’t smoke for the rest of the night. And I’ll sleep right here with you so whenever you feel like you need drugs, you'll have me instead. I’ll already be here,” Niall offers.

“I’m just exhausted of feeling, and being high is the next best thing I have to ripping my heart out,” Zayn explains.

“You must feel to move on. Or you’ll be trapped in your suffering because all you will remember are the good times without feeling the current bad emotions,” Niall tells Zayn, “Liam is not perfect. He's causing this.”

“Quit sounding wise…” Zayn dully requests.

“If I sound wise, it's because I'm only repeating the things you once told me,” Niall replies, “Me,
Lou, and Harry are here to stay. I’m here to stay as long as you want me to…”

Niall and Zayn continue to talk until Zayn’s weight progressively presses heavier against Niall. Finally after two days of no sleep, snores fall out of Zayn’s lips which press against Niall’s neck. Niall light shakes Zayn to see if he would stir, but Zayn is way past the point of consciousness and does not react to Niall’s movement.

But Zayn does not feel uncomfortable against Niall’s side. Niall actually thinks Zayn feels quite right there.

Niall grabs his and Zayn’s phones off the bed and sets the alarms for the morning. With Zayn still hanging on his side, Niall hits off the light in the room, changes Zayn into his pajamas, and tucks both of them under the covers. As they settle into the darkness, Zayn snuggles closer into Niall, causing a gleam upon Niall’s face. Zayn mumbles a little in his sleep, speaking gibberish that makes no sense, but Niall finds it adorable nonetheless.

Then Niall thinks back on the events of the day: taking care of Zayn, getting high, the kiss, and now this. The most striking occurrence is how wrong that kiss did not feel. Niall was not repulsed by it; he should be but he was not. Maybe he liked the roughness of Zayn’s lips, he liked the way Zayn’s five o’clock shadow felt against his neck, and he likes the way Zayn’s masculine muscles rarely flex in his sleep.

Maybe it is just the weed, Niall foolishly concludes. Everyone becomes more open and physical when they are high. There have to be reasons why Louis & Zayn or Louis & Harry cuddle. They just enjoy one another; this feeling must be no different.

So Niall falls asleep with a senseless smirk upon his face as the smell of Zayn nearly intoxicates him.

That is the night Niall fully comprehends that Zayn is a man of contradictions. Zayn’s heart was so big yet so weak. Zayn acts cold but his soul is warm. Zayn can make someone’s heart pound, but his personality could cause a lion to purr. Niall does not understand how he never realized this all before.

Niall awakes in the morning to an emptiness. He reaches for Zayn, to regain his friend's warmth, but then realizes he is no long within Niall's reach. That causes Niall to have a mini heart attack as he aggressively searches for Zayn in between the sheets, as if Niall believes Zayn fell deep into the bed.

A figure in the corner of the room slowly gains Niall’s attention. Niall quits smacking the bed to take a look at Zayn, who performs his morning prayer in the eastern corner. Niall quickly quiets down, not wanting to disturb Zayn during his sacred time.

Niall realizes he never watched Zayn pray before. Though Zayn does it all the time, minimally a few times a day, he normally leaves the room to not bother his friends and for some silence. Niall may not be a religious person himself, but he respects Zayn’s devotion. Gazing cautiously, Niall admires the way Zayn rocks his body, bows on the ground, and occasionally chants a phrase unrecognizable to Niall. Maybe Niall’s focuses on Zayn’s butt a little too intently, but praying Zayn is bent over half the time so it is not really Niall’s fault.

Zayn finally finishes his prayer, after which Niall closes his eyes and pretends to be asleep, so Zayn would not feel uncomfortable due to Niall’s invasive viewing.

“You’re a horrible actor,” Zayn chuckles while rolling up his prayer rug, “I felt you watching me.”

“Huh, what?!” Niall falsely mumbles as he attempts to casually stretch his body, “Just woke up.”

“Mhm, I’ll pretend I totally believe you… Did you sleep well?” Zayn prods.
“Yeah, much better than I have in a long time,” Niall replies, “Wanna get back in bed?” Niall reaches his arms out to Zayn, expecting/wanting more cuddle time. In Zayn’s perspective, Niall looks like a young child wanting to be held.

“Nah, no time for that,” Zayn responds as he peels off his shirt.

“Whoa buddy, aren’t you going to make me breakfast first?” Niall chuckles awkwardly, though Zayn’s exposed skin causes Niall to notice his own morning wood.

“Ha-ha, you're ridiculous. I gotta go take a shower real quick. In honor of me going to school today, my mother prepared a big meal for us downstairs. I’ll meet you down there when I’m done, yeah?” Zayn explains as he shuffles towards his bathroom while hopping out of his pants.

“Yeah…” Niall mumbles absentmindedly as his eyes travel down Zayn’s body while his friend sheds his clothing. Zayn kicks off his underwear as he closes the bathroom door, giving Niall the tiniest glimpse of Zayn's ass. Niall rolls onto his back and stares up at the ceiling, maybe a little let down that he did not see more of Zayn's nudity before the door closed.

But wow, Zayn really looks good shirtless, Niall thinks, and those pretty pink lips.

That is when revelation hits Niall like a train: he is no longer high and is still thinking these descriptive qualities about one of his best friends.

“Oh my gawd,” Niall swears to himself as his erection throbs, “I am so fucked.”

Niall then desperately tries to get himself off to the thought of a half-naked Zayn before Zayn returns to the room from his shower.

Chapter End Notes

I'm already working on chapter 11, though I haven't even begun to edit chapter 10, so part 1 of chapter 10 will be out to you soon though I don't have an exact date to you. But it's winter break now, I have a lot more free time on my hands :3
Chapter 10 Part 1: Call It What You Want

Chapter Summary

Niall supports Zayn through the heartbreak left by Liam, though he may have some personal issues to workout himself. An old friend of Harry's returns from his past, ruffling Louis's feathers. Niall seeks out a friend's story and a request as he tries to figure out his feelings for Zayn.

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry this took so long. I always try to stay a couple chapters of writing ahead of what I edit and publish, so I've been focused on writing more than editing the past couple weeks. Also have had a much busier break than I expected. This next chapter was supposed to be three parts, but I broke off the last part and made it into its own chapter like I did in the previous chapters. So this chapter will be two parts, mainly focused on Niall coming to terms with his sexuality and setting up Nick's influence in Harry and Louis's relationship.

Song of the Chapter: "Call It What You Want" By Foster the People

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 1

Niall’s truck pulls up in front of Zayn’s house with Louis and Harry sitting comfortably in the front seat. Louis honks once to alert the other two boys of their arrival as Niall guides Zayn out of his house. Zayn’s mother wishes her son a good day as well as to his friends who were escorting him to school. They wave goodbye as Louis and Harry hop into the back seat while Niall and Zayn get in the front.

“How you doing buddy?” Louis asks as he reaches forward and gently squeezing Zayn’s shoulders as a sign of support.

“Better… A lot better,” Zayn says as shoots a smile in Niall’s direction. This causes hot pink to spread across Niall’s cheeks. That boy’s smile could melt the ice caps Niall thinks to himself.

“Uh, everyone all buckled up?” Niall requests as he clears his throat, hoping no one would notice his obvious blush.

“Yes mom,” Harry responds sarcastically.

“Let’s go,” Niall says as his car drives down the street.

The drive is easy, and the walk up to the school is easy. But as the group approaches the front door, Zayn freezes in his place.
“All alright?” Harry calls to Zayn, already a few steps ahead of him.

Zayn does not responds as he takes deep breaths while looking at the opening. He could pretend all of this horrid experience was a gawd-awful dream, as long as he did not see how Liam would react around him. But if he goes inside, and Liam does not shoot him that beautiful smile like he always did, then Zayn knows it is all over.

“I’m right here,” Niall nearly whispers into Zayn’s ear, “You don’t have to worry. I’ll be right beside you the whole time.”

“But what happens when you aren’t?” Zayn requests.

“How about if I walk you to all your classes today? Both our minds together will know Liam’s schedule. I’ll help you avoid the halls he is normally in,” Niall offers.

“I’d really appreciate that,” Zayn gleams.

“And you have my number if you need anything. A text and I’ll be there,” Niall furtherly purposes.

Zayn closes his eyes and lightly nods as Niall softly places his hand on Zayn’s back to give the confidence push to enter the school.

Zayn’s day go smoothly as Niall guides him to every class with Louis or Harry joining them occasionally. Everything seems so easy with Liam not insight. Zayn could act as if nothing has changed or as if Liam does not matter in the first place. But the school is only so big, Zayn cannot hide from reality forever. And the group knows the only place they cannot avoid is at lunch, the one time period during the day they all share together.

“Do you think he will join us at the table?” Zayn asks Niall as they head towards the cafeteria.

“I don’t think so; he didn’t yesterday,” Niall answers.

“Where did he sit then?” Zayn inquires.

“Uh… with her group of friends,” Niall cautiously responds.

“Oh…” Zayn says. Zayn knows where Danielle and her friends sit at. Because Liam would always leave the guys’ table for five to ten minutes every lunch to go visit with her, as Zayn would always watch with jealous eyes.

“Hey, this isn’t about her. This is about you. You don’t need to worry about where she will be. Think about where you will be,” Niall orders.

“And where will I be?” Zayn asks.

“Next to me,” Niall replies with a smile, “Oh, and um Louis and Harry as well.” Zayn once again freezes as he cross the line into the cafeteria. His heart starts pounding and he feels like if his legs could give out underneath. All he can imagine is the incoming rejection by Liam.

“Zayny?” Niall calls to him. But Zayn does not react to Niall’s sounds.

“Babe?” Niall tries again to no avail does he receive Zayn’s attention. Without thinking, Niall then grabs Zayn’s hand and gives it a tug. This brings Zayn back into reality as he squeezes in response, letting Niall know he was officially there with him. The two walk hand and hand to the boys’ table. Niall talks to Zayn, keep direct eye-contact so Zayn would not have a chance to search out for Liam.
At first Niall feels a little uncomfortable holding Zayn’s hand in public for the world to see, but Zayn's warmth overtakes him. Knowing he is doing this for the wellbeing of Zayn (and that if it was not Niall holding Zayn’s hand right now, Zayn may still be frozen at the entrance of the cafeteria) all of his concerns floats away.

Once they arrive at the table, Niall releases Zayn’s hand and pulls the chair out next to his for Zayn to sit down.

“I’m not unable to move my own chair,” Zayn tells him.

“I’m just being polite, my goodness, sit down princess,” Niall demands to which Zayn complies with a thankful smirk. Zayn takes the seat as Niall pushes the chair in, “Oh I haven’t even gone through the line yet.”

“I’ll get it for you, just give me your card,” Niall quickly offers.

“You’re being really friendly,” Zayn comments strangely.

“Am I not usually?” Niall questions as he gives a look as if he had just been shot in the heart. He does not know why Zayn's opinion of him matters so much in this second, but the idea that Zayn could ever think that he is not a friendly person shakes Niall up. He wants Zayn to think the best of him, even if the best is not true.

“What?! No! You’re the nicest guy I know, I just meant-“ Zayn tries to explain before he is interrupted.

“I’m surprised you guys beat us here,” Louis says as he and Harry takes seats across from Zayn.

“Well normally I’d go to Liam’s classroom first and walk with him here… but um not today,” Zayn explains nervously.

“Uh, what do you want to eat?” Niall asks trying to change the subject.

“Pizza sounds good to me,” Zayn answers.

“And no pepperoni or Canadian bacon? Because Muslims don’t eat pork, right?” Niall states unsurely.

“Finally remembered?” Zayn replies with a smile.

“How could I forget?” Niall responds as he begins to trek to the food line.

“Could you get me a piece too?” Harry calls to Niall.

“Uh, hands will be full, get it yourself!” Niall answers joyfully disregarding all other people for Zayn. Louis and Harry look confusingly at one another for Niall’s odd behavior. Louis offers to get Harry’s piece as he follows after Niall.

When Niall and Louis return, though Harry attempts to have a conversation with Zayn, Zayn’s eyes dart around the room to find Liam. Niall takes his seat next to Zayn while sliding the trey of pizza under Zayn’s nose.

“Oh thanks!” Zayn sighs to Niall so blandly, then returns for his quest. Remembering how he brought Zayn back to reality last time (or maybe just looking for an excuse to hold Zayn’s hand once more), Niall grabs Zayn’s palm under the table. Once again, the touch returns Zayn’s mind back to
“As I was saying,” Harry continues, “I’ve been receiving such high scores on all my tests and papers, my school consular suggested that I may skip some of my next classes, and go straight to upper level courses. So next semester I may be joining you guys!”

“That’s great! Are you trying to graduate early or something?” Louis asks.

“I don’t know… like it’s a possibility,” Harry answers nonchalantly.

“Don’t do that,” Louis requests.

“Why not? You guys are graduating ahead of me,” Harry replies, "I don't want to be left behind."

“But we already told you we were going to wait for you and… um you, after graduation,” Louis says, skipping around Liam’s name.


“Harry,” Louis explains, “While I did find being held back in kindergarten a nuisance, it taught me to enjoy my childhood. I got an extra year of it. You’re only in high school for so long, and once you’re out you can’t go back. Please enjoy it.”

“I’ll put that into consideration,” Harry replies taking a drink of his milk. But during their conversation, Niall keeps gazing down at his and Zayn’s hands intertwined under the table. Because the way Zayn’s dark finger tips disappear into the snow white grip of Niall’s is beautiful, artistic even. A nervous sweat develops among Niall’s hand, and he fears this will cause Zayn to let go. But Zayn does not notice or does not seem to care. In fact, he may have grasped a little tighter. This feels way too natural for Niall. It nearly scares him. Because Niall’s hand almost looks as if it has been waiting for Zayn’s hand the entire time they have known each other.

Niall is so focused on this that he does not hear the bell ring. In fact the only thing that alerts him to the bell is Zayn’s hand pulling away from his. In a desperate attempt, he tries to grab Zayn’s hand even tighter to keep it from escaping.

“We gotta get to class mate,” Zayn chuckles as Niall finally releases his grip.

“Oh, yeah,” Niall says gathering up the mess from the table, “I’ll take your trey.”

“You don’t need to do that,” Zayn replies.

“No, I do,” Niall says attempting to take Zayn’s trey, but Zayn quickly jumps back.

“Come on,” Zayn demands. Zayn begins walking away, but there is a reason why Niall was trying to keep him from going. After taking a few steps, Zayn turns around to walk backwards.

“You coming or not?” Zayn calls to Niall, with Niall attempting to catch up with him.

“Zayn wait!” Niall yells. But as Zayn turns back around, he bumps right into someone: Liam, with his girlfriend Danielle.

“Watch where you’re- oh Zayn,” Danielle says, “Where were you yesterday? Didn’t see you in economics.”

“Oh, I-“ Zayn chokes while staring at Liam.
“He wasn’t feeling well,” Niall says wrapping an arm around Zayn, “Still not all that great. Voice is kinda weak.”

“Oh,” Liam replies looking very uncomfortable.

“Yeah, so we don’t want to get you sick, we better keep walking,” Niall says pulling Zayn away.

“I hope you feel better soon…” Liam wishes, heavy with guilt.

“See you in economics!” Danielle calls out.

“Breath buddy breath,” Niall commands while rubbing Zayn’s back.

“I want to hate her, I really do,” Zayn comments, “But she’s not a bitch, you know? No matter how much I want her to be.”

“Well he did meet her on a mission trip to help the unfortunate in a foreign country,” Niall agrees.

“I should have told him not to go, that’s what I shoulda done,” Zayn comments.

“Hey, don’t blame the trip babe,” Niall orders, “Let’s get to class, yeah?”

“Yeah…” Zayn sadly comments as they dump their leftovers into the trash.

Life’s new adjustment for Zayn does not come easily. While also losing the guy he had been pursing for years, he also lost the best friend part of Liam as well. Liam now understands the full gravity of Zayn’s feelings for him. And for that, he takes a large step back from their friendship. He cannot reciprocate the feelings Zayn has for him, and he feels horribly guilty for leading Zayn on over such a long period of time.

Liam kept pushing off this conflict from his mind, because Zayn gave him so much: emotionally and physically. Part of him really wanted to fall for Zayn eventually, but once he fell for Danielle, those feeling could not compare to anything before.

Zayn perceives Liam’s abandonment as Liam simply focusing all of his attention onto Danielle. Which is not completely false either. Liam is also enjoying his new found girlfriend, but Liam is not as one-dimensional as some perceive him to be.

Niall really picks up the slack that Liam leaves behind. Any of Niall’s free time quickly diverts to Zayn: walking him to class, driving him where ever he needs, doing homework together, and constant sleepovers.

Because Niall is trying to figure something out. Yes, he has this overriding urge to take care of Zayn until he is back to his flawless self once again. What Niall cannot determine is if he is doing it because Zayn did the same for him during his own breakup with Karlie, or if for another reason. Because nothing crushes Niall more than when Zayn cries and no matter how much Niall holds and cradles him, nothing seems to relieve the pain inside his friend. All Niall wants to do is shout how perfect Zayn is from the rooftops, for if the entire neighborhood could hear it, then maybe Zayn would believe it to be true.

All Niall knows is: something is missing when Zayn is gone.

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A couple weeks later, Louis walks into Harry’s house as usually does: without knocking because
they are years past that regulation. As he enters the Styles’s household, he sees Anne sitting on the couch watching *Jerry Springer*.

“Still watching that shit?” Louis asks, kicking off his shoes.

“Remind me of my high school days,” Anne chuckles, “Where are you doing here, love?”

“To see your beautiful face,” Louis grins, “and Harry of course.”

“He’s not with you?” She asks looking confused.

“Is he supposed to be?” Louis questions.

“He went out earlier. I just assumed it would have been with you,” Anne answers.

“No… Do you know where he was going?” Louis asks, slipping his shoes back on.

“I think Paul’s café, but I cannot be for certain,” Anne replies.

“Thanks. Let me know who the father is when I see you next,” Louis states, referencing the television show. Louis hightails it out of the Styles’s house as he briskly walks to Paul’s Café.

Once he arrives there, he debates himself in whether to act surprised by running into Harry or to act as if he was looking for him. Then it dawns on Louis that Harry might be on a date. Should Louis interfere then? But why would Harry not have told Louis about the date in the first place? If Harry did not tell Louis about this, Louis has to at least see her face. So Louis peers into the window to find Harry, which is pretty easy to do with his tall height and curly locks. Harry laughs at whoever he is with when Louis spots him. Louis’s eyes then divert to the person in front who is… a boy?

With his back to Louis, he cannot see what the stranger’s face looks like, but he is also relatively tall. While his hair is curly too, the guy’s hair is darker than Harry’s. Louis would know if Harry had another friend, since they tell each other everything. If someone is trying to steal his best friend, that person would have to fight Louis for it.

That is when Harry notices Louis in the window. A big smile appears on his face, and he waves Louis in. Louis takes the invitation and walks inside, now feeling embarrassed in how ridiculous he may have looked staring in the window.

“Oh how the tables have turned,” Harry chuckles, referencing the time Harry spied on Louis’s first date with Eleanor in the very same café.

“I see the irony, Styles,” Louis states.

“What are you doing here?” Harry says brightly as Louis approaches the table Harry and the guy sit at. Once Louis arrives, he can see the man’s face. Decently attractive, but nothing especially appealing about him. This man has a wide smile and purposefully messy hair.

“Oh, well I went to your place to see ya. But you weren’t there so I wound up here,” Louis answers, “Who’s this?”

“Th-This…” Harry stammers, “… is my friend, uhm, Nick.”

“Nick?” Louis looks at the guy, “You’ve never mentioned a Nick to me before.”

“Oh I have…” Harry states cautiously.
“You have?” Louis asks.

“Uh, remember that friend I told you about from my old school?” Harry hints at.

“You’ve really only told me about one friend from there and he was…” Now Louis gets it, “Oh.”

“Nick Grimshaw, the one and only,” Nick declares, reaching his hand out to shake Louis’s, but Louis does not respond with the same enthusiasm. In fact, Louis ignores Nick’s gesture.

“What’s he doing here?” Louis asks Harry.

“I am here, because my uncle lives a couple towns over,” Nick explains charmingly, “And a few months back I was just thinking about Harry. So I looked him up on Facebook and saw that he moved here. I then planned a short trip to see my uncle and asked if he would like to meet up to talk for a bit, and he generously accepted my offer.”

“That’s nice,” Louis says blankly.

“Would you like to take a seat babe?” Harry suggests to Louis.

“Yeah, sure,” Louis replies by grabbing a chair and pulling it up to the two-person table.

Louis watches as Harry and Nick interact. It really annoys him. They act as if no time has passed since their last encounter, or as if they are ignoring the fact that Nick falsely outted Harry at his old school, which gave Harry another incentive to leave his hometown to have a new start here. While in a twisted way Louis is glad it happened since it led Harry to him, he still despises anyone who could hurt his Harry like that.

Another thing Louis hates is how suave and charismatic Nick’s personality is. While trying to hold a stone-cold face, Louis cannot help but snicker at a few of Nick’s stories as Harry roars in laughter. And maybe Louis is jealous of how close the two seem, and how they had years of stories together just like Louis does with Niall and Zayn. Which he should not be jealous over, he just wishes those years had been spent with him instead.

“I gotta run to the boys’ room real quick. You two be okay here?” Harry asks as he stands up from the table.

“I’ll watch the ship captain,” Nick replies while giving a sailor’s salute.

“You be okay Lou?” Harry asks once again.

“I’ll be fine, go take care of your business,” Louis orders while Harry walks away.

“You don’t like me,” Nick states once Harry disappears into the bathroom.

“What gave you that idea?” Louis replies while rolling his eyes.

“Why is that?” Nick asks.

“Harry maybe able to play nice, but that isn’t me,” Louis declares, “I know what you did to him, what you told people, how you made him feel, and how he fled town because of you.”

“Before you go off on me, you didn’t hear our conversation before you got here,” Nick tells Louis.

“More funny stories?” Louis scoffs.
“I apologized,” Nick offers, “That’s why I came to see him.”

“That doesn’t change what you did,” Louis argues.

“A lot has changed since then,” Nick rebuttals.

“How so?” Louis asks skeptically.

“I came out as gay,” Nick reveals.

“Oh,” Louis squeaks shockingly.

“That’s why I’m here. Shortly after he left, I began to develop guilt about what happened. I didn’t understand the repercussions of my actions until I was older. I tried to figure out why I turned on Harry so quickly. When I finally came to the acceptance of my sexuality, I realized I had pushed the homophobia against myself onto Harry at my young age. And shit, I felt so bad once I understood that. I kind of fell into depression with that realization, just engulfed in my guilt. After seeing a therapist for a bit, she said I had to forgive myself, but I felt like I never would be able to do that unless I apologized to Harry. My therapist warned me of the chance that he may not accept it. But I knew I had to try. Took a lot of looking to track him down, but I finally did. To my surprise he agreed to meet, and here we are,” Nick emotionally explains to Louis.

“That’s… a story,” Louis exhales a large breath, “Really hard to hate you for all of that.”

“You really care for him,” Nick gleams, “It’s cute. He wouldn’t stop talking about you before you arrived.”

“I really care for him too,” Louis describes, “Which is why I’m so protective of him, and you really hurt Harry, and I had to pick up your mess.”

“Thank you,” Nick smiles largely, “I owe you for that.”

“To be honest, you don’t owe me a thing. If it wasn’t for you, I wouldn’t have Harry,” Louis smiles too.

“Is Harry…?” Nick asks.

“Gay? Oh no, sorry bud. He’s a cutie, but a straightie,” Louis chuckles.

“I was just clarifying,” Nick laughs, “The way he was talking about you…”

“Yeah we get that a lot,” Louis also laughs, “We’re used to it.”

“Sorry I was in there so long. Long line,” Harry says, taking his seat back at the table.

“Harry, it’s a one person bathroom, and there was no one outside of it,” Louis chuckles, “You’re talking shit.”

“Or he was taking a shit,” Nick quips, causing Louis to holler in laughter.

“You two are ridiculous,” Harry says shaking his head while trying to hold back a smile. Louis and Nick soon figure out they are very alike: their sass and sarcastic sense of humor, their history with Harry, and both being gay.

It is also very nice for Louis to have a gay friend who was outside of his circle. And Louis could not deny that Nick was actually quite cute and charming, and fun to flirt with. Nick would then travel
down to visit Louis and Harry every few weeks to have interesting weekends with the two boys.

Harry’s brush of white paint creates a puffy cloud upon a light blue background of a sky.

“Needs to be a little bigger,” Zayn orders as he watches over Harry’s shoulder, “And darken the clouds in the upper right-hand corner to symbolize the coming storm of the play.”

“If you want to do it yourself Zayn, be my guest,” Harry sighs, now expanding the size of the cloud.

“No, no you’re doing just fine,” Zayn lies.

“Then get off my back,” Harry playfully demands as Zayn walks off.

“I need a smoke,” Zayn says as he leaves the room.

Louis and Niall sit in the auditorium watching Zayn and Harry interact while doing their homework. They also had their own stage projects as well: Louis painted the scenery of a tropical rainforest, using his memories from his trip to Nicaragua, as Niall painted Big Ben from childhood vacations to the United Kingdom. Harry was assigned the task of painting the mural of a mountain for the upcoming play, which one would think would be easier than painting a forest or foreign national monument. But not for Harry Styles, who still has no completed his clouds for the mountain, let alone started on the mountain. But some blame does go on Zayn’s perfectionist mentality in regards to his stage management.

Niall’s eyes follow Zayn as he leaves the room. The faintest smile rests upon Niall’s face while watching Zayn’s hips swing side to side. Louis will occasionally catch himself watching Niall while Niall gazes upon Zayn, which is becoming more and more frequent with every passing day. Louis does not really know what to think of this since he has nothing else to go on besides long looks, but something is up he can feel it in his bones.

Once Zayn disappears into the hallway, Niall’s eyes immediately go back to his homework at hand, but that dumb smile is still on Niall’s face.

“Hey Loumoo?” Niall asks.

“You know I hate that nickname,” Louis growls.

“Anyways, Loumoo, can I ask you a question?” Niall requests.

“What’s going on Niall?” Louis replies with a sigh.

“How did you know you were gay?” Niall asks not looking up from his homework.

“How did I know?” Louis repeats. Why would Niall ask such thing? Not that the question itself was rude or anything, but Niall is more the type to accept things how they are and not ask why. Niall never asked a question like this when Louis came out to him and never has since. So why Niall be asking this-?

“Yeah, I just mean like, I read online that some people say they knew it as long as they can remember. Others said that they even got married to a woman before they realized it, so I just wanted to get your side,” Niall explains, trying to sound very casual in his tone.

Then it hits Louis like a train.
“I um…” Louis starts, but then realizes how important it is that he articulates this well for Niall. If Louis says the wrong thing, it could send Niall into further repression of his feelings. He wants Niall to feel normal, not like this is anything weird.

“Well to start off, I must say there is a big difference between having a same-sex attraction and being gay,” Louis states.

“There is?” Niall says shockingly looking up from his homework.

“Yeah! Like it’s totally normal to have same-sex attractions at some point. Like acknowledging someone is hot is just a part of the human experience. Everyone does it, even if people don’t admit it. Unless they’re like blind I guess… like I still have attractions to girls. When I see a hot girl, I know it. Just because I’m gay does not mean I cannot recognize facts,” Louis rambles.

“What’s the difference then?” Niall chuckles.

“A big difference!” Louis exclaims, “I may see a hot girl, wonder how she kisses and how she feels. But I don’t want to fall in love with her. I can’t even imagine such a thing. You know that feeling when you see someone and you feel nervous? And all you want to do is talk to them and know everything about them? Their touch excites you; it’s comforting yet sexual. When you see someone and all you want to do is make them laugh and feel like the most important thing in the world. When they’re hurt, you want to cradle them and wipe every tear away. You imagine what a future would look like, with an engagement and wedding and a house and kids. People don’t do that with sexual attraction. Yeah sex is a part of being gay, just as it is a part of being straight. But being gay is love, a feeling. It is not sex. You get that? Like have you ever felt this way about someone? You know, like Karlie?”

When Louis ends his speech, a click at the door announces Zayn’s entrance back into the room whom still appears rather irritated.

“Uh yeah, I think I have,” Niall replies as he watches Zayn glide from the door back to help Harry with his mountain. Louis smiles at Niall who is smiling because of Zayn.

Louis definitely gets it now.

“Be right back,” Niall says to Louis.

“What’s going on Nialler?” Zayn asks sweetly, causing Niall to lightly blush. *I’m worse than a fan girl* Niall thinks to himself.

“Uh, I gotta ask you a flavor,” Niall states.

“Rocky road?” Zayn questions backs, causing Niall to laugh hard at a joke that was not even that funny.

“So, in December the arts department always has an end of the year talent show. A girl named Holly in my class asked me to sing with her, and she wants to sing *Just Another Girl* by the Killers. Would it be possible if we used to stage after hours for practice?” Niall requests.

“Yeah sure buddy, I can give you the keys as long as you don’t make a mess of the place. And no sex on my stage,” Zayn orders.

“Oh, you don’t need to worry about that… And keep your keys, you’ll be there too!” Niall exclaims.

“I’m not going to watch you guys practice every afternoon,” Zayn declares.
“Well here’s the thing… Holly is a very busy girl. She’s fully involved in choir, flag girls, and A.P. classes, so she won’t be able to practice that much. So I was thinking…” Niall hints.

“No,” Zayn states, already knowing what Niall would be asking.

“I’m just asking you to practice with me. Just me and you, no one will see, please,” Niall begs. He knows Zayn does not like to sing, but Niall is searching for any excuse to spend time with him.

“I can’t sing Niall,” Zayn whines.

“Yes, yes you can, I’ve heard you. It’s beautiful,” Niall replies.

“When have you heard me sing?!” Zayn inquires.

“Uh…” Niall hesitates, “After your morning prayer, you always take a shower. You think I’m asleep though I feel the movement of you leaving your bed. When you get in the shower, you sing. And it’s the best alarm clock I’ve ever heard.”

Zayn turns bright pink, “You listen to me?”

“Yeah, please don’t stop because I’m there. It’s… It’s lovely. That’s why I asked you. And I’m not asking you to perform on stage at the show, I just need someone to practice with and you have talent,” Niall admits.

Zayn sighs and rolls his eyes. He spins around, debating what he should do, “If I asked you, you would do it?!”

“Of course, without reluctance, anything,” Niall gleams.

“Ugh, fine, but if you record me, I will kill you,” Zayn threatens.

“Thank you! I love you so much!” Niall cheers, wrapping his arms around Zayn and hoisting him up in the air for a hug. In the excitement Niall lays a sloppy, wet kiss upon Zayn’s cheek.

“Ew dude!” Zayn wipes Niall’s saliva off of him. *Whoa why did I do that* Niall thinks, setting Zayn back down on the ground.

“Uh, after this, yeah?” Niall asks, looking down in embarrassment for what he just did, though Zayn does not even seem affected by the display of affection.

“Totally, I’m gonna help Harry finish his so we can get this over with. That kid may have a magical voice, but it doesn’t come with magical hands,” Zayn says turning away.

Niall returns to Louis and starts his homework though that dumb smile is once again plastered to his face. Which causes Louis to grin, because Niall just told him everything he needed to know, even if Niall does not realize it yet.

Chapter End Notes

This is going to be pretty fluffy...
Chapter 10 Part 2: Call It What You Want

Chapter Summary

Harry believes he is the best wingman in the world. Emotional fires surround a drunken Niall, but he figures out he will always know how to get to Zayn's home no matter where he is at.

Chapter Notes

This is a pretty long part as two story lines begin I've been planning on start ramping up, but I think it's super cute and I hope you all will like it:

Song of the Chapter: "Call It What You Want" by Foster the People

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Part 2

Louis sets his phone down for the third time in fifteen minutes, which normally does not bother Harry, except during their current arrangement.

Cuddled up on the couch, Louis leans heavily against Harry as they watch P.S. I Love You. And every time Louis’s phone buzzes, it causes him to move. In this movement, Louis’s elbow jabs into Harry’s rib cage, and when Louis pulls away the cool air clips Harry’s exposed chest in the absence of Louis’s warmth. Harry tries to mind his own business, but this his Louis time. Zayn or Niall can wait.

“Who is so important Lou?” Harry asks.

“Oh, no one really,” Louis replies, finishing his message then putting his phone back down.

“Last time you said that, you had a Stan,” Harry reminds him.

Louis sighs because he really does not believe he has anything to tell, but he does not want to hide things from Harry either, “Uh, just Nick.”

“You and Nick talk?” Harry questions.

“Yeah… I mean sometime, not all the time. He’s funny and cares about you,” Louis explains.

“Do you like him?” Harry inquires.

“Gosh Harry,” Louis chuckles, “I don’t know.”

“Let me see what you guys are saying?!” Harry demands.

“What?!” Louis squeaks, “No!”
“What you got to hide Lou?” Harry laughs, “Talking dirty?”

“No! I just don’t see how it’s any of your business,” Louis huffs.

“Hey, if it wasn’t for me, you two never would have met,” Harry points out, “So someday when you two have children, you’ll have to say If it wasn’t for your uncle Harry, I never would have met your father.”

“Whoa Harry, how the hell did I end up married to this guy?! We haven’t even gone on a date yet!” Louis defends.

“We’ll have to change that!” Harry says, launching himself on top of Louis.

“What are you doing?!” Louis exclaims trying to fight off Harry.

“Give me your phone!” Harry demands while attempting to pin down Louis.

“No!” Louis yells as he throws his phone across the room.

“Thanks babe!” Harry calls out as he rolls off of Louis and lands on the floor. He quickly scuttles across the room to steal Louis’s cell.

“No so fast!” Louis barks as he grabs Harry by the right ankle to prevent him from moving. Harry tries to kick Louis’s grasp from him, but Louis crawls up Harry’s body. But Louis is light compared to Harry’s lanky body. With his long arms, Harry extends his reach to nearly touching Louis’s phone. Harry flips himself over to throw Louis off of him. With Louis now lying next him, Harry lobs his arm up and grabs the phone.

“Got it!” Harry squeals in joy. They both stand up fast as Harry flings his arm, with the phone in hand, up into the air as Louis tries to grab it.

“I hate you!” Louis hisses as he attempts to jump in an effort to seize his phone back. But even with his highest leaps, he cannot grasp his phone due to Harry’s height.

“Poor baby Lou,” Harry teases.

“You’re a bully,” Louis whines, stepping back from Harry.

“It’s for your own good,” Harry gazes pleasantly upon Louis.

“Are you just going stand there with your hand in the air?” Louis questions.

“Oh yeah, I forgot,” Harry remembers. He then smacks Louis in the balls, causing him to fall to the ground and cover his groin. Harry runs around him during this distraction and locks himself in the bathroom.

“Gawd damnit Harry!” Louis yells as he stands back up straight, still rubbing his groin. He can hear Harry giggling loudly from the bathroom as Louis skips over to it. Just before Louis is about to pound on the door, the door opens.

“Here you go,” Harry says casually, giving Louis his phone back as he walks past him.

“What did you do?” Louis accuses.

“Not much,” Harry replies as he takes his seat back on the couch as if nothing happened.
“You call pinning me down, smacking me in the balls, stealing my phone, and locking yourself in the bathroom to send a text not much?” Louis recounts.

“Sounds like our usual to me,” Harry hums, which Louis could not deny when said like that. Louis then turns his attention back to his phone to see what Harry said sent. Oh gawd Louis thinks to himself.

You should ask me on a date sometime ;) is what Harry had sent to Nick.

“Harry!” Louis exclaims in frustration.


“This guy, who I’ve only seen maybe two or three time, who I have no idea who likes me-“ Louis is cut off.

“What do you mean no idea if he likes me? I read your two’s texts. He’s so flirting with you,” Harry states.

“Harry, I-! wait… he’s flirting with me?” Louis questions, looking like a deer caught in the headlights.

“He calls you babe and cutie; if you don’t answer for a few hours he’ll send you another text; he asks about your day; sends you a text good night and good morning sometimes…” Harry lists off.

“So? I call you and the boys babe and darling; You and I text all the time; you ask about my day; you text me good night and good morning,” Louis rebuffs.

“Yeah, but I’m your Harry, best friend for years. You just met this guy and he’s doing all that for you. What does that mean?” Harry inquires.

“Oh…” Louis understands.

“I’m more than just a pretty face,” Harry winks.

Louis looks down at his phone to see if Nick has replied yet. He has not, “But what if you’re wrong?”

“I’m never wrong,” Harry quips.

“I have like 10 examples from the past week alone to prove that false,” Louis rebuttals.

“Okay, you got a point, but for this I’m not,” Harry explains.

“Even if he does like me, what you said is totally out of the blue. What if it scares him off?” Louis whines.

“Louis,” Harry states.

“Yeah?” Louis answers.

“Calm your tits and sit your ass down,” Harry orders, smacking the spot next to him for Louis to come. Louis releases a loud sigh as he walks over to Harry to take his seat. As soon as Louis sits down, Harry wraps his arm around him. Harry pulls Louis into his chest, placing his chin upon the top of Louis’s head.
“Even if he turns you down, I’ll be here to hold you every night just the same,” Harry coos, calming down Louis for once. Louis pulls away and looks Harry in the eyes.

“Every night?” Louis questions, his cheeks turning pink.

“As long as you let me,” Harry replies. Louis heart begins to beat fast upon Harry’s words. He wants to kiss Harry. And yeah, they kiss a lot, making out during their jerk off sessions, but this kiss would not be the same. It would be similar to the kiss Harry gave Louis before he left for Nicaragua: emotional and meaningful.

Buzz! Louis’s phone vibrates against his leg, breaking his concentration on Harry.

“Think that’s Nick?” Harry asks.

“Uh, yeah, probably,” Louis says not pulling away from his and Harry’s closeness.

“Should you check that?” Harry questions.

“Oh… yes,” Louis gives in. He drifts away from Harry to grab the phone out of his pocket. He watches Harry in an anxious stare as he opens up the message, without looking at his phone in fear of the response. Finally he gazes down.

Really?! I was thinking the same thing:) how about next time I’m in town, you and me break off to go grab dinner or something? Nick’s message reads.

“What does it say?” Harry requests.

“Uh, yeah, yeah he wants too,” Louis breaths.

“See! What did I tell you?” Harry cheers, “I’m the best wing man ever.”

“That you are,” Louis regretfully admits.

“I call godfather to the first child, and his or her middle name has to be Styles, so the family name lives on,” Harry demands.

Louis rolls his eyes at Harry’s requests, though Louis having children with Styles in their name does not sound that bad to him.

Do I really need to learn to the choreography?” Zayn barks at Niall, nearly tripping over his own feet.

“It’s not that hard. I want to have the full experience of this when we practice,” Niall calls out standing across the stage.

“But you barely have any choreography in this thing. I don’t know why it matters if I’m just your practice buddy?” Zayn asks while walking towards Niall.

“Because I know you can do it, please,” Niall begs as they meet in the middle of the stage.

“I will if you do it with me. I’m sick of watching this dumb tutorial the girl recorded,” Zayn comments.

“Fine, I can at least do that for you,” Niall offers. Both the boys begin to walk back over to Zayn’s
side of the stage. Zayn closes the laptop he had been watching the tutorial video on and turns to Niall.

“Okay, after the second chorus I will sing I could be reeling them in left and right. While I sing that, you will walk from your mic to in front of me. When I sing something’s got a hold on me, tonight you will then walk behind me, while grabbing me by the shoulder and spinning me around once so it will look as if my body is following your movements,” Niall explains.

“So I’m literally the thing that has a hold on you?” Zayn clarifies.

“Yes! Exactly!” Niall exclaims in joy, “You’re getting this.”

“This is so cheesy,” Zayn rolls his eyes.

“It’s genius,” Niall states, “Anyways, when I sing Well, maybe all of my friends should confront you should be center-right stage. During the performance, Holly will have two backup dancers behind her. They will have been on stage the entire time dancing, but it will be the only time Holly interacts with them. She’ll be leading the group for a short bit, with both of them copying her moves.”

“And how would you describe her moves?” Zayn asks.

“Well to use her terminology, she says it’s like what white people do during the Cha Cha Slide the guy sings now Cha Cha real smooth,” Niall responds with a laugh.

“Ope, that explains how her hips are moving,” Zayn giggles.

“Yeah, she’ll have to give a better explanation about that in the next video,” Niall chuckles, “In the next line I say The fact that I don’t want another girl I look over and watch you dance. You then break off from the backup dancers, doing a little catwalk across the stage as I sing All of my friends say I should move on, All of my friends say, All of my friends say, All of my friends say, She’s just another girl. When I finish my stanza, you then sing your solo out to the audience, standing in the front center of the stage.”

Zayn now stands nervously on the edge of the stage looking out into the auditorium, “I don’t know how you do this.”

“Do what? Sing? It’s pretty easy, you just open your mouth and-” Niall tries to explain as he approaches Zayn.

“The people is what I mean,” Zayn comments, “Damn, if I notice someone just watching me walk down the hallway I nearly trip.”

“At this point I don’t even think about it anymore,” Niall replies, “The stage is all about me. I’m not here for them.”

“How did you calm yourself down when you were younger then? Harry had such bad stage fright he made Louis go to all of his performances, but you never seemed bothered by the attention,” Zayn describes.

“Made? He still makes Louis do that!” Niall laugh, “Um for me, it was knowing that no matter how well or not well I did, the people who care about me will always believe I did a good job. And with this room, just me and you, no matter what, even if your voice cracks, I’m always going to think that no one could do better than you.”

“You have so much faith in my voice yet I’ve never sang for anyone but you,” Zayn states.
“I know what you’re capable of. Wanna give your solo a try real quick?” Niall suggests.

“Yeah, just start off with me doing that cat walk,” Zayn orders.

“Got it,” Niall says stepping back to center right, he claps to create a beat for him and Zayn to follow.

“All of my friends say I should move on, All of my friends say, All of my friends say, All of my friends say, She’s just another girl,” Niall chants while watching Zayn. Zayn walks across the stage, from downstage right then to downstage center.

“Then why can’t I sleep at night, And why don’t the moon look right? The sound's off but the TV's on, And it's a great big world,” Zayn tries to project his voice, but he cannot reach the high note and his voice cracks when he says sleep. When he finishes his solo he turns back to Niall, disappoint set upon Zayn’s face.

“Hey, hey, that was great. What are you looking down for?” Niall asks.

“You should have asked someone else…” Zayn mopes.

“I picked exactly who I needed too,” Niall states, grabbing Zayn softly by the chin to pull his head up, “That fact you can sing this well without any practice before is a gift from God.”

“Really?” Zayn snickers, “My voice proves God exists for ya?”

“If your voice doesn’t, I don’t know what would,” Niall admits, “Besides, you’re just my practice buddy, it’s not like you’ll be performing this in front of people anyways.”

“So this girl you’re singing with. Are you and her?” Zayn questions.

“While she is quite beautiful, she’s a lesbian,” Niall laughs.

“Oh, then nothing going on there,” Zayn chuckles.

“I guess she and her girlfriend are kind of going through a rough patch. She’s hoping this performance may prove their love for each other,” Niall explains.

“I thought you picked the song?” Zayn points out.

“She gave me a list of song and told me to pick the one I thought would work best or I liked the most,” Niall describes, “Yeah it kind of reminds me how I felt for Karlie, but I feel like it can have many meanings, you know?”

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“Glad you could finally make it,” Harry declares to the newly arrived Louis and Nick. The boys are at another house party. Harry, Niall, and Zayn are in the kitchen of someone’s house… they really cannot recall whose party they are attending, all they know is the music is loud and the drinks are well made. Harry is tipsy, and Niall is a little drunk… okay drunk… fine, very drunk. Zayn sits on the countertop of the island in the kitchen with Niall and Harry standing on opposite sides of him. Louis blushes as all their attention turns on him and Nick after their first date.

“Cruddy chef got Louis’s order wrong twice. Even though we’re late at least we got a free meal out of the experience,” Nick recalls to the boys with his hand lightly gripped around Louis’s hip.

“Only after you nearly went off on the waiter! Probably wasn’t even his fault,” Louis comments,
lightly jabbing Nick in the stomach.

“That fucker was high as balls. You ordered spaghetti and you received shrimp, excuse me for trying to get you what you wanted,” Nick quips.

“Fine fine, it came from good intentions,” Louis chuckles. Louis does not really know how much he likes Nick. Yeah he is cute, funny, and charming, but this was his first gay date and he must admit it was magical. Nothing really particularly amazing about the date, but he was actually able to look a boy in the eyes lovingly in public. He probably appeared as giddy as a schoolgirl crush, but at least he was able to show his true colors.

“Surprised you did not get the chicken alfredo. He gets that every time we go out,” Harry comments.

“I thought about trying something new,” Louis gleams at Nick, who smiles back at him.

“Oh my gawd, if you guys don’t stop googling-eyeing each other I’m going to vomit,” Zayn states with a disgusted face.

“Anyways, how has the party been without us?” Louis asks, trying to change the subject.

“Really fun! Three girls totally hit on Niall though he turned each of them down,” Zayn describes, “No idea why, they were gorgeous!”

“Well maybe they weren’t my type,” Niall slurs.

“Funny, preppy, blonde girls! That’s your bread and butter buddy,” Zayn chuckles with a playful smack on Niall’s back.

“Has it dawned on you that my type is perhaps changing? Haven’t you been paying attention to me?” Niall asks rather darkly, which startles Zayn and the other boys as well.

“Tell me your type then,” Zayn requests sweetly.

“Um, I don’t know… dark hair, artistic, individualistic, who’s not scared to push the limits,” Niall describes nervously.

“That’s like the opposite of Karlie,” Harry states, not fully understanding what Niall means yet, unlike Louis.

“Not many of those around here,” Zayn comments, “We’ll have to go searching for her; come on let’s go. It’s a big house!” Zayn declares, hopping off the counter while pulling Niall by the arm to follow him. Just then Liam walks into the kitchen talking to a couple of guys. Zayn freezes in place, this being one of their closest interactions since they stopped talking. The grip upon Niall’s arm becomes increasingly tight, nearly painful.

“You alright?” Niall whispers into Zayn’s ear.

“Uh, yeah, I’m just gonna go use the restroom,” Zayn mutters while releasing his grip on Niall and leaving the room, “Be back in a bit.”

As Zayn exits, Liam walks up to the group, “Hey guys, what are you doing here?!”

“We don’t really know to be honest,” Harry laughs, “Nowhere else better to be I guess. Where’s Danielle? I thought I saw her leave with you earlier.”

“Her parents are pretty strict about curfews,” Liam reveals, “So I often have to drive her home early
from things, but early enough in the evening for me to come back after her.”

“How are you and her doing?” Niall asks.

“Great, amazing to be honest. Like it was kind of weird at first, her being my first serious girlfriend, but now it feels really easy and right, you know?” Liam clarifies.

“Yeah, I do,” Niall comments, being the only one in the group to have a long term relationship like Liam’s with Danielle.

“Who’s this?” Liam asks referencing Nick.

“Nick Grimshaw,” Nick extends his hand, “At your service.”

Liam chuckles, “I don’t need anything more than a drink. Haven’t seen you at school before.”

“That would be because I don’t go to your school. I’m from out of town,” Nick explains.

“How are you here with then?” Liam inquires.

“Oh, well I’m friends with Harry, and just arrived here with Louis from dinner,” Nick answers.

“Ohhhhhhh,” Liam says with a grin, “Good for you two.” Louis rolls his eyes in embarrassment. It was just dinner, not that big of a deal.

“I’m sure I’ll be seeing more of all you guys,” Nick says, “Hope I get to meet Danielle sometime soon too. Heard so much about her. Good things of course!”

“I’m sure,” Liam chuckles, as his phone begins to ring, “Speak of the beauty. Be back, I better take this.” Liam leaves the kitchen through the back door for some silence in the yard. Niall watches Liam intently, because there is something Niall cannot wrap his head around: how could anybody pick someone else over the being that is Zayn Malik? After a few minutes, he decides to follow after Liam to ask him that very question.

“Are your parents really that upset over five minutes? Okay, next time we’ll be sure to leave extra early, I promise. I’ll set an alarm in my phone and everything. Okay babe, love you too, night,” Liam finishes as he lifts his phone away from his face. He turns around to go back into the house, when he nearly walks head first into Niall, who is standing right behind.

“Holy shit! You scared the shit out of me,” Liam squeals.

“Sorry,” Niall replies quickly, “What was that about?”

“Oh, Dani wanted to make sure I got back here alright and everything. Asked me not to drink more than a beer if I was going to be driving home,” Liam explains, “She worries; it’s cute.”

“That’s nice,” Niall states bluntly, “Can I ask you something?”

“Sure, what’s up?” Liam asks, “You alright?”

“Why did you end things with Zayn?” Niall requests directly.

“Whoa, Niall, I’m not gay!” Liam declares defensively.

“Cut the crap Liam,” Niall orders, “I know what you and Zayn were doing. Zayn told me, and even if you say he is lying, I caught you guys multiple times. I saw; I know.”
“Oh,” Liam looks shocked at this revelation, breathless even, “Why didn’t you say you saw anything…”

“Because it was not any of my business if you guys did not want to tell me. If I would have brought it up, then you two would have had to define it, and thus probably end what you two were doing. And I didn’t want to be at fault for that. Zayn was so happy. But I guess even that attempt failed in the long run.”

“Yeah…” Liam admits.

“So why did you end things with Zayn?” Niall repeats, “What’s wrong with him?”

“There’s nothing wrong with him,” Liam lets out a large sigh, trying to articulate what to say, “Look, me and Zayn had something going on. But it was uneven. What I was feeling for him and him for me were not on the same level. Yes, Zayn is amazing. He is so kind, and beautiful, loyal, and trustworthy. He was always there for me when nobody else was. I love him, but I’m not in love with him. With Zayn, I felt safe, which is a great feeling! But with Danielle, there’s passion. The second she touches my hand, I know exactly where I’m supposed to be. When she is gone, I can feel it, and I can sense her like sonar when she is near. Zayn did not give me the completeness that Danielle does. And while I deserve to feel this way for her, Zayn does also but with someone who feels the same way about him. Zayn is beyond magnificent, but he isn’t the one for me.”

“Oh,” Niall says actually admiring his answer.

“Why are you asking this? Is Zayn okay?” Liam asks.

“Uh, he’s getting okay, slowly,” Niall replies, “Honestly, I just don’t understand how someone couldn’t pick Zayn.”

Liam lets out an awkward chuckle, “Niall, you’re drunk.”

“Yes I am, but that’s besides the point,” Niall says, “I’ve been wondering this for a while, it just slipped out tonight, because…”

Then like Louis, Liam gets it. Why Niall is always around Zayn, the constant touching, whispering in the ear, and asking various questions to his friends. Liam gets it, which causes Liam to smile because even though Zayn is kind of his ex, he knows there is no one more loving than Niall Horan.

“You know, if someone has feelings for Zayn like the way I should have felt for him, that person should really tell him. Zayn deserves to feel like the center of someone’s universe, because that’s what he deserves and all he wants,” Liam suggests to Niall, gently resting his right hand on Niall’s shoulder.

“Yeah… maybe…” Niall mumbles.

“I don’t know if you want to tell Zayn this, or even if he wants to hear it, but I do miss him. Everyday. I’m just giving him his space to work out his feelings. I hope there is a day where me and him can be friends again,” Liam reveals to Niall, “I love him; I’m just not in love with him.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Niall hums.

“How about we go back inside buddy, join the party, and check on Zayn?” Liam recommends.

“Lead the way,” Niall orders. As Liam turns away, Niall grabs him in a bear hug, trying to thank Liam for being honest with him. Liam can feel the fear in Niall’s clutch, as if Niall is terrified to
come to terms with whatever he is feeling. Liam hugs him back, letting him know it is okay.

“You know what, you’re not drunk enough yet,” Niall says as he pulls away.

“And you are drunk enough,” Liam laughs, “How about I’ll finish your drink? I really can’t drink more than that though. I gotta drive home still.”

“Not a bad idea,” Niall states as they reenter the kitchen. Niall’s eyes immediately go to where Zayn previously sat on the countertop, but it appears as if he has not returned from the bathroom yet. Niall searches the room for him but he is nowhere to be seen.

“Where’s Zayn?” Niall asks Louis and Nick as Niall also notices Harry’s absence now too. Louis and Nick are looking flirtily into each other’s eyes, giggling at their conversation. Niall’s question pulls them out of their own world.

“Uh, I don’t know where he is… Hm, Harry is gone now too. Maybe he followed after him?” Nick suggest.

“You don’t know?” Niall barks to Louis, “You always know where Harry is at.”

“Uh well me and Nick started talking and then he disappeared… I think,” Louis defends against Niall’s accusation. Before Louis finishes his comment, Niall leaves the two in search of Zayn and perhaps Harry.

Niall remembers how jealous Harry acts when Louis diverts his attention to other sources; he had just as much to be worried about Harry as he does for Zayn. Okay, maybe his mind is a little more on Zayn.

After going through a series of room throughout the house, with Nick and Louis following behind him, he cannot find Zayn anywhere. Once they enter the living room again, from where the music is based, Niall gazes around one last time, till he sees a tall figure standing over a cute girl in the corner of the room.

“Is that?” Niall asks to Louis. And it is. Harry has his tongue down some brunette-haired girl’s throat. She grasps on desperately to his tight, white v-neck shirt as his right hand holds himself up against the wall above her.

“Good for Harry, yeah?” Nick states cautiously.

“Yeah, good for him,” Louis says very somberly.

Niall looks over to Harry one more time, debating in his head whether or not break up the two to ask about Zayn. When he turns his head around towards Louis to ask his opinion, Louis’s lips are plastered onto Nick’s face as his hands cling onto Nick’s cheeks, not letting him escape the kiss. At first Nick seems very shocked by this random display of fondness, but then he sinks into the kiss, closing his eyes and sharing his tongue as well.

Niall’s eyes shoot open as he looks back over to Harry in awkwardness. But now he can see Harry’s closest eye is watching Louis and Nick. Niall’s gaze then returns to Louis and Nick, andLouis is also inspecting Harry in his peripheral vision.

“Uh…” Niall’s eyes dart back and forth between Louis and Harry. In Niall’s opinion, it appears as if Louis and Harry are playing a distressed game for attention. He tries to deliberate in his head how to best handle the situation, but the alcohol in his bloodstream is making it terribly hard to focus on one thing at a time. Then Zayn pops back into Niall’s mind.
“Zayn…” Niall mumbles as he moves towards Harry. Yes, what Harry and Louis are currently doing is probably not what is the healthiest for them, but they have been doing this desperate dance for years now. They can do one more night of it.

“Hey… buddy?” Niall asks pulling on the back of Harry’s shirt like a child requesting his or her parent’s attention.

“Uh, a little busy at the moment Niall,” Harry hisses.

“I can totally see that, very sorry about this, I’m just looking for Zayn. You seen him?” Niall inquires.

“Oh, while you were outside talking to Liam he said he wanted to leave. He didn’t want to bother you so he asked his parents to pick him up. He didn’t leave too long ago,” Harry explains as the girl looks impatiently at Niall.

“Thank man, have fun!” Niall says patting Harry on the back as Niall smiles at the girl during his exit. As Niall leaves the room, he can see the obvious tension mounting between Louis and Harry, and their exploits. One problem at a time Niall thinks to himself as he leaves the party for his truck.

His keys jingle for an extended period of time as he attempts to locate the key to his truck, going around the ring a couple times. By the time he finally finds the correct key, he smacks into the window of his truck.

“Ah fuck!” He yells rubbing his now bruised forehead. That is when he looks into the window and sees how drunk he really is through the faint reflection.

“Fuck I can’t drive…” Niall says to himself, looking at his foggy eyes and distant demeanor. But he has to get to Zayn. Somehow, someway, he has to get to Zayn to make sure he is okay… and Niall is so drunk, maybe Zayn will take care of him, and hold him, and maybe a kiss or two… Niall’s mind drifts off to fantasy.

I’ll walk there Niall decides, proud of himself for thinking such a great thought. That is when he begins trekking down the street while whistling a happy tune… hopefully in the direction of Zayn’s house.

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Niall wanders onto Zayn’s front yard an hour later than he should have, taking into count the distance from the party. But in Niall’s defense: it is very dark, and instead of sobering up on the walk there like he hoped, he somehow got even drunker. All the lights in the house appear off from the view of the front lawn, so he goes into the backyard hoping to see the faint glow of Zayn’s television peeking through the blinds of his window.

And to Niall’s hope, it comes true: the light is on. There is no way Zayn could be asleep by … 1 a.m. shit! Niall thinks looking down at his watch. Wait he does not own a watch, where did this come from?

Shaking his head of the thought, he looks down at the ground for something to capture Zayn’s attention. He picks up a few pebbles and throws them at Zayn’s window, largely missing most the time. Finally, Zayn rolls up his blinds and pops his head outside.

“Hello?” He calls out.

“Oh Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?” Niall quotes as he bends down onto one knee, his
arms reaching up towards his target.

The grass is still surprisingly green for how late it is in autumn, but the cold temperatures are bringing in the first frost of the season. White crystallizations surround Niall, making sight quite artistic, even if it appears like a scene from a high school movie. Pink brightens up Niall’s cheeks given how cold it is, as a smile erupts across his face. Zayn thinks he is going to draw this scene the next morning.

“Art thou Juliet?” Zayn quips.

“What?” Niall squaks.

Zayn laughs, “In the play, Romeo is on the ground while Juliet stands on the terrace. If you’re the one calling for Romeo, then you should be Juliet. Or are you talking to yourself, Romeo?”

“Oh… What’s my line?” Niall chuckles.

“There’s a reason why you’re a choir boy, not an actor,” Zayn gleams.

“Gonna let me up? Kinda chilly,” Niall comments.

“How long you been out there?” Zayn asks.

“Oh, well I walked here so it’s been awhile,” Niall answers.

“Niall! It’s like below freezing! Why didn’t you drive here?!” Zayn tries to keep his volume down, but the worry in his voice echoes.

“Oh, the same reason why I didn’t come through your front door… drank too much,” Niall sadly replies.

“My parents could have picked you up,” Zayn offers.

“I didn’t want them to see me like this… I know how they feel about drinking,” Niall says.

“Why do you care so much about what they think of you?” Zayn prods, “And why didn’t you stay at the party then?”

“Um same answer for both… I, uh, care about you,” Niall answers honestly.

Zayn rolls his eyes and disappears for a moment. Then Zayn’s blanket flies out of the window and lowers halfway to the ground, a height Niall can easily grab onto. Niall then climbs his way into Zayn’s room. As soon as he stands up from the climb, Zayn’s arms wrap around Niall.

“Gawd, you drunken idiot, don’t ever do this again,” Zayn whispers into Niall’s ear, “You’re cold to the touch.”

“I’m sorry, you were just gone and I got worried,” Niall coos.

“Niall, I’m fine. You could have stayed there,” Zayn states as he takes a step back, “Liam just startled me. I thought he wasn’t coming back. And you appeared to be having a good talk with him.”

“No, you made a promise to me during my breakup: If we ever go to a party and I want to leave, we would leave. The least I can do is keep the same deal with you,” Niall explains.

“That’s very sweet. Very stupid but very sweet,” Zayn smiles to Niall. And gawd, Zayn looks so flawless. Yeah, his hair is a little messy from bed, he is wearing flannel pajama bottoms and a loose
shirt, and he looks a little groggy as if he was nearly asleep before Niall arrived. But flawless nonetheless, Niall would not change a thing about Zayn even if he could.

"Why didn't you just call?" Zayn questions.

Oh yeah I have a phone Niall thinks. "I didn't even think of that. My mind became set on seeing you so I did."

"You're a really good friend," Zayn whispers.

“And you’re perfect,” Niall hums as his face slowly moves towards Zayn’s lips.

“Whoa mate,” Zayn pulls back, “The alcohol in your breath is way too strong. There’s some mouthwash in my bathroom, go use it.”

“Yeah sure,” Niall coughs as he leaves for Zayn’s bathroom.

He shuts the door and turns the water from the facet. He splashes his face a few times and then looks up into his reflection. He feels dumb, so dumb. Did Zayn just turn him down from that kiss? Or did Zayn not even notice? Was Zayn going to let him if it had not been for his breath?

Niall is drunk, so drunk. He hopes his words are not slurring. And Zayn is Muslim; he does not even drink. Could he count Niall out as a potential boyfriend because of drinking?

Boyfriend? Niall thinks Is that what I want? Niall takes a swig of mouth wash, swishes it around in his mouth, then spits it back out. Time to go back in.

Niall steps back into Zayn’s room. Zayn lays on his bed on top of the covers playing with his phone. He looks up at Niall, then his eyes travel up and down Niall’s body. Did he just check me out Niall wonders.

“Uh buddy?” Zayn begins, “You got something on the bottom of shirt and top part of your pants.”

Niall gazes down himself to a wet spot and some chunks on his clothing. Shit.

“Did you... throw up?” Zayn asks slowly.

“I… it appears so,” Niall agrees in shame. He does not even remember throwing up on his way here. All he remembers is one second his head was spinning, and the next moment half way to Zayn’s house he felt a lot better.

“You can’t get into my bed covered in that crap,” Zayn comments.

“Oh yeah,” Niall replies unbuttoning his shirt. He throws it onto the ground, and then lets his jeans hit the floor once he undoes his zipper. He steps out jean then stumbles over to Zayn’s bed.

“You need any pajamas?” Zayn inquires.

“You warm me up?” Niall asks innocently.

Zayn scoffs, “Do you even have to ask?”

A wide grin spans Niall’s face as he and Zayn crawls under the blankets. Immediately after hitting off the light, Niall hops on top of Zayn, straddling his hips. He buries his face in Zayn’s neck. Niall is happy, so happy. This is all he could think about on the walk here and he finally has it. He continues to nuzzle Zayn, till he purrs?
“You’re still so cold,” Zayn comments as his hands rest upon Niall’s back.

“Zayn?” Niall inquires.

“Yeah?” Zayn asks back.

“You’re pretty,” Niall giggles, “and warm.”

“I prefer ruggedly handsome,” Zayn chuckles.

“You’re ruggedly handsome,” Niall corrects, “and warm.”

“Thank you,” Zayn replies.

“And cuddly, and I’m cuddly. We’re good at being cuddly, you know?” Niall rambles in Zayn’s neck.

“You’re much better than Liam,” Zayn comments.

“Do you still love him?” Niall sighs.

“Yeah… I guess,” Zayn answers honestly.

“Well you shouldn’t,” Niall declares.

“Why’s that?” Zayn questions.

“Because, you’re amazing,” Niall states, “Duh. And you deserve so much better than what he gave you.”

“Well I wish people more than you thought that,” Zayn chuckles.

“But what if it’s just me?” Niall asks.

“Huh?” Zayn grunts.

“Would it really be so bad, if I was the only person that thought that about you?” Niall inquires, “The only one who thought of how beautiful you look when you wake up early for your morning prayer. How sweet you sound when you offer me your food because I finished off all of mine at the lunch table. Who thought about how intelligent your words would be if you just let them leave your lips, even when you’re scared to talk in class. Who thought: there is no possible way there could be human made more perfectly made than Zayn Malik?”

What Niall does not notice is how close his lips got to Zayn’s face while his words unraveled from his mouth. And when he takes a break to breathe, he feels Zayn’s breath bump against his lips. Niall holds himself up over Zayn’s body. He can feel how tense Zayn feels underneath him, but Zayn is not pushing back. Niall is so close, so close to Zayn. If an earthquake were to shake the house, he would fall onto Zayn’s lips.

So maybe in Niall’s head, he says a little prayer that the Lord above would cause the ground to rupture just so that would happen. And it may sound horrible that mass destruction would occur for a kiss, but in Niall’s case it would be worth it. Because the earth would shake hard enough they would likely fall off the bed. Wrapped in a blanket they would be stuck, enveloped around each other. So the kiss would not be able to break, even if they wanted it to.

And gawd, Niall is so close. This is all he has wanted for nearly a month now. And now that it is
here, yes he definitely wants to kiss Zayn. More than anything. So he moves his lips a little closer. 
*Does Zayn want this too?* Because he is definitely not moving away. He just lies there, waiting.

But then a small burp pops out of Niall’s throat. The hint of alcohol briefly reminding his taste buds of the previous events of the night. And yes, Niall now knows for sure that he wants at least something with Zayn. But Zayn deserves better than some drunken kiss. Because as Niall said, He is Zayn Malik. And Zayn Malik deserves the best.

“Uh Niall?” Zayn breaks the silence.

“Yeah?” Niall asks, catching his breath in his throat.

“Your dick, uh, is pressing into my stomach,” Zayn squeaks.

“Oh shit, I didn’t even notice,” Niall comments looking down his chest even though it is so dark he could not see anything, “I’m so drunk Zayn, I’m sorry.”

“I know,” Zayn whispers.

“But everything I said, is true, no matter how drunk I am. People know how amazing you are. Liam realizes it too. He told me; we discussed it. But with everything it’s not enough. But Zayn, you are enough. You are good enough. And don’t let any dumb thought in your head ever tell you differently. And if you don’t believe it, I will spend every day proving to you that it is true, until you believe it. Because you’re good enough for me. And really buddy, I’m all that matters,” Niall explains. He then rests his head back into Zayn’s neck, right under his chin line.

Niall’s arms go under Zayn’s armpits and then his hands pop back up above Zayn’s shoulder, just to hold himself in that position. And this is where Niall belongs. He knows that for sure now. Because in Niall’s opinion, when a person is drunk or high, that is when they let their guard down. When people do what they have actually always wanted to do, consensually of course. And the last time he got really high with Zayn, they kissed. And now when Niall got drunk, he found his way to Zayn’s house. He knows where he belongs. Here.

“You really know what to say to make a guy feel good,” Zayn yawns sweetly.

“You really know how to hold a guy to make him feel good,” Niall nods into Zayn, “sleep tight,”

“Don’t let the bed bugs bite,” Zayn’s last response before they fall asleep.

Chapter End Notes

I decided to break the last part of this chapter up on its own. So the next chapter will be a one part and pretty short but it's pretty necessary for the series. I'll have it out for you guys on Monday:)
Chapter 11: Just Another Girl

Chapter Summary

When Niall's partner for the talent show comes down ill, he turns to Zayn for a desperate request. But Niall receives more than he bargained for from the performance.

Chapter Notes

So this is probably the shortest chapter I've ever written, but that is because in this chapter only one scene takes place. But a very important scene.

If you have not noticed, nearly every chapter is titled by a song that is used within the chapter or the song applies easily to the chapter. But for this chapter I really really REALLY suggest you listen to this song ("Just Another Girl" by The Killers) before you read it because it makes a lot more sense in my opinion if you can easily picture what is occurring. As you have probably observed, I am much better at writing conversations than explaining action. So I'm really sorry if it is a little difficult to read, I just have a hard time descriptively writing down what I see in my head. But I did my best and tried to make it as understandable as possible by the actions.

During the piece, I describe what is taking place by saying where each person is placed upon a stage, so it may also be a good idea to open up Google Images and look up stage directions so when I say stuff like "downstage center" you will know what I'm talking about.

And just to clarify, I use lyrics from the song "Just Another Girl" by the Killers in this. I do not claim to own the lyrics. They are not mine; they are copyrighted by the band, not me. Here is where I got the lyrics from:
http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/killers/justanothergirl.html

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 11: Just Another Girl

The night is finally here: the one Niall and Zayn have been working tirelessly on for nearly four weeks. Finals are over and it is nearly Christmas break. The only thing left is the arts department talent show. While there is no real prize for the victor; the night is more for students to blow off steam, see friends one last time before the New Year, and say goodbye to any seniors who were graduating a semester early, which includes Niall’s partner Holly. But Holly has not arrived yet, and it is putting Niall on edge especially as their performance time nears.

“Niall, what you doing out here? Shouldn’t you be inside getting all dolled up for me?” Nick inquires as he approaches the front door of the auditorium.

“Nick! Louis and Harry didn’t say you were coming,” Niall states happily, though his eyes continue to look behind Nick, hoping to see Holly walk up at the last minute.
“Thought I would surprise the two by showing up for the weekend. They kept talking about your performance; I could tell it was important to them. I assumed they’d be here and my guess is right,” Nick explains to Niall.

“Well I’m really happy you could make it,” Niall confirms. That is when he feels his phone vibrate in his pocket. Holy shit that better be Holly Niall thinks as he pulls out his phone.

He reads the text. Fuck. He really wishes that was not from Holly.

“Everything alright man?” Nick asks.

“Yes… No, my partner is at home throwing up, she can’t make it tonight,” Niall utters very disappointingly.

“Ah fuck,” Nick breaths, “Could you do it as a solo performance?”

“Yes… but it would lose its meaning. The way we choreographed it and stuff, it wouldn’t make since with one person,” Niall describes.

“Did you guys have like an understudy or anything?” Nick suggests, “It’s a stretch since it is just a talent show but…”

“No, I didn’t have anything planned like that. The only other person who knows anything about this is-” Niall describes. Then oh Niall thinks there is someone…

“Follow me! I’ll show to Harry and Louis, hurry!” Niall exclaims as he quickly hurries into the auditorium, Nick struggling to keep up with him. Niall snakes his way through groups of people in the auditorium till he comes up on a row of seats where Louis, Harry, and Zayn are sitting.

“Zayn!” Niall calls out to grab their attention.

“Nick⁉️” Harry and Louis yells once they turn their heads.

“Niall⁉️” Zayn squeals, “Why aren’t you backstage?!”

“My beautiful boys!” Nick says giving a kiss on the cheek to each of the boys. Zayn wipes off the kiss, Louis giggles, and Harry appears unfazed by it.

“We need to talk,” Niall declares as he drags Zayn in the side hallway.

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“Hell to the no. A thousand times over,” Zayn asserts turning away from Niall.

“Zayn, please, I will do anything,” Niall offers.

“You don’t have anything of value to offer me,” Zayn states, “I told you I would practice with you as long as I didn’t have to sing in public. And especially dance. You know I don't dance.”

“You think I planned this? Do you really think I wanted to have this end with me begging something of you that I know you do not want to do?” Niall explains.

“Then I don’t see why you’re asking me of this,” Zayn replies coldly.

“Because we put so much work into this. This deserves to be seen,” Niall describes, “It’s like if you built a series of stage props that you put your whole heart into, and then the day before the show was
supposed to go on they cancelled it. Wouldn’t your work deserve to be on that stage for the world to see, even for one night?”

“Yeah but my face is not on those props. If I go out there, and they see me, and I mess up…” Zayn cautious reveals, “Niall, I can’t do it.”

“I’ve heard you, over and over again. You may even sing it better than Holly. I don’t know. But don’t you want to find out if I’m talking shit to you or if you are actually talented?” Niall questions.

“No,” Zayn affirms agitatedly.

“Why not?” Niall demands.

“Because you make me feel worthy!” Zayn yells, followed by a silence that echoes through the empty corridor.

“Wait... what?” Niall questions as he begins to blush, “I make you feel that way?”

“Niall, since things ended with Liam I’ve been tearing myself to pieces. How pretty she is, how funny, smart, talented, and the list goes on. But the second I enter that auditorium with you, you treat me as if I invited singing. And for a brief period during the day, I think I’m good enough at something. Yes, I’m good at stage craft, but I can’t perform stage craft. I sing with you, and dance, and I feel like finally... But if I go in there, and I figure out you’ve been lying to me for two months because you were trying to restart my confidence, then I lose everything all over again. If we stay in this hallway and never go in, I can at least fantasize that for a four minute song, at least I’m good at something. Please don’t take that away from me...” Zayn describes, tears filling in his eyes as he ends his speech.

Niall is speechless. Because that was the entire point of singing with Zayn. Even if it is just for an hour period after school every other day, Zayn feels like he is worth something. Finally. And maybe if this keeps up, it will expand into the other parts of his life as well. And for that, Niall does not want to ask anymore of Zayn. Tears well up in his eyes as well.

“Oh baby,” Niall coos as he hugs Zayn, “That’s all I’ve ever wanted. Okay, we don’t have to sing. I’ll go cancel it.”

“Wait,” Zayn does not believe what he is now hearing. He pulls back to look Niall in the eye, “You aren’t going to fight for this anymore? You really care about this song.”

“It’s just a song,” Niall discloses, “I asked you not only because you are talented, but because you needed to feel this. Even if it is little, it something. And if that is all you need for now, and doing this may ruin the progress of what you made, then we will not go any further. Your feelings mean more to me than any song.”

Zayn is so touched by this, because he knows how much time and energy Niall gave to this performance. Zayn could see it in the way they just debated. And then Niall just folded the second Zayn got real with him. Niall always puts Zayn above all else, and Zayn can really see that now.

“I’m just so happy I can make you feel this way,” Niall reveals, “I’ll be right back. Save me a seat next to you?”

As Niall begins to walk away, Zayn calls out his name, “Wait!”

“What is it?” Niall turns back around.
“Don’t cancel the song,” Zayn proclaims.

“What? Zayn, it’s really no big deal. If not going on stage means that much to you—“ Niall says before he is interrupted.

“If you are willing to sacrifice hours of practice just for my well-being, I can sacrifice five minutes of my pride for you,” Zayn offers, as Niall’s face lights up like the 4th of July.

“Really? You mean this? I really do not want to do anything you don’t want to,” Niall proposes.

“Yes, let’s do it. I want to make a couple changes though,” Zayn explains as they start to head towards the backstage department of the school.

A female teenage announcer walks on stage to proclaim the next routine.

“Our next performance will be by Niall Horan and… a surprise guest… singing *Just Another Girl* by The Killers!” The crowd lets out a round of applause as the announcer leaves the stage. The lights go dark throughout the auditorium.

“Do you think Zayn is okay?” Harry whispers to Louis.

“What do you mean?” Louis whispers back.

“He hasn’t returned since Niall pulled him out. Do you think he went home or something?” Harry asks.

“Uh…” Louis trails off not having an answer.

That is when Niall walks on stage holding his bass guitar. Wearing a red and white long-sleeved plaid shirt and decently tight jeans. The crowd cheers as he arrives at the microphone the announcer was previous at.

“So I have to sadly publicize that my partner, Holly, has come down with the flu so she is unable to attend tonight’s performance,” Niall states as the crowd whines for her absence, “But lucky for you all, one of my best friend has been practicing with me and knows the entire song and choreography planned. Though the choreography Holly and I mapped was for a different gendered pairing, I have no problem still performing as planned, as long as no one cares either.”

“We don’t care! Do the song!” Someone from the crowd yells.

“Yeah sing!” A girl from the opposite end of the auditorium yells.

“As you wish,” Niall grins as he pulls his microphone back to center right stage. At the same time, two of the backup dancers pull a second microphone up to center left stage from behind the curtain wearing skinny blue jeans and black t-shirts. They glide back till they are upstage left.

The lights then focus on the stage as Niall struts back on stage strumming his guitar. The rest of the instrumentals from the song are turned on by the sound system. He himself has a cordless mic strapped on the right side of his face.

*Niall: Step out into the Indian dust.*

*I can feel the cracks in my spirit*

*They're starting to bust.*
Drive by your house
Nobody's home
I'm trying to tell myself that I'm better off alone.

That is when the sound of a drum begins to be heard. It slowly gets louder as Niall paces around the front edges of the stage.

Niall (chorus): All of my friends say I should move on.
She's just another girl
Don't let her stick it to your heart so hard.
And all of my friends say it wasn't meant to be.
And it's a great big world
She's just another girl.

And that is when the bass drops. All the lights shine to center upstage, where Zayn sits behind a percussion set. He pounds on the drums as a few people in the crowd cheer. Niall comes to the mic placed on center right stage and quits moving, though he primarily sings into the mic on his face. The mic in front of him is just so he keeps his place and will look similar to Zayn when he starts to sings.

Niall: I went to see a fortune teller that was a trip,

Zayn stands up from the drum set and hands the drum sticks to the official percussionist for the performance who was backstage. Wearing similar outfits to the girls only difference being his skinny jeans are black and his black shirt is long sleeved and buttoned up, he starts a slow strut towards Niall’s position.

Niall: Maybe this confusion's got me losing my grip
I can't believe you're out there flying with somebody else.
Now Jason's getting married in the blink of an eye;
I got an invitation but I didn't reply.
Tell your little brother that we put down the gloves

Zayn comes up behind Niall and whispers into the ear that Niall’s mic is based off of so the audience will be able to barely hear Zayn’s voice as well as Niall’s.

Niall and Zayn: And give him all of my love

Zayn then walks over to his mic on center right stage and begins to sing the chorus along with Niall. Feeling uncomfortable by the audience in front of him, Zayn spends most of his time gazing up at the ceiling as the words leave his lips. Niall smirks at Zayn’s attempt to stay calm.

And once the second chorus ends, just as they practiced numerous times for choreography, Zayn begins his stroll around Niall, going in front of him to downstage right and then looping around behind him.

Niall: I could be reeling them in left and right
Something's got a hold on me, tonight.

As Niall sings something’s got a hold on me, Zayn clutches Niall by the shoulder and light spins him around. Niall stays in place but rotates in the same direction Zayn is moving. Zayn finishes his strut around Niall and now stands in front of the two backup dancers that were supposed to be supporting Holly but are now Zayn’s.

Zayn looks back at first and copies the girls’ movements, but then he remembers he has done this
routine nearly one hundred times now. He knows it. He closes his eyes and begins doing the dance by memory. The movement of the Zayn and the girl’s arms and legs, and the way their hips turn, mimics each other perfectly and remains in rhythm in relationship to one another.

Niall: *Well, maybe all of my friends should confront…*

Niall looks over at Zayn and the backup dancers, as he is supposed to in the design of choreography. But he actually studies Zayn. He watches the way Zayn’s hips spin, the smile upon Zayn’s face as he does a twirl, and how Zayn appears completely confident in what he is doing.

Holly was the one who picked this song, but Niall got really behind the tune once he sang it once. He thought he loved it because it reminded him of Karlie. He has not dated a girl since her, even when he received closure from their relationship. And a part of him thought the reason for that was because no other girl could compare to her.

But seeing the way Zayn moves…

Niall: *The fact that I don’t want…*

Everything he had been feeling since the kiss: This constant desire to hold Zayn’s hand, the way he watches Zayn when he sketches, the pleasant way Niall began looking forward to Zayn’s daily prayers, and the way Zayn looked right now. The confidence that he was always too scared to let himself feel was pouring out of him like a God-made waterfall.

Niall: *another girl*

The song was right. Niall does not want another girl.

Niall wants Zayn.

Niall does not want another girl now or ever. That much is clear. Niall hungers Zayn. Not for a night, a weekend, nor a fling. Niall wants Zayn so no one else can have him. And Niall does not want to be anybody else’s but Zayn’s. Niall craves to be Zayn’s everything, and he does not understand how he did not come to that realization until now. This revelation causes the smile of all smiles to spread across Niall’s face. Because this is it. This is what he has been waiting for. It was Zayn all along.

Zayn’s cat walk across the stage brings Niall back into reality. Zayn pulls his mic off its stand and takes center downstage and stares out upon the crowd. For a brief moment he gazes back at Niall for reassurance in his performance. But all he can see is that shit-eating-grin on Niall’s face. Zayn knows no matter what sounds come out of his mouth once he begins to sing, Niall is going to think Zayn’s solo was the best performance in the history of performances since the beginning of time. His mouth opens wide.

Zayn: *Then why can’t I sleep at night?*
*And why don’t the moon look right?*

Niall hands his guitar to a backstage volunteer as the sound system plays the rest of the guitar part till the end of the song.

Zayn: *The sound’s off, but the TV’s on*
*And it’s a great big world.*

And the crowd screams for Zayn after his solo. Most of them did not even know who he was, and those who did had rarely heard him talk. But now Zayn seizes control of the show. Zayn feels so
giddy from the rush of the act he nearly walks off stage right there, but Niall grabs his hand and pulls him right back into to their concert.

Niall: *Don’t let her stick it to your heart, boy.*

Niall and Zayn walk around each other as if they are a pair of planets orbiting around each other at a fixed point. While it appears they are arguing with each other while they sing, their movements bring them closer to the other.

Zayn: *She’s just another girl.*

Niall: *All of my friends say.*

Niall’s arms wrap around Zayn as if they are slow dancing.

Zayn: *She’s just another girl.*

Niall: *Another girl…*

Niall concludes the end of the song as they quit spinning. They stand staring at once another, but Niall appears to be searching for something. As if he expects to find his soul hidden in Zayn’s eyes.

“Zayn, I don’t want another girl,” Niall declares honestly. Zayn stares back at him, not knowing how to react since that was not in any of their practices, a reference to anyone’s name.

The music shuts off as the crowd remains quiet, as if the audience can sense that the emotions taking place on stage are unprepared for. The crowd waits for the two to eventually turn towards the auditorium to bow, so they will know the show is officially over. But Niall and Zayn appear so much more focused on each other; as if they are the only two in the large theatre.

But someone has to break the silence, and who no better to do it than their best friend Louis Tomlinson.

“WOOOOOOOO!” Louis shouts as he jumps out of his seat.

Taking this initiative, Harry and Nick both leap up and scream as well, causing the whole auditorium to erupt in a standing ovation. Applause that goes on for minutes on end. This loud noise cause Zayn and Niall to turn out to the crowd and bow. After a few bows the two walk off stage together, still holding hands from their final bow.

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The dressing room is hectic as everyone surges backstage to congratulate Niall, but more importantly Zayn, to let him to know that he really did an amazing job for a first time performance that was not even planned.

The sudden popularity emotionally overtakes Zayn; this is definitely something he is not accustomed to. He looks to Niall for help, but he does not receive any. Niall watches the scene take place because even if Zayn does not know what to do with all the attention, he sure deserves it more than Niall does.

After a few moments of contently watching, Niall glides over to one of the mirrors to begin removing the makeup from his face. Louis, Harry, and Nick then pop up to next to him to give their congratulations.
“Holy shit man, that was terrific!” Nick exclaims to Niall.

“I know! It went even better than I ever could have imagined,” Niall yells back, “Zayn starting off with the drums was his idea.”

“That was some great acting up there. I really could have believed the emotions you and Zayn were giving one another. Are you sure you don’t want to join drama as well?” Harry inquires.

“I wasn’t acting,” Niall declares with a smile.

“What do you mean you weren’t acting?” Nick asks uncertainly.

“Guys, I’m in love with Zayn.”

Chapter End Notes

Hope you all enjoyed :) semester is starting tomorrow so I don’t know when I’ll post next, though the next chapter is complete, I just need to edit it.
Chapter 12 Part 1: Thinking Out Loud

Chapter Summary

With Niall finally accepting his feelings for Zayn, he must also face the probability that there will be no quick happy ending for those emotions. Harry and Nick begin "playing" a "game" of jealousy over Louis.

Chapter Notes

Sorry it's been so long ya'll. So busy with this semester, a lot less free time that I thought I would have. But a couple people been asking about the next chapter so I'll try to post things at least once a week.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 1

“Wait what?” Harry questions with a shocked look upon his and Nick’s face. The statement does not even seem to faze Louis. While there are still cheers and jeers occurring around the boys from Niall and Zayn’s previous performance, time and sound feels to have stopped around Louis, Harry, Niall, and Nick.

“I love Zayn,” Niall repeats to the three guys standing in front of him.

“Are you saying what I think you’re saying?” Nick tries to clarify.

“Yes, I am saying exactly that,” Niall gleams.

“Is he fucking with us?” Harry asks Louis.

“No, he’s not. I know Niall well enough to be able to tell when he’s messing with us,” Louis confirms, “Plus, I’ve known for more than a month now.”

“Wait… I didn’t tell you or anyone,” Niall states.

“You didn’t have to. I’ve known you since first grade. You think I can’t tell when something is up with you?” Louis explains, “You aren’t exactly known for your subtlety.”

“Well when you put it like that,” Niall chuckles.

“Are you sure about this?” Harry asks, “This is a big step.”

“All I know is that no one can compare to him,” Niall says while shifting his gaze over to Zayn who is still adjusting to the constant yelps of attention around him. But Zayn can feel Niall’s eyes watching. He sends a grin back Niall’s way in response to Niall’s loving eyes.

“So what are you going to do about it? Are you going to tell him?” Nick inquires.
“Uh…” Niall mumbles, “I don’t- I don’t know. I’ve never done this before.”

“What are you talking about? You ask out girls all the time,” Harry reminds him.

“Not like this! Those were just some girls; this is Zayn fucking Malik,” Niall clarifies, causing Louis to smile. Niall has never acted so nervous about liking someone. Louis finds it adorable how much Niall holds Zayn to a higher position. As if every girl Niall dated before Zayn was just practice for this.

“Do you want to be his boyfriend?” Nick questions.

“Um…” Niall stammers. Because to be completely honest, Niall has not thought about that once before this moment. Yeah, he found Zayn cute, and funny, and intelligent, and any other possible positive adjectives. And he thought about kissing Zayn, touching his body, and… other stuff. But now, this is about getting Zayn: emotionally. Niall is now thinking about dates and boyfriend. Shit, Niall has never been a boyfriend to a boyfriend. How the fuck does he do that?

“Okay, let’s start smaller and at something a little more important: what does Zayn feel about you?” Louis asks.

“We haven’t ever talked about it…” Niall reveals, “But we spend all our time together, sleep in the same bed together more often than not, text non-stop…”

Harry and Louis glance at one another in unison, because they do all those things Niall is listing off. *That does not mean they are in love too, right?*

“Why so serious?” Zayn inquires, placing his arm on Niall’s shoulder as he rejoins the group. Niall’s face turns pink to Zayn’s touch.


“How does it feel?” Harry asks Zayn.

“Fuck, I was so scared. But then I looked back at Niall and pretended it was only me and him on the stage like all the times we practiced,” Zayn says smiling at Niall, “But then the crowd went wild and it brought me back to reality. Shit, the rush is amazing.”

“Think you’re going to do it again?” Nick questions.

“Whenever Niall needs me,” Zayn replies.

“Zayn, right?” This guy asks, breaking into the group talk.

“Chad!” Harry exclaims, “That was a great rendition to *Let It Go* you did!”

“Yes, Zayn Malik,” Zayn says to Chad, pulling his arm off of Niall to shake Chad’s hand. Niall appears wildly jealous at Zayn’s change in attention.

“You did amazing. I don’t know how I haven’t met someone like you before,” Chad gleams. Niall shoots Chad a death glare. *Who the fuck does this guy think he is hitting on Zayn only after he saw Zayn singing when Chad has never said a word to him before* Niall thinks. And it does not help how much a pretty boy Chad is. He is much taller than Niall, strong cheek bones, and fluffy brown hair similar to Louis’s.
“You’re actually in two of my classes,” Zayn hums.


“Thanks, didn’t know you read,” Zayn jokes.

Chad chuckles, “Well anyways, there’s an after party going on at Tori Harvard’s house. You all should come.”

“I don’t know it’s kind of late…” Niall yawns.

“Come on, Niall it could be fun. It’s our night,” Zayn argues.

“Yeah, sure, if you want too,” Niall gives into Zayn.

“We’ll be there,” Louis confirms.

“Sweet. While I do hope I win this talent show, if anyone is going to beat me, I hope it is you two,” Chad explains to Niall and Zayn, “See you guys there.” Chad walks off from the group.

“Thought you didn’t like parties,” Niall whispers to Zayn.

“I thought I wouldn’t like singing in public either and turns out I did. Might as well try this and see if I like it at as well,” Zayn points out, “That okay with you?”

“Whatever you want to do,” Niall smiles, “As long as I’m with you.”

To no one’s surprise, Zayn and Niall win the talent show competition. Niall takes Zayn’s hand as they do a grandiose bow to those watching. The celebration is short-lived as they quickly head to the after party.

It is not a rager like many other parties they have been to. The party is filled strictly with students who are active members in the arts, such as acting, singing, or drawing. While there is some alcohol, there is no keg. There is some music playing, but nothing that would get the cops called like that happened at a party earlier in the school year.

Louis, Harry, Niall, Zayn and Nick stand in the corner of the room talking mainly among themselves, though Zayn keeps constantly being pulled away by various people asking to take pictures with the new winner of the annual talent show.

“He’s a star,” Niall smiles as he watches Zayn disappears with another round of girls.

“A natural if I do say so myself,” Nick says taking a sip of his drink.

“What do you even do Nick?” Niall chuckles, “I feel like you’re always with us, but I don’t really know anything about what you do outside of Louis and Harry.”

Nick laughs at that comment, “Oh I just sleep when I’m not with these two boys,” Nick places his hand on Louis’s far hip, “I actually want to be a DJ someday. I already volunteer at the local radio station in mine and Harry’s hometown. I mainly research for them right now, but I hope to make my way up the ladder soon.”

“So you know a good sound when you hear it?” Louis asks looking up at Nick.
“Exactly,” Nick gleams at Louis, “I know it when I see it.” Louis’s cheeks turn pink at Nick’s glance, but Harry’s cheeks turn pink as well… but in jealousy?

“What did you hear tonight?” Niall asks as Zayn returns to the group, “Specifically from Zayn.”

“Real potential,” Nick says shifting his attention back to the group, “Your two’s vocals together makes a perfect harmony.”

“Well I could have told you that,” Harry comments as he rolls his eyes. He takes another sip from his drink before he throws his arm around Louis’s hip, knocking Nick’s grasp off of Louis. This causes Nick to shoot Harry a confused look. Louis appears unfazed by the change, already being completely comfortable to Nick or Harry’s hands on him.

To mark his territory, Nick then places his hand on Louis’s thigh while looking Harry directly in the eye.

Harry then laughs. In response, he smacks Nick’s hand off of Louis’s thigh and grips it himself. “Mine,” He playfully says to Nick. Louis does not feel like Harry is joking though. Maybe it is the alcohol talking, but Louis can literally feel glares between Harry and Nick. The confrontation ends in a laughing fit between Nick and Harry. Harry pulls his hand back to the thigh that is close to himself as Nick’s hand reappears on Louis’s hip.

“We can’t stop now babe,” Niall says to Zayn once he returns with a drink in his hand, “Mind if I take a drink? I’m famished.” Niall then grabs Zayn’s drink before Zayn can protest. Niall expects tea or Pepsi, but it tastes very bitter. So bitter in fact Niall nearly spits it back out, “What the hell is in this?!”

“Oh, I don’t know exactly. Chad made it for me,” Zayn admits as he seizes the drink back.

“You don’t know? Have you heard of ruffies?” Niall tries to confirm, “You know there is alcohol in that, right?”

“Yeah I know…” Zayn mumbles.

“But you don’t drink,” Niall reminds him.

“I know… but Chad said I’d like it. Thought I’d give it a shot,” Zayn giggles.

“Just be careful babe,” Niall says to Zayn.


“Um, Chad…” Niall says as he realizes he is lying.

“What about him?” Zayn asks, “Do you know anything about him?”

Niall now remembers he knows nothing damning about Chad. Yeah he has slept with a few guys at school, but that does not mean he is a bad person.

“Uh… nothing, just in general I guess,” Niall fumbles, “Like after Liam and all.”

“I can take care of myself,” Zayn replies by taking a drink from his cup. A sour expression jolts across Zayn’s face in reaction to the liquid.

“I didn’t mean it like that,” Niall defends as Chad walks up to the group, “I know you can take care of yourself..”
“Hey Zayn we’re doing Karaoke in the other room. Want to sing with me?” Chad asks while mildly slurring his language.

“Uh, he doesn’t like to sing a lot in public,” Niall tells Chad.

“You know what, maybe I will,” Zayn replies while shooting Niall a scowl. Chad takes Zayn’s hand and leads him out of the room. Louis, Harry, and Nick look shocked at the interaction between Zayn and Niall.

“Did I do something wrong?” Niall asks while looking very hurt.

“I don’t know what that was about,” Louis replies.

“Should I go apologize or something?” Niall asks.

“Uh, I say it’d be better to let Zayn go blow off some steam. He’ll probably feel bad about his attitude and apologize himself if you let him cool off for a bit,” Louis explains.

“Yeah… yeah,” Niall comments as they hear Start of Something New from High School Musical blare through the house. Niall grabs his drink and stomps to the black porch to rid himself of Zayn’s angelic voice coming out of the next room.

Once on the patio, he chugs his drink in hand and looks back up at the stars. He really wishes his uncle was with him right now. His uncle always had the best advice when it came to pretty much anything. While his friends may know the situation between Niall and Zayn better, Niall’s Uncle knows Niall.

“So I’m a little confused,” A voice startles Niall. Niall spins around to see Liam on the porch with him.

“Oh, how the tables have turned,” Liam chuckles, though Niall cannot recall what Liam is referencing.

“What are you doing here?” Niall asks to Liam.

“Well, I had to rush Danielle home after the talent show as usual, so I didn’t have time to congratulate you there,” Liam explains. “With that performance on stage I thought you told him.”

“Told him?” Niall questions.

“Wait… either you’re so drunk you don’t remember what you said or you didn’t mean what you told me… Um, okay nevermind,” Liam awkwardly scratches the back of his head.

“What do you think I said?” Niall tries to clarify.

“The way you spoke to Zayn on stage, I would have believed you meant it. That you’re crazy for Zayn,” Liam gleams.


“No you told me at that last party we were at. You were pretty drunk, I did not know to take to heart what you said. But I guess you just confirmed it by saying Louis knows,” Liam chuckles.

“Oh? I don’t really remember seeing you there,” Niall laughs, “So now everyone knows.”

“But apparently Zayn?” Liam states. “Why are you out here when he’s in there dancing with Chad?”
“That’s precisely why I’m out here,” Niall admits.

“So you’re just going to let him get away? You haven’t even tried,” Liam retorts.

“If he was into me, he wouldn’t be dancing with Chad in the first place,” Niall replies.

“Niall, I see how close you too have become. Maybe he feels the same way about you, but he believes you’re straight so he has not given it a try,” Liam offers.

“I don’t know… Chad’s like a pretty boy, you know? And I’m me…” Niall admits.

“You really think Chad could compare to whatever you could give Zayn? You’ve known Zayn for at least five years. And Chad’s known him for what, five minutes?” Liam says.

“Okay, I see your point,” Niall answers, “But I don’t know how to do this.”

“All Zayn wants is for someone to look him in the eyes and see all the positive things that he never admits to himself,” Liam explains, “And I can see it in your eyes: you see all of that and more. You won’t know until you try. And you will never know, if you never try.”

“What do I do?” Niall asks, his heart rate beginning to race as he finally lets himself imagine an attempt at getting Zayn.

“You walk inside, and you tell Zayn we need to talk please. You’ll pull him outside, right here on this patio, and say everything. Everything you have always wanted to tell him,” Liam orders.

“That I love him, and he’s amazing, so amazing, I don’t even deserve him. That he is so beautiful, no one’s smile can compare. And there is so much I love about him: the way he sleeps on everybody when he’s exhausted past the point of belief; the way he listens to everyone’s problems and handles them as if they are his own. And currently the idea of him touching anyone else, the way he should be touching me, is driving me up the fuckin’ wall,” Niall rambles.

“Yes, that is perfect. Please, I know more than anybody else, Zayn deserves to be happy. And so do you,” Liam grins.

“Okay, okay, here I go,” Niall states looking at the back door, but his feet do not move. His leg are paralyzed in fear.

“Come on, you can do this,” Liam gives Niall a confident push into the house.

All of Niall’s focus is on his mission at hand. He glides past Louis, Harry, and Nick who all give him a greeting without even noticing their attempt at attention. He pushes past a few groups of people that are also located in his room till he makes it to a door. He pulls it open and leaves the room.

“Is he okay?” Louis asks Liam.

“Yeah! He’s just going to tell Zayn that he nuts about him. He’s kind of fixated on that for the time being,” Liam explains nonchalantly.

“Wait! You mean right now!?” Louis exclaims.

“Yeah, is there anything wrong with that?” Liam inquires.

“No! It’s good! It’s beyond good! I gotta watch this!” Louis yells, jumping to his feet.

“Don’t you think this may be one of those times to let Niall do this on his own?” Nick asks.
“Nick, they are two of my best friends who are about to fall in love with one another. A couple that would be perfect for one another. If you or anyone stands in the way of me seeing this, I will not hesitate to twist whoever’s neck gets in my way,” Louis states. Nick looks a little mortified at Louis’s declaration.

“I think we should let him go,” Harry chuckles as he also stands up next to Louis.

“Fine, fine, what do I know?” Nick says joining the group as they travel behind Niall, but giving Niall enough space to look as if he is on his own.

Niall follows the sound of music till he reaches the door of the main living room. He takes a deep breath upon standing at its entrance. He is scared, so scared. This may seem rushed, with Niall only admitting to himself that he is completely into Zayn earlier in the evening, but he cannot wait for Zayn a second longer.

He step into the room but quickly realizes that it is not Chad and Zayn singing by the karaoke machine anymore. In fact, when he gazes around the room he sees no sign of them.

"Do you know where they went?" Niall whispers to the line of boys standing behind him.

"Uh, he wasn't in the room we were all sitting in..." Nick mumbles.

"Maybe he stepped out for some fresh air? If he wasn't near the back door with us, he must have went out the front door," Liam attempts to explains, "Let's try there bud?" Liam suggests as Niall plows through the group to get to the hallway where the front door is located.

But at the first second of stepping into the entrance way of the home, his feet halt at what he sees.

“Come on sweetie, you can do it!” Louis shoves Niall into the room, but then he and the rest of the boys see what Niall is gawking at.

Zayn is pinned against a wall at the foot of a staircase, which leads to the upper level of the house. In front of him is Chad, whom holds Zayn against the wall with his body in a deep make-out session. Chad breaks the kiss to which Zayn smiles pleasantly at him. Then Chad attacks the right side of Zayn’s neck causing a tipsy whine escapes his lips. Finally, Chad pulls Zayn up the stairs, and then they disappear into what the group suspects is a bedroom.

“Oh… Niall…” Louis whispers, as Niall pushes the group of boys out of his way to barge out of the room.

Niall knows he should not be mad at them, but he is. He did not want to do this: telling Zayn anything about what he was feeling. Nor did he want to see Zayn pinned to a wall with a boy who was not Niall. But Niall did see it. And whatever dream he had of him and Zayn having a quick happy ending went down with the kiss. Karlie chose someone over him, and now it feels like Zayn did the exact same.

Niall sulks into the kitchen, grabs another beer, chugs it, throws the nearly emptied can towards the trash (but misses it completely), and then wanders back outside. The group of boys follow after Niall, worried for their friend’s well-being, but they stay a safe distance behind sensing his angst.

Niall walks to the middle of the lawn and lays down to look up at the stars, hoping at least they calm his nerves. But the sky has clouded up, and some light snow flurries begin to fall. Rationally, his anger against his friends has passed. He knows it was not their intention to hurt him. They were, in fact, attempting to make him happy. But things do not always go according to plan.
One by one the rest of their boys make their way outside to join Niall. First, Louis sits to left of Niall and grabs his hand to express his support. Harry and Nick sit on the right side of him and look up to the same sky Niall observes. Liam comes up behind Niall, crosses his legs as he sits down, and moves Niall’s head onto his lap. While not being his fault, Liam feels the most guilt about this since he was the one who encouraged Niall to tell Zayn. He runs his fingers through Niall’s hair to soothe his soul. No one says anything; comfort does not always have to be expressed through words.

“He’s just so beautiful, you know?” Niall mumbles, though not really looking for a response.

“We know babe, we know,” Louis coos as the snow begins to fall more intensely.

Niall’s phone buzzes from within his pocket. He pulls it out with his free hand to see who it is from.

It is from Zayn: Hey buddy! Think I’m spending the night here ;) I’ll tell you more about it tomorrow. Peace! xx

Niall refuses the answers the text as he puts his phone away. Just the nail in the coffin to ruin his night.

“Can we leave?” Niall requests.

“Yeah, let’s go Ni,” Louis replies.

Chapter End Notes

Don’t know when the next one will come! Thank for your patience :(
Chapter 12 Part 2: Thinking Out Loud

Chapter Summary

Niall must cope with his newly declared feelings for Zayn as Zayn continues to get closer with Chad. A slip of Nick’s hand dramatically changes the relationship between Louis, Nick, and Harry. (This is a pretty smutty chapter if ya’ll have been missing that).

Chapter Notes

Hey guys so I'm gonna try to post a new chapter every Friday afternoon. This chapter has a definite mix of angst and smut: one of my favorite mixes. I'm actually really proud of this smutty scene so I hope you all enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 2

Niall asks for each of the boys not to tell Zayn about the events which occurred that night. Zayn just seems so happy after meeting Chad, Niall does not want to ruin it with some stupid feelings that do not even matter in the long run. Each of the boys object when Niall requests it, but they in the end agree to Niall’s demand.

“I lost my V-card!” Zayn exclaims joining Louis and Niall the next day at Louis’s home.

“You what?” Niall asks with a cough.

“No longer a virgin! This guy,” Zayn says pointing at himself.

“How was it?” Louis questions, trying to balance out his desire to comfort Niall while at the same time show support for Zayn’s declaration.

“Fuck, it was good, he was good,” Zayn moans as he ironically throws his head back.

“Was it… was it what you expected?” Niall stammers.

“I really did not know what to expect. Like I barely know him; I didn’t know how he moves. It just felt right, you know? And man, was it right,” Zayn explains as he leans against Niall. Niall smiles at Zayn’s touch, but pain still resides in him. For every touch reminds him that there is part of Zayn that Chad has experienced and Niall will not.

“Are you two gonna be anything?” Louis asks while his eyes dash back and forth between Niall and Zayn.

“I don’t know… Afterwards we just talked all night, you know? And he’s actually really chill. We went out for breakfast this morning and kept on going from last night. I guess I would say it was magical,” Zayn rambles with a stupid smile on his face.
“Like a fairytale?” Niall inquires.

“Perhaps. The best thing I’ve had yet,” Zayn replies as Niall now wonders why he even asked that to begin with since he knows its answer would hurt so much.

“I think I better get going; I got some homework to do and stuff,” Niall says while he rolls Zayn off of him.

“But I just got here! We gotta celebrate this! We did when you lost yours,” Zayn reminds Niall.

“We will some other time yeah? I’m sure Louis would love to party with you about this,” Niall states as he leaves the room, “You two have fun.”

“One second, I think I left something in his truck,” Louis lies to Zayn as he follows after Niall.

“Wait!” Louis calls as Niall approaches his trucks, “Are you okay?”

“No… but it’s no one’s fault. I want Zayn to be happy. He seems… happy,” Niall answers.

“And you deserve to be happy too,” Louis replies.

“I will, just give me some time. Zayn deserves this as well. He’s been through so much this past semester, please give him his day. If it wasn’t for me feeling like this, I’d be here with you asking about all the disgustingly gay details.”

“We can talk later, yeah?” Louis offers.

“Yeah, please go have a good time with him. I’ll be fine,” Niall demands as he hops into his truck.

The fake fighting between Nick and Harry over Louis becomes a more and more frequent occurrence since the incident at the party. And while they always shake it off as playfully, Louis cannot help but feel it is not a joke. Sure, it was kind of funny and cute the first time it happened, but its increased frequency leads Louis to believe it is more than play.

The act keeps going farther and farther: more sexual and dominating in nature. It may actually be driving Louis up the wall. And on top of it all, neither boy knows that the other has been sexual with Louis. Louis feel uncomfortable telling Harry about his sexual encounters with Nick since Harry and Nick are longtime friends, and Louis does not tell Nick about Harry since Louis has not told anyone about Harry so why would he start now?

“Can you guys quit, I’m trying to watch the movie,” Louis grunts, sitting in between Nick and Harry in Harry’s basement watching Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Nick is to Louis’s right and Harry to Louis’s left. Nick and Harry release their grips on Louis once he barks his command.

“Lou-eh, it’s a kids’ movie. Learn to have a little fun,” Nick chuckles.

“I do have fun; lots of fun with you guys. But I paid for this movie for all of us to watch, so I’d really appreciate it if we would get my money’s worth out of it,” Louis commands.

“Fine, anything for you princess,” Nick gives into Louis. As Nick relaxes, he casually places his hand back on Louis’s right knee, causing a glare from Harry’s direction. Harry then grabs Louis’s left knee.

“Again guys, really?!” Louis comments while rolling his eyes. Harry smacks Nick’s hand off of
Louis and pulls Louis by the legs closer to him. Nick then grabs Louis by the right thigh and retracts Louis back towards him. But with Harry grabbing onto both of Louis’s knees, Nick accidentally clutches onto Louis’s upper inner thigh. This causes Louis to remember how long it has been since he has gotten off. Being winter break, Nick has stayed for an extended visit. With him here, he has not had any alone time. Not that he minds, he really does enjoy his time with Nick and Harry. But while Nick is with Louis and Harry at all times of the day, there has not been anytime for Louis and Harry to get off together. And with Nick staying at Harry’s house, there has not been a moment for Louis and Nick to break off to fool around either.

So Louis tries not to show that his breathing has hitched as Nick’s grip tightens along his thigh. He looks back up at the television for any distraction as Harry grabs his other thigh. With both boys now claiming each of Louis’s legs, their grasps tear his legs apart. Louis’s erection hardens as he prays that his tight jeans will conceal it. Nick and Harry will never let him hear the end of it if their joint efforts cause him to pop a boner. That is when Nick’s hand slips, runs up the thigh, and grazes Louis’s zipper causing Louis to moan.

Nick and Harry go silent as their minds try to confirm if Louis had just made the sound they think he had. Their eyes stretch wide as they look at each other wondering if the other had heard the same moan. Louis’s cheeks turn bright pink in embarrassment.

“Uh, Lou?” Harry questions breaking the silence.

“Are you… turned on right now?” Nick asks immediately after.

“I, erm, don’t…” Louis stammers looking away from both of the boys.

That is when Harry and Nick also remember how long it has been since they too have had any sexual relations, even with their own bodies. They observe Louis’s boner throb within his pants, confirming their suspicions.

With his horniness taking control, Nick then does something a little extreme. He again runs his hand across Louis’s groin. In reaction Louis holds his breath, and then releases it when Nick’s hand removes itself.

Nick awaits for a protest from Louis. Or from Harry. In fact, he now feels beyond stupid for making a move on Louis in front of his best friend. If he does not get kicked out of Harry’s house in the next few seconds, he will be really surprised.

But neither Louis nor Harry say anything to Nick. In fact, they look as if they want for more. Nick gawks at the boys for a couple moments, expecting a look of disgust. But there is not one. Louis rolls his hips against couch in one circulation signaling his true desires.

Testing the waters once again Nick rubs Louis’s groin, firmly grabs Louis’s member, releases, and then runs his hand up Louis’s torso. Another groan escapes Louis’s lips. Something even more surprising then occurs after: Harry grasps ahold of Louis’s upper thigh and begins rubbings sweet circles into it with his thumb.

Is Harry actually going along with this Nick wonders as he watches the two boys’ interaction with one another. It is not of surprise or anxiety, but of calm and familiarity. Sure Louis and Harry have always been physically comfortable with one another: cuddling, arms around each other, and rare handholding. But this is different. This is sexual and intimate.
Believing he should just go with the flow, Nick then places his hand on the thigh Harry does not have his hand on and sensually massages it just as Harry is.

*Is this really happening* Louis thinks as he watches both Nick and Harry’s hands pressure his loins.

“Do you know where his turn-on spot is?” Harry whispers to Nick across Louis.

“Uh… his thighs?” Nick makes a logical guess, with what he is referencing at hand.

“No, his neck,” Harry replies as he places his lips upon where he just said. Louis then rolls his head in Nick’s direction so Harry has more access to his neck.

Nick watches as his hormones are now pumping through his body. He finds what he is watching as so hot. Both Louis and Harry are beautiful people, so the fact they appear to fool around on a regular basis together only makes the situation that much sexier. Nick, besides for that brief period during his childhood, always assumed Harry was straight. He does not exactly know what Harry is anymore, but he is definitely not straight.

“No, I didn’t, let me see,” Nick states as he also begins to suck on Louis’s neck.

*Fuck,* this way too real for Louis. He throws his head straight back against the head cushion of the couch so both Nick and Harry have equal space for Louis’s pleasure. Two mouths; two tongues. He really cannot believe his is happening. The stimulation is overwhelming him. Because both boys add something different. Harry knows what Louis likes after years of exploring each other’s bodies. He know exactly what buttons to press to push Louis over the edge. Nick is new and fresh; he does not recognize exactly what Louis’s turn-ons are yet. But Nick does have experience of his own so Louis will have a taste of something novel.

“What else gets Louis off?” Nick asks Harry.

“Well as you can see, his thighs are highly sensitive,” Harry describes as he playful runs his hand over Louis’s bulge.

“What else is there?” Nick inquires. Harry is finding it very amusing that he has lessons to teach to someone who is more than a year older than him. Louis is normally Harry’s teacher at things; it feels very liberating to be on the other end of the stick.

“His nipples make him moan, so easily,” Harry replies as he reaches for Louis’s shirt, but Louis quickly grabs ahold of its lower lining, preventing Harry from lifting it up.

“Everything alright?” Nick questions concerningly. A wicked smile strikes Harry’s face as a look of uneasiness is upon Louis’s.

“He’s a little insecure,” Harry explains, “About his stomach. He feels bad it isn’t flat, though I think it’s one of the loveliest tummies in all the land. He has nothing to be insecure about. Don’t you agree Nick?”

“Harry…” Louis whines. Louis told Harry that sensitivity in confidence. He never thought it would be uttered to another person, especially not one whom he is interested in. He attempts to playoff this cocky persona to the crowd, to Nick. This admittance really damages that.

“Babe,” Harry coos while rubbing over Louis’s palm which has a tightened grip upon his shirt, “You’re beautiful. You know that, let me and Nick see it.”

“So gorgeous,” Nick agrees running his hand over Louis’s chest. In response, Louis’s hold upon his
shirt loosens.

Harry softly takes ahold of Louis’s hand, “Nick, will you do the honors?”

“My pleasure,” Nick declares as he rolls the shirt up Louis’s body. Louis takes it a step further by raising up his arms, so Nick is able to fully remove the shirt off of him. Louis feels extremely vulnerable as both guys gaze upon his body in admiration. He moves his hands to cover his stomach when Harry grabs Louis’s by both the wrists.

“Now, let us show you how handsome you are;” Harry orders as he places a kiss upon Louis’s stomach. Nick takes the initiative as he lays his lips upon Louis’s right pectoral muscle.

“Fuck…” Louis moans as both boy suck on his torso. This is too much, way too much. He still cannot believe this is happening. He is going to wake up any minute, he can feel it. They lap on his body like dogs who have not drunken for days.

“You two…” Louis whimpers.

“Shall we?” Nick asks to Harry. Harry quickly understands what Nick is referencing as Harry brings his head up to Louis’s left pectoral muscle.

“Let’s,” Harry hums as Nick and he bite onto each of Louis’s nipples.

“Shit,” Louis nearly yells as both of his hands land on the back of their heads. Nick and Harry begin sucking purple blotches all over his torso; hickies turning Louis’s chest into a mess of poke-a-dots. His chest shines in the lamplight due to the flood of saliva left upon his chest.

Unconsciously, Louis starts to push Nick and Harry’s head downs his chest towards his groin. His erection feels trapped within his jeans. It is needing released or else pleasure will turn to pain.

“Are you wanting something babe?” Nick asks up to Louis.

“Oh, uh,” Louis becomes observant of his actions.

“How do we do this?” Nick asks redirecting his attention to Harry.

“The beginning is pretty basic. You first release the beast,” Harry orders as he grabs ahold of Louis’s zipper. Louis holds his breath as Nick takes control of the button that holds his pants together at the waist. But neither Harry nor Nick move as they smile mischievously at the other. They been look up to Louis with their smiles intact.

“What are you guys… waiting for?” Louis asks in a huff.


“What?” Louis requests.

“You heard the man,” Harry confirms.

“You guys know what I want,” Louis whimpers.

“Maybe we don’t,” Harry grins.

“But…” Louis stammers.

“Do you want it or not?” Nick smirks.
“If you guys don’t take off my pants I’m going to fucking explode,” Louis states.

“So you’re saying…” Harry hints at.

“Take off my pants,” Louis reiterates.

“That’s all you had to say,” Harry comments as Nick unbuttons Louis’s jeans. Harry then drags down the zipper as Nick helps Louis wiggle the jeans down below his knees. Louis sighs in relief due to the lessening pressure on his erection. The fly of his boxers is soaked in precum.

“Very anxious aren’t we?” Nick asks as he rubs his thumb of the concealed head of Louis’s penis.

“You could say that,” Louis admits as Harry rubs his exposed thighs.

“I think we kept him waiting long enough,” Harry says to Nick, with Nick nodding in agreement. Both Nick and Harry take ahold of the elastic in Louis’s boxers and lowers the underwear down to the level of his pants.

The sight before their eyes is breath taking. Louis shivers to the new found coldness along his body. His erection smacks against his abdomen as precum rolls down his length. The purple blotches remain on his chest in monument to the work of Harry and Nick. He looks so owned by Nick and Harry, each of their love bites a symbol of ownership over his body.

“Wow love, how do you hide any of this?” Nick says while tracing his fingers along Louis’s curves, “You could be a pin-up model.”

“You could say that,” Louis huffs.

“Really,” Nick comments as he grabs Louis’s boner, causing Louis to release a light squeal. Harry continues to rub Louis’s thigh while Nick slowly milks Louis’s cock.

“Does he prefer it fast or slow?” Nick asks to Harry.

“Fast, just be mindful of his foreskin. It may seem like he has a lot, but if you pull too hard it can really cause him some pain,” Harry replies.

“Aye, Aye captain,” Nick answers as he changes the speed of the handjob he performs on Louis. Louis twists his hips into Nick’s grip, moaning in appreciation for Nick’s effort.

“Play with his balls?” Nick suggests to Harry.

“Oh, I don’t know about-“ Louis says. Before Louis can complete his sentence, Harry begins bouncing Louis’s balls between his fingertips.

“Oh, okay, I see your point,” Louis moans as he throws his head back into the couch once again. With all of this: two boys, nipple play, hickies, ballplay; he knows he cannot last much longer. Which will appear pathetic, but he cannot help himself. It is really their fault, not Louis’s, he believes. It has been days since he has gotten off, in his defense.

“Kiss his thighs, it drives him wild,” Harry offers to Nick as Nick quickly obeys. Nick and Harry press their lips all over legs as Louis feels the heat from their bodies spread across him. Nick squeezes Louis’s dick firmly as he rolls Louis’s foreskin up and down his members.

Learning from the mistake of his and Harry’s mishap at the hotel, Louis grabs both Nick and Harry by the hairs on their head and pulls them up before he erupts cum all over himself. Having not
orgasmed in days, his white hot spunk shoots in the air like a rocket then lands back on his chest as Nick rubs the rest out of his cock.

“Holy fuck that was good,” Louis breaths.

“Happy we could be of service,” Nick quips as he places a kiss upon Louis’s cheek.

“You look exhausted,” Harry says to Louis.

“Sorry just haven’t came like that in awhile,” Louis wipes a drop of cum off of his face.

“Anything else we can help you with?” Nick ask while lightly biting Louis’s ear.

“Yeah… yes you can actually,” Louis grunts.

“Hm?” Harry wonders.

“I want to get both of you off… at the same time,” Louis whispers, feeling a little shameful at his request.

“You don’t owe us anything if you’re too tired Lou,” Harry replies sweetly.

“No, I want this. You guys told me to say what I want, and now I am,” Louis responds, “I didn’t realize how bad I wanted this… until this.”

“I really don’t think we should argue with the man, Harold,” Nick says to Harry as he unbuckles his own pants.

Harry looks to Louis for confirmation, as Louis nods his head in reply. With cum still running down his chest, Louis hops onto the floor between Nick and Harry as he sits nearly eye-level with their groins. They both roll their jeans off but leave their underwear on. Using one hand for each boy, Louis begins rubbing both of their dicks through the fabric of their boxers.

Nick is already at full mast by the time Louis place his hand on him, but Harry is only maintaining a semi. He is really nervous about exposing himself in front of Nick. Yeah, he just gave a mutual handjob to his best friend with Nick, but that was about Louis. What Louis wants now is about Nick and Harry, causing Harry some apprehension.

But then Louis gives a small squeeze to Harry’s thigh and sends him a smile that says it will be alright. Harry gives back a relaxed smile as he starts to enjoy what is taking place at hand. He closes his eyes and rolls his head back into the padding of the couch as his dick grows in size.

Finally after what seems like an eternity to Louis, though it probably has not been more than a couple minutes, he grabs ahold of both of their waistbands and gives a tough tug, letting the guys know he is ready for more. Looking nervously at one another, Nick and Harry pull of their boxers and throw them across the floor.

Louis gawks at both of their nudities. Sure, he has seen Harry naked too many times to count, but now he has something to compare it too. Nick’s dick has a slight curve down compared to Harry’s that sticks straight out. Nick has some thickness to his member, but it is six inches compared to Harry’s seven. The skin is also a little looser than Harry’s, so Louis has a little more to play with. He takes ahold of them both loosely and slowly jerks off both the men in front of him.

He looks up to the boys for either approval or discomfort, but displeasure is the last thing he would receive from them. Harry still has his head facing the ceiling with his eyes closed as Nick watches
Louis with hungry eyes. Seeing how they are handling his light touch, Louis grabs a little hard.

“Yeah, just like that, a little tighter and faster, can you do that for us sweetie?” Nick request in between two moans. Louis gladly complies as the sounds of satisfaction grow louder from Harry and Nick’s mouth. Precum glistens atop both of their shafts. Is Louis’s mouth watering?

“Looking a little thirsty, love,” Nick comments as Louis blushes, “If you want something, no one is stopping you.”

“I’ve… never…” Louis stammers as he quits moving his wrists.

“Has he ever given a blowjob?!” Nick asks Harry.

Harry cheek’s turn pink as well, “Not, um, not to my knowledge.”

“Oh,” Nick sighs turning back to Louis, “I’m not going to stop you if you want to try.”

“You don’t have to do anything you don’t want to,” Harry reminds Louis.

“I know…” Louis breaths as he approaches the head of Nick’s dick. Nick watches with a smirk on his face; he rolls his hips trying to get his tip closer to Louis’s beautiful lips.

“Do I just?” Louis asks, speaking into Nick’s dick as if a microphone.

“Kiss it and see?” Nick suggests.

Louis’s lips land upon the slit of Nick’s cock as his tongue runs across the head.

Nick releases a deep grunt as he closes his eyes, “Yeah, just like that.”

Louis keeps his right hand upon Harry’s dick, giving it a sloppy handjob as he focuses his attention upon Nick. Louis is hooked on the salty taste created by the precum. Inch by inch, Louis takes more and more of Nick’s length into his up his mouth.

“I cannot believe you haven’t done this before,” Nick reveals as he places his hands on the back of Louis’s head to hold him in place, “This is like pro-quality.”

“Hey, it’s his first time,” Harry says to Nick, having the intention of smacking Nick’s hands off of Louis.

“No, it’s okay. I kind of like it,” Louis says coming up for a breath of air, then returning to suck on Nick’s dick. Louis’s saliva runs down Nick’s shaft in a needy frenzy. Before Louis’s knows it, Nick’s pubes brush against Louis’s nose, and Nick’s pubes are not long by any means.

“Shit…” Nick squirms as his head touches the back of Louis’s throat. Louis loves this, no matter how bad that sounds. He loves the warms feeling the precum causes; he loves how full his mouth feels; he loves how the dick throbs in reaction to Louis’s performance.

“Holy fuck, Harry, you have to try Louis’s mouth. It’s literally the best,” Nick suggests as Harry and Louis quickly come to his attention. Louis pulls off of Nick’s dick, with a little pop coming from Louis’s lips due to the ending of suction from the blowjob.

“I… I do?” Harry’s voice cracks.

“Yes, it’s so wet and tight, you must,” Nick orders as he pulls Louis by the hair in the direction of Harry. Louis looks up to Harry with innocent eyes, but his lips are dark red due to the rush of blood
to the area caused by his blowjob.

“You… You don’t have too…” Louis whimpers, sounding very unconfident.

All Harry can do is nod as Louis gazes upon Harry’s cock. Yeah, he has seen it, more than a hundred times. But this new. A taste. Harry inside of him.

The apprehension does slow him down. He switches to giving Nick a weak-ass handjob with Louis’s attention shifting onto Harry. As Louis’s hot breath spreads across Harry’s member, it throbs, smacking Louis in the face. It lands on Louis’s lips, the head easily slides into his mouth, and an enjoyable groan slips from Louis.

Because Harry tastes… amazing. With Nick, Louis liked sucking dick in general. But with Harry, he likes sucking Harry. Without thinking, he immediately takes the entirety of Harry’s length into his mouth. Harry is a tad bit longer than Nick, but Louis rapidly buries his face in Harry’s groin.

“Bloody hell,” Harry groans in response. Louis moans around his cock, the vibrations sending chills through Harry’s body. But Louis needs more, more of Harry, and he has already hit the base of his dick.

So Louis completely releases Harry’s cock, breaths for a brief second, then goes all the way back down. He repeats this over and over again, retaking Harry’s size countless times. As if somehow believing the harder he sucks, the longer Harry will get.

He attempts to open up his throat to take all of Harry in that he can, but he has not had the experience to practice deep-throating. He continually chokes around Harry, but he loves it. Louis’s cock rehardens in response to Harry’s thick member pressing into his throat.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa! I’m about to cum!” Harry yells as he pulls Louis off of him by grabbing onto his hair. Louis whines as his mouth feels extremely empty by the lack of dick.

“How do you want this to end, love?” Nick asks Louis as he jerks his own cock.

“Um… I want…” Louis mumbles.

“Hm?” Nick clarifies.

“I want you two… to cum on my face,” Louis requests, deeply embarrassed by his requests.

“Oh darling, you never cease to amaze me,” Nick smiles as he rubs Louis’s cheek with his thumb. He then pulls himself to his feet, “Least we can do is grant is final request, right Harold?”

“Yeah…” Harry breaths as he also stands up. Louis stays on his knees as he looks up to the boys around him. Nick jerks his cock above Louis’s left cheek as Harry does the same on Louis’s right.

Louis gazes vulnerably, his eyes darting between both of their members. Nick quickly jerks off to try to catch up to Harry as Harry slows his pace to hold off from his orgasm.

“You about there, Harry?” Nick asks impatiently.

“Whenever you are,” Harry grunts.

Louis begins breathing in deep because he does not know what to expect. He has never had a facial before, and he is a little scared that some could squirt into his eyes. He bats his eyelids at the guys jerking off before him, attempting to show confidence and a sexual version of perfection, though he
is not exactly sure what he is supposed to do.

“You ready babe?” Nick asks Louis as he moans.

“Yeah, yeah, I’m ready,” Louis responds nervous.

“Here… here I-“ Nick squeals as his cum shoots upon Louis’s cheek.

“Fuck,” Louis groans as he feels the hot spunk hit his face.

“Lou, watch out!” Harry orders as he too cums upon Louis’s face.

“Shit…” Nick groans as he rubs out the last of his cum from his member.

“Fuck me…” Harry agrees he wipes his cockhead on Louis’s cheek.

Both Harry and Nick pull away to look upon the beautiful mess that is Louis Tomlinson. Like a splatter painting, Louis is made into a masterpiece by the orgasms caused by Harry and Nick. Their cum runs down his cheeks, to his jawline, and then dripping from his jaw to chest. Like filthy icing on a pure white cake.

Louis then does something neither boy expects him to do. Some of their cum rolls from Louis’s cheeks onto his lips, in which his tongue greedily licks off his face. Harry and Nick watch in admiration as Louis cleans himself, absorbing all of their flavor.

“You’re a little cum slut, aren’t you?” Nick gleams.

“Watch your mouth!” Harry barks in response.

“It’s not a negative name,” Nick replies, “He just likes what he likes. Do you like how we taste?” Louis nods as he licks some more from his fingers.

Nick and Harry pull their pants up and then sit on the ground next to Louis. The three lean back against the couch, as Louis’s head falls upon Nick’s shoulder.

“Here, clean yourself up,” Harry instructs to Louis while taking off his own shirt. Louis proceeds to use Harry’s shirt as a cumrag and wipes the last of their orgasm off his face and chest.

“You look exhausted,” Nick comments to Louis.

“Yeah… a little bit… kinda had the best sexual experience of my life. Don’t blame me for being a little tired,” Louis ends with a yawn.

“How about we take him to bed?” Nick says to Harry.

“He needs it,” Harry agrees. Nick then proceeds to pick Louis up bridal style.

“Whoa there, what are you doing?” Louis asks as he clings onto Nick for fear of falling.

“Trust me,” Nick suggests to Louis. Louis loosens his grip but still has his hands wrapped around Nick’s shoulders. Harry quickly tidies up their sticky mess left on the floor as Nick holds Louis waiting for Harry. Louis looks beyond tuckered out as his head rests upon Nick’s chest.

“Up to my room,” Harry orders as they leave. While Nick carries Louis in his exhausted state, Harry’s hands hover right below Louis’s body in case Nick were to slip or drop him. While not
holding Louis like Nick, Louis can feel the tips of Harry’s finger lingering right below his back.

Nick sets him on Harry’s bed as Nick and Harry undress Louis and then redress him in pajamas. Louis is falling in and out of consciousness as he watches the process, exceptionally enjoying being taken care of by these two men.

Harry and Nick also strip to their underwear as they crawl in bed with Louis. Louis lies on his side, as Nick rests behind him and Harry cuddles in front of him. Louis feels Nick’s arm go over him and land on the other side of Harry torso.

Louis always had this secret with Harry. Something they shared with no one else. But now it appears as if Nick is joining that secret. Someone would thinking adding another person to this concoction could cause drama or uncertainty. But Nick’s entrance does the opposite of that. He actually supplements positive attributes to this newly formed arrangement.

*Louis and Harry* and *Louis and Nick* easily transition into *Louis, Harry, and Nick*. Louis values this change as he comfortably falls asleep in between the warmth and cuddles of Harry and Nick.

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Winter vacation grinds on for Niall. Zayn and Chad spend more time together and texting to their hearts’ content. To be completely honest, it drives Niall insane. Not only is he madly in love with Zayn, he also feels like he is losing the friendship aspect of him as well. Because after Niall’s break up with Karlie, Zayn gave all his time to Niall. And after Liam ended things with Zayn, Niall gave all his time right back to him. So in a nonromantic sense, they became each other’s everything, even if Zayn did not realize Niall was giving his heart as well. But now, Zayn’s time is going to Chad.

While Niall would prefer to spend most of his free days with Zayn, he has been spending the majority of his time with Louis, Harry, Liam, and Nick. And they are great guys; Niall is not denying that. But they are no Zayn.

“So then my little cousin said he wanted to be a thief when he was an adult, but I told him they do not a degree for that in college,” Niall explains to the group as they hang at Liam’s house, “I then remind him that he wouldn’t be very good of him to be a thief. He responds by explaining he would always return the money after he stole it so he would still be good. I prompt him he could just not rob the bank in the first place and still be a good boy. He didn’t seem to like that idea.”

The group of guys chuckle at Niall’s story, but Zayn does not. In fact, Zayn does not even look up from his text with Chad. Niall glares at the phone Zayn holds until Zayn cannot help but feel Niall’s gaze.

“Did I miss something?” Zayn questions cautiously.

“You would know if you could put your damn phone down for five fucking minutes!” Niall exclaims as he storms out of the room.

“Did someone forget to feed him?” Zayn quips as the boys watch Niall leave.

“He does have a point,” Nick agrees as he takes a drink from his tea, “But that’s none of my business.”

“Really? His interaction seems a little irrational to me,” Zayn comments.

“Have you asked him why he is acting this way?” Louis asks Zayn.
“Niall would tell me if something was bothering; we tell each other everything,” Zayn replies comforted by that thought.

“I’m going to go get a drink,” Liam lies, “Any of you need anything?”

“Nah, we good,” Harry says knowing what Liam is really doing, “Go ahead, take your time, we’ll be fine.”

Liam leaves the room and follows after Niall, who is now creating magical meal mix of fruits and candy in the kitchen.

“So, that in there?” Liam references.

“Yeah, a little extreme, I know,” Niall replies not looking up from his food.

“Not extreme to us who know what’s actually going on,” Liam says, “But to people like Zayn, who don’t know what is up, it might.”

“Yeah… I can’t tell him now, you know? He likes Chad, I don’t want my stupid crush to ruin that,” Niall explains.

“He may like him, but you need closure to move on. Maybe if you tell him, and he turns you down, then you can start moving forward,” Liam offers.

“What if I don’t want to move forward?” Niall questions honestly, a little quiver heard in his lips.

“Then you gotta fight for him,” Liam confirms, “But being mad at him for reasons outside of his control is not fair to him or to you. You just gotta pick a side, you can’t be in love with him but act like you aren’t. Either love him fully or don’t.”

“It’s scary… the idea of revealing it all to him and then being shot down. And what if our friendship cannot be same after? It feels like I have more to lose than gain,” Niall reveals.

“Or you have everything to gain,” Liam replies as he squeezes Niall shoulder, “Just give it some thought, yeah?”

“Yeah,” Niall responds as he looks down at his mess of food, “This was a major mistake.”

Chapter End Notes

So I would like to say this series has two climaxes because of the two main ships in the story. So we are quickly approaching the first of these climaxes. I’ll see you all next friday:)
Chapter 12 Part 3: Thinking Out Loud

Chapter Summary

Harry and Louis's relationship continues to change due to Nick's admission into their dynamic. As things sour between Zayn and Chad, history repeats itself while Niall thinks out loud about his feelings for Zayn.

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone! So I told you I'd try to post a chapter every Friday so here is that promise. This chapter is pretty short, but there is plenty of emotional shit going on and I'm bringing back some symbolic items from previous chapters. Hope ya'll enjoy:

Song of the chapter:
"Thinking Out Loud" by Ed Sheeran

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 3

The second half of the school year starts as Niall tries to find a way to confess his feelings to Zayn, though every time he attempts to he unravels.

But Zayn is becoming nervous and antsy. He is increasingly checking his phone; not in an endearing way but in a needy way.

“I’m about to go get another drink, you need anything babe?” Harry asks Louis.

“I left my wallet at home today… I’ll be fine, thanks,” Louis replies.

“You sure? Nick will kill me if I let you go hungry,” Harry replies, causing Louis to gleam.

“If you don’t mind, one of those cheap ass hamburgers and a sweet tea would be nice,” Louis admits, “I can pay you back once we get home.”

“If we’re going to be keeping a tab for how much we buy each other, we’re both going to be seriously in debt,” Harry comments.

“Then so be it,” Louis smiles, “That will keep you around.”

“You okay?” Niall asks Zayn as he, Zayn, Louis, and Harry sit at their lunch table. Harry then stands up and walks to the food venue to buy Louis a meal.

“Uh yeah, just…” Zayn mumbles, “Chad has not really answered my texts for a few days now. He keeps saying he’s busy, but I can see him across the lunch room and he’s texting right now. I even sent him a message but he hasn’t responded to me… but he has had no problem responding to whoever else.”
“Maybe it’s the reception in the school? The phone service here has lots of dead spots, messages get lost sometime,” Niall tries to convince Zayn.

“Yeah… that’s probably it…” Zayn replies with a fake smile.

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Nick’s dynamic adds a lot to Louis and Harry’s life. For Harry, Nick serves as an example on how he should treat Louis. Louis has always been the teacher for Harry, with Harry having very little to no experience of anything, sexual or romantic, outside of his situation with Louis. That being, he has never had previous encounters to know how to take care of someone else.

For Louis, Nick means he is no longer the care-taker. Sure, he loves taking care of his large family, and he loves teaching Harry about life and various things. But it does become a little tiring after years of doing. Of course Louis cannot ask Harry to take care of him, because in his opinion that undoes the point of being taken care of. A person should want to take care of someone else, Louis believes, it should be instinct rather than instruction. So he never tells Harry his secret desire. And Louis does not realize how bad he wanted to be taken care of until Nick does it.

Nick drives Louis around, cooks for him, cleans for him, changes him out of his clothes when he is too tired, tucks him into bed, wraps around him, kisses him goodnight and texts him every morning. Those are all things Louis would do for his sisters or for Harry. And for once someone is doing those things for him, and it feels amazing.

Seeing Louis’s satisfaction with Nick’s actions, Harry begins to replicate them. When Nick returns home during the school week, Harry is left for Louis. During which Harry carries Louis to bed, cooks for him, and takes care of him when he is sick. Louis maybe getting a little too dependent on it actually… and Harry may too.

Louis and Harry and Louis and Nick are merging into one. When Nick takes Louis out on dates, Harry normally tags along now. Harry continues to teach Nick about the wonders of Louis’s body. But the thing about their situation is, while Louis and Harry may fool around by themselves and Louis and Nick may also, Harry and Nick do not fool around without Louis. Louis is the center: their common thread.

“Dance with me,” Harry demands while he, Louis, Niall, and Zayn are at a party. Harry yanks at Louis’s hand who is sitting in a chair.

“Not in the mood to dance,” Louis states while he takes a drink using his other hand.

“Like when we were kids,” Harry smiles at him, “You taught me to dance.”

“There are people here, Harry,” Louis reminds him, “I don’t want them to get the wrong idea about you.”

“Dance with me,” Harry repeats, “I know you love to. It’s just a dance. I know who I am and what I like. Do you really see me as someone who cares what people think?”

“You once told me you wish you were one of those people who could not care what others think about you, but you doubt you could ever be that way,” Louis retells.

“Maybe I’m changing,” Harry declares, “I know you would be dancing if Nick was here. But he isn’t, so dance with me.”

“Go Louis,” Niall commands as he takes a drink from his beer.
“Guess it would not kill me,” Louis attempts to hold back a grin as he puts his drink on an end table. Harry pulls Louis across room by the hand.

_Thinking Out Loud_ by Ed Sheeran plays from the sound system as Harry whisks Louis. They stand in the middle of the room as Harry instructs Louis to put his arms on Harry’s shoulder. In turn, Harry’s large hands rest upon Louis’s predominant hips. Harry smiles down upon Louis as Louis grins in return, closing his eyes as his cheeks turn peachy.

Harry leads Louis in the dance as they feel alone in the room, as if heaven’s rays are shining down upon them. They dance and spin, Louis feeling like a Disney princess at a ball.

This is one of the most beautiful moments of his life. Harry guides Louis’s hips in the direction of his movements. Pulling Louis in close, Harry’s right cheek sets upon Louis’s forehead and Louis can feel Harry’s smirk. Louis’s heart flutters in response. Can he sense how weak Louis’s legs are in this moment? Can Harry feel his heart pounding?

“If Nick was here, he’d say you were the most beautiful boy in the room,” Harry hums.

“He would, would he?” Louis struggles to say.

“Yeah,” Harry replies.

“What about you?” Louis asks.

“Me?” Harry questions.

“You’re here, not Nick. What would you say?” Louis inquires again.

“I would say…” Harry mumbles, “I would tell Nick to say you could take someone’s breath away with the way you look tonight.”

“It looks like you’re not breathing Hazza,” Louis responds, those innocent eyes attempting to stare into Harry’s soul once again, to really read what Harry is thinking. _If he only had some courage._

“They’re really something, aren’t they?” Niall says to Zayn referencing Harry and Louis.

“Couple of idiots I say,” Zayn replies, but as he looks upon the two dancing, he sees Chad as well: dancing with someone else.

“What the?” Zayn states as he slams his drink down on a table near him.

“Whoa! Maybe now is not the time for this confrontation,” Niall says grabbing onto Zayn’s shoulder, attempting to hold him back.

“Hold on,” Zayn smacks Niall’s hand off as he charges for Chad. He knocks a number of couples out of his way, including Louis and Harry, in his march.

“Hey buddy, can we talk for a minute?” Zayn asks by tapping on Chad’s shoulder. Both Chad and his date are pretty drunk by this point in the evening. His date, a quite attractive bloke with dark skin and dark hair, obviously of South American decent, does not respond to Zayn’s presence.

“Oh, how’s it going?” Chad asks nonchalantly as his beautiful date continues to dance upon him, “Have you met Vince? He’s new here this semester.”

“That’s nice,” Zayn comments spitefully, “Mind if we talk for a minute?”
“Uh, I’m kind of on a date…” Chad replies, “Can we another time?”

“Well you won’t respond to any of my texts so…” Zayn states, “I think now is the time.”

“Another day, okay? I’m kind of busy enjoying this cute boy,” Chad says as he turns his attention back to Vince.

“Hey Zayn, I’m not feeling too well. Can you take me home?” Niall lies, interrupting to situation.

“Give me a minute,” Zayn requests not breaking a deathly stare with Chad.

“He doesn’t want to talk to you,” Vince orders.

“Please, I’m sick,” Niall repeats as he grabs Zayn by the arm softly.

“Yeah, whatever,” Zayn once again shakes Niall’s comforting grip off as he storms out of the room.

“You guys have a good night,” Niall nods to Chad and Vince as he runs after Zayn.

“Hey slow down!” Niall calls out as Zayn briskly walks to Niall’s truck.


“He’s an ass,” Niall agrees.

“Why didn’t you tell me?!” Zayn barks.

“I don’t know him too well! He’s two years older, and we’ve only been in the same choir class a couples times. I didn’t know he would do something like this,” Niall pleads, “You really believe I’d ever let anyone hurt you?”

“Sorry, sorry, I know it’s not your fault. God, I just can’t believe myself,” Zayn swears, "I'm so fucking stupid."

“You’re not stupid. You want to be in love, and he took advantage of that,” Niall replies as he tries to pull Zayn in for a hug, “Let’s go home, and I’ll cook you your favorite dessert, and I’ll put in Legally Blonde, and we’ll hate on all the guys in the world together.”

Zayn takes a deep breath and let’s himself sink into Niall’s arms. His head rests upon Niall’s forehead as he swallows in a few more breathes and close eyes. After a few seconds, he momentarily calms down, “You’re literally the best.”

“I know,” Niall chuckles, “Can you drive? I’m not drunk, but I’ve had a couple beers. You know, just to be safe.”

“You got it buddy,” Zayn takes the keys as they both hop into Niall’s truck.

“You deserve so much better than him,” Niall states.

“I just feel so dumb… I gave him my virginity…” Whatever calm Zayn was feeling quickly evaporates into another rage filled realization, “You know, wait here. I’ll be just a minute,” Zayn objects as he gets back out of the truck, “Be right back.”

“Zayn!” Niall calls out as he tries to unbuckle his seat belt. But it jams. By the time he rips it off of him, Zayn is already back in the house.
Niall pushes his way through the crowded party and finds himself in the room with the dancing again. Louis and Harry are still enwrapped in one another, appearing unfazed by the drama unfolding around them. Niall then looks for Chad and Zayn, but he does not spot them here.

Even with the darkness of the room, what he does see is a very intoxicated Vince sitting in the corner drinking sloppily from his fruity cocktail.

“Hey where did Zayn go?” Niall questions Vince, "Has he been in here?"

“Yeah, he hauled Chad out of the room. I don’t know where they went…” Vince replies, pointing his straw in the direction of a door that leads into another hallway.

“Thanks,” Niall sighs as he turns away.

“Hey man,” Vince states honestly, “I hope that guy is alright. I knew he was talking to Chad when me and him started spending time together, but I did not think they were that serious. At least that’s what Chad told me... Also, be careful with him. Chad’s totally hammered, not in the right state of mind.”

“I’ll make sure it’s okay,” Niall accepts. But just as he is about to step into the hallway, someone else blocks the door.

“Niall!” Karlie exclaims.

“Karlie, hi!” Niall replies looking behind her.

“The blonde hair, it looks good,” Karlie stammers, obviously smashed.

“Thanks! Um, can you excuse me?” Niall tries to move around her, though she firmly grabs onto one of his biceps.

“I’ve been looking for you, actually,” She states.

“Maybe another time? I kind of got something going on,” Niall replies.

“I think I kind of miss you, probably a lot to be honest,” Karlie reveals.

“Oh, that’s nice,” He responds unenthusiastically.

“Could we talk about us at some point?” She exclaims, "I'm free right now if you are!"

“Karlie,” Niall breaths. Because Niall would be lying if he said he had never thought about this moment: The moment in which the girl he thought was the love of his life would come back and recognize his worth. Their happily ever after would be back on track.

But that is when Niall realizes he has not even thought of the fantasy for nearly two months. Since Zayn. As if Zayn’s lips broke a dark curse that had ravaged Niall’s life.

“We had something great,” She cutey whines.

“We did,” he confirms, “But you had something better than I. You had someone who would have done anything for you at the drop of a hat. I had someone who lied to me for six months.”

She stares at him in shock, because what Niall said hurt but it is also the truth.

“We had something great. But I don’t think I’m at a place in my life where I’m willing to risk it all
for you again,” Niall states, “It does not mean I did not love you, and I think a part of me still does. But I’m not the same person you broke up with. I changed and grew, not because I wanted to but because I had to. And me saying no right now does not mean you are any less pretty or boundless. It’s just… that greatness is no longer for me. That time has passed. My goodness Karlie, it feels like a lifetime ago since you were in my arms. How long has it been?”

Karlie smiles sadly up at him with a tear in her eye, “Well now I really regret telling you never to dye your hair. You look really good in blonde.”

“The natural me I guess,” Niall laughs. Niall then hears something inaudible yelled from the hallway he was originally trying to enter, “I’m sorry, I got something I gotta take care of. I’ll see you at school?”

“Yeah,” She nods as she removes herself from the doorway, “See you at school.” Niall then pushes the door open to see Zayn and Chad alone in the hallway.

Chad, in his drunken state, currently has a difficult time standing up straight without swaying or leaning against the wall. Zayn is across from Chad with a mix of pleading eyes and angry vocals.

“What happened?!” Zayn inquires.

“Nothing Zayn, nothing,” Chad answers as he burrows down his eyebrows. His right hand is pressed against his forehead, to either guard his eyes from the bright light or to help him see straight.

“We were amazing. The sex was great, we laughed and talked all night, and after. What happened?” Zayn reiterates.

“Zayn, it’s done,” Chad smears, “Just let it go.”

“Well you could have at least told me that,” Zayn barks.

“Well I just did,” Chad states. Niall slowly approaches the conversation as he watches Zayn’s heart break.

“What… what did I do wrong?” Zayn whispers, “I can’t believe you’re such an asshole.”

“Look, I keep telling you to drop this but you won’t. You were a good fuck, an excellent one, but that’s all you are and that’s all you ever be. You paki,” Chad slurs.

Once again, Niall sees the life drain from Zayn’s eyes. The last time he heard someone say that offensive word was when Niall’s fist met some bully’s nose. Even if Chad is drunk, that is no excuse for what he just said. Not only did that guy just break Zayn’s heart, he had to call Zayn a racial slur as well. Niall’s face turns red as he approaches Chad.

“Hey mate?” Niall taps on Chad’s shoulder.

“Uh, yeah?” Chad returns.

SMACK Niall’s fist flies into the left cheek of Chad.

“The fuck?!” Chad shouts as he falls back against the wall of the tiny hallway.

“Niall! What are you doing?!” Zayn exclaims.

“Breaking his heart is one thing, but don’t you have the common decency to let him down lightly? You know, being a respectable human being and all?” Niall yells with his Irish accent coming out
dominantly, "Or are you not capable of that?"

“That hurt you asshole!” Chad hollers as he holds his cheek in his hands.

“And don’t fucking say that’s all he will ever be! Because that’s a lie. Zayn is going to be amazing and he already is! And that does not change just because you are too dick-thirsty to see it. He fucking cares so much, he waited for you long after you were already gone. He’s so beautiful, and he does not even realize it! Which you think would mean he is either blind or stupid, but he’s neither of those things because his eyes are an entrance to the most gorgeous soul I’ve seen looking back at me, and his knowledge on comic book references and R&B music could rival an encyclopedia. So don’t ever say all Zayn will ever be is a good fuck, because yes he is that I am sure, but he is also so much more than that,” Niall declares as Zayn watches with his heart stopping to Niall’s praise of him, “Zayn Malik deserves so much better than you; you aren’t good enough for Zayn Malik! My god, I wish I was good enough for Zayn Malik.”

Chad stares back at him in a drunk haze not truly understanding the gravity of the situation as Zayn watches as well, his mouth agape in Niall’s admittance.

I wish I was good enough for Zayn Malik repeats in Zayn’s head over and over again.

“Niall? Niall, we need to go,” Zayn says heaving on Niall’s arm which he just punched with.

“What?” Niall replies returning to reality after his adrenaline-filled action.

“We need to go, now,” Zayn repeats as people enter the hallway due to all the commotion.

“What’s going on?” Vince asks looking down at Chad.

“Run!” Zayn declares as he pulls Niall out of the party.

Once they exit the front door Niall is still fuming. They make their way back to Niall’s truck, and Niall grabs Zayn’s palm with his own bruised hand. Perhaps Niall would not normally do that, but his heart his pounding, he can barely breath, and Zayn is his safe space. Even if it is just grabbing his hand for fifteen seconds, it brings Niall back to Earth, just as it did for Zayn during the initial days after Liam left him for Danielle. Niall does not make eye contact with Zayn, but Zayn looks down at their intertwined fingers and then back up to Niall. A pleased grin cemented upon his face.

“Doesn’t that hurt your hand?” Zayn inquires.

“Me? No, are you okay?” Niall asks back.

“I’m not the one who just punched somebody,” Zayn retorts.

“Your hand feels... good… You have really soft skin,” Niall comments, hoping not to sound creepy, as he walks Zayn over to the passenger side of his vehicle. Very gentlemanly, Niall opens up the door of his truck for his friend.

“Oh gawd, I’m sorry. It looks like I got some blood on your new converse,” Niall points out.

Zayn looks down at his brand-new all-white shoes. Usually he would be pissed about such an occurrence caused by one of his boys, but he may be able to make an exception, “It’s okay. My shoes now have a story. A ruby red tattoo.”

“What was all of that?” Zayn finally questions as he hops into the truck. Niall shuts the passenger side’s door and then jogs back to the driver’s side to get in himself.
“What do you mean?” Darkness has overtaken the sunlight as he starts this truck. A thin mist darkens the cement of the road, but Niall’s lights turn the street gold leading the way home to Zayn’s house.

“What you did in there,” Zayn clarifies.

“No one should or will ever talk to you that way. And I shouldn’t have had to do that. You should have stood up for yourself, because you know you deserve better than the likes of him,” Niall replies.

“And all you said in there?” Zayn reiterates.

“Every word I said was true,” Niall dully answers. *If he only had a brain.*

“Alright,” Zayn accepts as he lays his hand upon the top of Niall’s bruised knuckles which is placed on the gear stick. Zayn then looks out his passenger window at the rapidly disappearing neighborhood as they drive down the street.

*I wish I was good enough for Zayn Malik.*

Chapter End Notes

I think the thing a lot of you have been waiting for what is happening next chapter :) see you in a week! hope you all are enjoy your spring break, I know I will be! On a sidenote about me, I was just accepted to go study in England during the fall semester. And I'm really excited. Might do a One Direction pilgrimage while I'm there xD we'll see. Sorry, I'm just so excited I had to tell someone.
Chapter 13: You're the One That I Want

Chapter Summary

Niall finally works up the courage to tell Zayn what he has been feeling since their kiss.

Chapter Notes

Hope ya'll enjoy as this Ziall-focused arc ends :)

Song of the Chapter:
"You're the One That I Want" from Grease

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You’re an idiot,” Zayn says as he washes the broken skin upon Niall’s hand which had punched Chad. Niall sits upon Zayn’s bathroom counter as Zayn stands in front of him holding a wash cloth.

“Why is that?” Niall asks.

“You didn’t need to do that. He was just ending things with me; I got way too emotionally invested over a hookup,” Zayn reveals.

“No, no victim blaming here. He led you on. He made you think he wanted something more from you when he didn’t even have the common courtesy to tell you the truth. He wanted to keep you as a side option when you, in fact, are the main course,” Niall explains.

“I’m just so dumb for thinking a guy like him could actually want someone like me,” Zayn admits sadly, “Like he's such a pretty boy, and I'm just me-"

“What are you talking about?! You’re the prettiest boy I know!” Niall regretfully responds.

“Haha, thanks mate, but-“ Zayn is interrupted.

“No buts. Zayn, I will tell you every day for the rest of your life how perfect you are until you believe me. And even if you someday do believe, I will keep reminding you of this fact so you could never possibly forget. I may have told Chad that you are not blind, but if you look into this mirror behind me and do not see perfection staring back, then maybe you are,” Niall describes as he moves his head in the direction of the mirror. Zayn stares into the mirror, his reflection gazing back at him. His eyes then divert to Niall’s reflection, who gawks at Zayn in a state of awe.

“I don’t see it. You look far better than me,” Zayn chuckles.

“Thank you,” Niall smiles, “But seriously. What I exactly said to him kinda blurs in my memory since the heat of the moment has passed, but whatever I said I know it was true. Because my gawd, look at you, just look at you.”

“I’m not perfect, I can tell you that much,” Zayn replies light-heartedly.
“You may not be perfect, but you’re perfect for me,” Niall breathes, gazing deep into Zayn’s eyes. That is when Zayn feels it: his heart stops at Niall’s voice. And then it pounds, so loud Zayn does not know how Niall cannot hear the rattling of his heart repeatedly throwing itself into his rib cage.

“There’s… um… no bandages in here. I think my mom has some stored in the kitchen… I’ll be right back,” Zayn whispers as he pulls himself out of the room that one could literally cut the tension in the air with a knife.

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“Zayn, he’s straight. He’s Niall and he’s straight,” Zayn repeats to himself as he stands over the sink in his kitchen, staring out the window and at his half-visible reflection in the glass.

Why does Niall have to be so lovely to him? Why cannot Niall lightly punch Zayn on the arm and tell him to man-up like everybody else does? No, Niall has to be a knight in shining armor. Because that is who Niall is and who he always will be.

Zayn lowers his head into the sink and splashes some water in his face. He reaches for a rag below the counter to dry off with, “You know Niall. You know what he means, he’s just drunk-“

“I’m not drunk,” Niall refutes, greatly surprising Zayn.

“Fuck Niall!” Zayn exclaims as he spins around, “How can you be as quiet a mouse?”

“You said I was drunk, but I’m not drunk,” Niall repeats.

“Niall, you’ve been drinking…” Zayn clarifies.

“Drinking, not drunk, you’ve seen me totally hammered before. Am I now?” Niall question. Zayn takes ahold of Niall’s head and opens up Niall’s eyelids as wide as they can go while Zayn peers inside them. Niall’s eyes are not bloodshot or dilated. He then forces Niall’s mouth open to smell his breath. And while Zayn can smell alcohol, it is not an overwhelming scent coming out of his throat.

“And if I was totally wasted, would you have let me drive us home?” Niall claims.

“Okay, you’re not drunk,” Zayn finally confirms, “But still…”

“I need to talk to you about something?” Niall cautiously states as he slowly moves his body closer and closer to Zayn’s.

“What- what is it?” Zayn nervously answers.

“I have not been honest with you for the past couple months, and I should start. So no time like the present, yeah?” Niall reveals.

“You know you can come to me about anything,” Zayn reaffirms.

“Well everything but with this…” Niall admits.

“Spit it out,” Zayn orders softly.

“Hold on, sorry, I’ve had this speech worked out in my head for more than a month, and now that it is finally here I can’t remember a damn word of it,” Niall chuckles.

“No need to be so formal,” Zayn reminds Niall.
“I know there is not a need for it, but I believe you deserve it that way. Formal like Cinderella going to the ball,” Niall explains.

“That’s sweet…” Zayn acknowledges.

“You kept saying I was straight… and I do not know if I am or not,” Niall reveals.

“You don’t? Why didn’t you tell me sooner?!” Zayn snaps, but then tries to calm down so he would not sound mad about Niall’s revelation.

“I don’t know if I’m gay or if I’m straight, or what I am to be exact. All I know is… since you’ve kissed me I haven’t been able to stop thinking about your lips,” Niall breathes as the room becomes even more silent than it was previously.

“Oh,” Zayn exhales.

“And I briefly thought it was just a physical attraction, because dear god Zayn you are so hot. I mean, stunning, gorgeous. But when that door opened, I began to see all the amazing weird things about you that I didn’t notice before. Zayn, I’m not going to lie to you. I cannot say that to some sense I always felt this way about you. Because I didn’t. You were my best friend, my bro to be exact. But since we kissed and I fell for you, I don’t know how I wasn’t in love with you the entire time,” Niall describes to Zayn.

“You’re- You’re in love with me?” Zayn stutters.

“Well it wouldn't be the first time I've said it...” Niall mumbles.

“You're my best friend,” Zayn reminds both of them.

“I know! Which is why I fought it for so long because I didn’t want to fuck us up, but Zayn, that feeling when you kissed me. It was magic. Kiss me again, you’ll feel it too,” Niall requests as he grabs ahold of Zayn’s limp hands. “It felt like nothing I ever felt before.”

“I don’t know…” Zayn replies.

“Just… try it,” Niall recommends as he places his lips on top of Zayn’s. They stand there for a few seconds not moving, but even with no movement Niall’s heart flutters. He missed those lips more than he even knew.

“I’m sorry,” Zayn breaks the kiss. He softly pushes Niall out of the way to leave the room. Niall’s heart sinks with Zayn’s exit as he now stares at the empty space in front of himself.

“Gawd, I’m an idiot,” Niall curses as he peers out the window into the dark night.

He ruined it. Ruined everything. How will Zayn ever hold him again, sleep in the same bed, or clutch each other’s hands after Niall’s disclosure? Zayn will not want to lead Niall on by doing relationship-like actions with him. Before those actions meant nothing, but now they will mean everything. He should just leave and save what little dignity he has left. But how could they go back from this? A tear wells up in Niall’s eye.

“Niall,” Zayn calls from behind him.

“Yeah?” Niall replies as he tries to snort the snot back into his nose. Niall turns around while keeping his head down so Zayn will not see how pathetic he looks right now. He feels like a child, crying for not being able to get what he wants.
Zayn jumps and slams his lips into Niall’s. Niall’s eyes shoot open as Zayn’s tongue pushes into Niall’s mouth.

“I feel it,” Zayn declares as he briefly pulls away from Niall to talk, “I feel it.” And Zayn has the largest smile Niall has ever seen on him in the history of their friendship, causing Niall to grin just as wide as he shoves his tongue back into Zayn’s mouth.

Instinctively, Niall grabs Zayn by the ass and lifts him into the air. He spins around and sits Zayn on the kitchen counter. Zayn’s legs swing open for Niall as they continue to sloppily snog. Niall’s hands land on top of Zayn’s thighs and he pulls them apart so he can slot in between them. But this causing Zayn’s legs knock some empty glasses into the sink. The sound of glass clashing echoes through the house. Zayn and Niall quit kissing to look into the sink, relieved that none broke.

“Shit, we’re going to wake your parents,” Niall comments as he looks down the hallway that leads to their bedroom.

“To my room,” Zayn orders as his tongue once again darts into Niall. All Niall can do is moan into Zayn’s lips to signal he got the message. He grabs a hold of Zayn’s back and pulls him into his body. Zayn takes the hint and wraps his legs around Niall’s waist, allowing Niall to grab him by the bum so he can carry Zayn out of the kitchen.

Zayn is a little heavier than Niall expected, causing Niall to accidentally slam him into the wall of the stairwell that leads up to Zayn’s bedroom.

“Ow!” Zayn exclaims, pulling away from the kiss.

“Oh baby, you okay?” Niall asks concerningly.

“Baby?” Zayn smirks.

“Oops, do you not want me calling you that?” Niall inquires.

“Don’t you ever stop,” Zayn demands as he begins to suck face with his best friend once again.

“I’ll kiss the boo-boo till it feels better,” Niall hums as he treks up the staircase.

So much is rushing through both the minds of Zayn and Niall. What they can agree on is that the taste from the mixture of their saliva is addicting. Neither of them want to stop for a second. In Niall’s head, thanks to gawd-damn Louis, all he can hear is the song “You’re the One That I Want” from the movie *Grease*. The same movie Louis made Niall and Zayn watch so many times they lost count. But in Niall’s tipsy state of mind, the fast pace of the song and the lyrics fit so well. Like those scenes in movies or television shows where the two characters whom like each other finally happen, and those who watch are so sick of waiting for it to happen. This is Niall’s moment.

“You’re the one that I want,” Niall hums into Zayn’s mouth unconsciously.

“You are the one I want. Woo, hoo, hoo honey,” Zayn sings back as Niall steps onto the last step.

*Our minds are so fucking synced* Niall thinks with a grin.

“We made it!” Niall says in relief.

“Were we not about to? Would have been a shame if we did not make it to my bed,” Zayn chuckles.

“For you Zayn, I’d find a way,” Niall replies lovingly as he pushes open the bedroom door with
Zayn’s body. Niall then softly kicks the door closed with his foot. His attention then directly turns to Zayn’s bed. Zayn hops off of Niall’s waist but continues to kiss him, pulling him in the direction of the bed. Niall unbuttons Zayn’s shirt as they pull each other down.

“Wow,” Niall mumbles as his body presses into Zayn’s. Niall finishes unbuttoning Zayn’s shirt and throws it onto the ground. His hands immediately land on Zayn’s torso as he attempts to touch every inch of his body. The lights are off, and the only lights illuminating the room are from the moon and a distance street light. So Niall cannot see much, but what he can see is the darkness of Zayn’s skin compared to Niall’s bone-white hands in the moonlight. Zayn looks gorgeous, so vulnerable like this. Niall lays the full weight of his body onto Zayn as his tongue attempts to go down Zayn’s throat.

“Whoa, stop, stop,” Zayn demands.

“Huh, what?” Niall asks he pushes himself up, hovering right above Zayn, “Did I step on you or something. Gawd, I’m a mess.”

“No, no. It’s not that,” Zayn looks extremely embarrassed at what he wants to request, “Can we, um, slow down please?”

“What, did I do something wrong?” Niall inquires.

“Nothing! You did nothing wrong,” Zayn says soothingly, “It’s me.”

“What about you?” Niall asks.

“I know you aren’t him,” Zayn explains, “But the last time a boy told me all these sweet things and wanting me… he lied and used me.”

“I would never do that to you,” Niall responds honestly.

“I know, I know you wouldn’t,” Zayn looks away from Niall, “But I just went through a lot tonight. It is more that I don’t trust myself. Because I trusted him, and I was so wrong to do that.”

“Zayn, I am so into you, for like months,” Niall chuckles.

“And you’ve had a bit to drink…” Zayn hints at.

“We agreed I’m not drunk,” Niall clarifies.

“You’re right,” Zayn agrees, “But if you really feel as strong about me as you say you do, you’ll feel the same way for me tomorrow, correct?”

“Yeah…” Niall admits.

“So can we just, take a breather, and tomorrow morning we’ll talk about this and see where we want to go with this, please?” Zayn requests.

Niall looks at Zayn for a moment, thinking over what he said. Niall could probably sweet talk some more and keep this moving in the direction he wants to take it (Zayn naked preferably), but if Zayn does not want to then Niall will respect his wishes.

“Of course,” Niall replies as he rolls off of him and lands on the bed to the right of Zayn, “Consent is mandatory in all aspects of relationships.” They both look up at Zayn’s ceiling analyzing what just happened between them.

“Thanks for being so understanding,” Zayn adds gratefully.
“Not necessary. I’ve just wanted this for what feels like forever. I may have gotten a little carried away because of that with the speed,” Niall admits as he reaches for Zayn’s hand, “You just kiss so good.”

“I’m really happy you told me,” Zayn responds as he looks upon Niall.

“I’m glad you gave me a chance,” Niall says as he kisses Zayn lightly on the lips, “I know you set boundaries for tonight, but could I put out a request?”

“You can say it, but doesn’t mean I’ll accept it,” Zayn chuckles.

“Can we just kiss? Nothing more, just you on top of me or me on top of you or us next to each other as we kiss in our underwear?” Niall wishes as he attempts to bite his lower lip cutely. But his attempt makes Zayn laugh at how ridiculous he looks.

“In our underwear?” Zayn giggles.

“Okay, you can wear whatever you want, but I’ll be in that,” Niall offers.

“Yeah, I’d be okay with that,” Zayn allows with a grin. Niall quickly strips off his clothes and hops under the covers. Zayn proceeds to change into pajama bottoms while keeping off his shirt. Niall watches Zayn in admiration as he walks across the room, cleans up lightly, and takes off his necklaces all while smiling at Niall. After what seems like an eternity, Zayn finally gets in bed next to Niall.

“So, how do we do this?” Zayn asks nervously.

“What do you mean? I assume this is not your first time kissing a boy…” Niall awkwardly laughs.

“I mean, you and me,” Zayn explains, “From bros to…”

“Like this…” Niall answers as he caresses Zayn’s lips once again. He opens up Zayn’s mouth as his tongue runs along Zayn’s.

“Okay, I think I get it,” Zayn replies as he dives into the kiss. They both grab onto each other’s faces softly and delicately hold each other in place. Niall is trying to read Zayn, to determine how much he is actually enjoying this. But the moans from Zayn’s throat put any apprehension to rest.

Zayn rolls on top as their tongues continue to fight it out. Zayn’s hands travel down Niall’s torso feeling the new scenery. Niall’s erection grows within the thin fabric of his boxers in reaction to Zayn’s touch. A groan leaves his lips and enters Zayn’s mouth.

Zayn then pulls away to look down as Niall, causing Niall to fear the worst.

“I’m sorry about the boner… I kinda can’t help. I can make it go away if you give me a minute,” Niall offers with anxiety in his throat.

“No, it’s not that,” Zayn chuckles, “That’s quite nice actually. It’s, um, you in general.”

“Oh…” Niall sighs sadly.

“Not in a bad way!” Zayn quickly defends, “I’ve never let myself think this way about you. You’re one of my oldest friends and whom I assumed was straight. Sure, I thought you were good-looking ascetically, but…” Zayn’s hands trace Niall’s pectoral muscles and then wander down to his abs, “I’ve never really let myself think of you as beautiful or sexy… but you look so good.”
Zayn wants to say more than *good* because Niall looks way better than just *good* underneath him. Niall’s muscular body looks downright sexy. So sexy that if Zayn had no self-control he would be licking Niall’s chest from end to end. But maybe Zayn is a little scared to fall fully into Niall’s spell.

“You think I’m beautiful?” Niall mimics from when Zayn asked the exact same question before their first kiss months ago.

“Shut up,” Zayn easily understanding the reference. He places his lips back upon Niall as their snogging session recommences. Zayn’s hips grind into Niall’s waist, causing a hiss of pleasure from Niall. He can feel Zayn’s growing cock as well, sending nervous sparks flying through his body. He places his hands on Zayn’s exposed back as they slowly slide to Zayn’s ass.

Niall is scared to touch the booty at first, not knowing if that would cross the line Zayn had set. But the speed at which Zayn’s cock is ramming into Niall’s groin convinces Niall that maybe the boundaries Zayn established may not set in stone. He takes ahold of Zayn’s ass so he would have something to remain firmly attached to during their sexually aggressive motions.

And Zayn’s ass fits perfectly into Niall’s hands, better than he possibly could have imagined an ass could. Not saying that Zayn has a large one, nowhere comparable to the size of Louis’s. But it was firm. Karlie had no big buns either, but they felt way different. Zayn’s ass is pure muscle, and Niall can feel it flex with every pelvis thrust. Niall never wants to let Zayn’s butt go.

“Do he got the booty?” Zayn quips as he purposefully flexes his gluteal muscles.

“He doooooooo,” Niall moans, tightening his grip in response, “Gawd you feel wonderful.”

Zayn begins giving Niall long but sharp thrusts against his cock as Zayn stares down at him with a mischievous smile. He loves watching his effect on Niall. As if Zayn is some type of sex god.

“Uh… uh… uh,” Niall moans with every lunge from Zayn. Niall’s ankles link up behind Zayn’s back as Niall attempts to bring Zayn closer into him, because Zayn feels so fucking swell.

“Woo,” Zayn happily sighs as he quit moving his hips.

“Don’t stop,” Niall whispers.

“Got a little too excited there, sorry,” Zayn apologizes.

“Oh, it was quite fine,” Niall breaths, disappointed at the end of Zayn’s humping, “You know what you’re doing.”

“I really don’t,” Zayn laughs.

“If you didn’t, would I be moaning and asking you not to stop?” Niall questions as he rolls both him and Zayn over so Niall is now on top. On animal instinct, his hips ram into Zayn as Niall licks Zayn’s lips. Saliva spills out of both of their mouths. Niall’s hands run through Zayn’s hair during their kiss.

“You’re beautiful, so beautiful,” Niall repeats in between kisses. Everything about Zayn is overrunning Niall: the smoothness of his skins, the mixed smell of weed and cologne, the hardness felt in Zayn’s pajamas, and the slight tickle caused by Zayn’s whiskers. Niall is doing without thinking: whatever comes naturally between him and Zayn. But soon, an all-too-well-known feeling begins building in groin. His mind says to stop but his hips do not listen. By the time Niall retakes control of his body, it is too late.
“Oh shit,” Niall yelps as he forces his hips to quit stirring. But his intentions are not faster than his body’s reaction. Jizz spills out of his cock and quickly fills the inside of his boxers. Niall, breathing heavily, collapses on top of Zayn. Zayn does not move as Niall recovers from his orgasm.

“Gawd damnit,” Niall groans as guilt builds inside him, “I did not mean for that to happen. You set boundaries and I did not mean to cross them, it just…”

“Happened?” Zayn finishes Niall’s thought.

“Yeah…” Niall replies as he feels too ashamed to look into Zayn’s eyes, “I’m sorry. I understand if you don’t want to cuddle anymore. Like I promise nothing more will happen; I can sleep on the floor. I wouldn’t blame you though if you don’t trust my word after that.”

“I really don’t mind actually,” Zayn admits, “Thanks for apologizing but I can tell that wasn’t supposed to happen persay. My only objection is… your cum is seeping through your boxers and making pants wet.”

“Oh fuck!” Niall rolls out of the bed, “Do you have some boxers I could barrow?”

“You know which drawer,” Zayn says referring to his dresser.

“Yeah,” Niall responds as he walks over to Zayn’s dresser. Zayn watches Niall even though very little light is shining in the room. But he watches his shadow, he can see the glow from Niall’s white behind as he slips off of his boxers and pulls up Zayn’s.

“Do you need new pajamas?” Niall asks.

“Sure,” Zayn replies as Niall throws them his way. Zayn puts the new ones on under the covers as Niall gets back into the bed with him. Niall kisses him on the cheek causing a large smile from Zayn.

“I’m exhausted from that,” Niall giggles into Zayn’s ear.

“Pussy put his ass to sleep he be calling me Nyquil,” Zayn hums from Nicki Minaj’s song Anaconda.

“You could say that,” Niall laughs, “Cuddle me till we sleep?”

“I prefer little spoon,” Zayn replies as he rolls away from Niall.

“Good, I’m pretty versatile,” Niall quips as he cuddles Zayn from behind.

“We’ll see about that,” Zayn chuckles lovingly as he pushes himself against Niall.

“One more kiss?” Niall request.

“Sweetdreams,” Zayn kisses Niall on the lips.

“See you in the morning,” Niall closes his eyes, never feeling happier before in his life.

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Niall wakes up to an emptiness once again. But he does freak out or search for Zayn. He know Zayn has not gone far. So Niall rolls over and looks in the eastern corner of the bedroom, and no surprise Zayn is there praying as he does every morning. Smiling, Niall watches Zayn, not checking out his bum like he usually does, but just admires all the aspects of Zayn. He even appreciates the aspects, such as religion, that Niall does not completely understand or feel himself, but it makes Zayn who he
The sunlight peaks into Zayn’s room as he completes his prayer. Once he finishes, he looks over his shoulder nervously at Niall. He puts away his artistic green prayer rug and then makes his way over to his bed. He sits cautiously on the edge of it as Niall wraps around Zayn’s waist and places his head on Zayn’s laps. A happy purr sounds from his mouth.

“So…” Zayn begins.

“Yeah?” Niall asks.

“What do you remember from last night?” Zayn inquires.

“What do you mean?” Niall questions.

Fear spreads through Zayn’s mind. Maybe Niall was a lot more intoxicated from alcohol than he thought. What if he does not remember a thing he said and this was all just a drunk mistake?

“The part when…” Zayn mumbles.

“When we were at that party and that dick Chad told you off and called you a racial slur. And then I punched him in the face and may have confessed that I really wanted you. Then we went back to your place, and as you were cleaning my wound I officially told you that you were all I wanted, so we kissed and I carried you up to your room and it was the best kiss I ever had. Well second best after our first. And then you asked us to slow down so we did, but we still dry humped till I came in my shorts, embarrassingly, for the first time ever. And then we went to sleep with me wrapped up around you. Now we awoke and here we are,” Niall describes, “Told you I wasn’t drunk. Really thought you would trust my word after knowing me for six years.”

“That’s about it,” Zayn chuckles, “And you don’t regret anything you said or did?”

“Do you?” Niall questions but not really wanting a response.

“I… I don’t,” Zayn confirms.

“Hew!” Niall signs greatfully, “Me neither then. Kiss me lover boy!”

“Uh…” Zayn pushes down Niall’s head, “I know your morning breath after you drink.”

“After I brush my teeth?” Niall smiles.

“I think we got some things to talk about too,” Zayn grins back, “But sure.”

And that is now Niall and Zayn became Ziall.

Chapter End Notes

So I kinda hit the end of my previous writing. So I gotta start writing new chapters. But with the busyness of school, I do not know how much time i will have. So I'll still try to publish every friday, but it maybe every other friday depending how much free time I have to write and edit.
It's been fun doing some Ziall stuff, but the rest of this tale goes back to the main ship of the story: Louis and Harry.

If ya'll missed Larry stuff, it's coming.
Chapter 14 Part 1: Fireproof

Chapter Summary

The World adjusts to Niall and Zayn's new relationship. Inspired by those two, Louis asks a boy to prom.

Chapter Notes

Sorry it's been so long since the last posting. School got crazy and had no free time to work on this! Posting will be a lot more persistent this Summer.

So this chapter is exactly short enough to be only two parts, but the way it would have been split, it would have been the first half all dialogue and the second part all smut. So I split it into three parts. So part 1 of this chapter is mainly filler (setting the stage for the next coming plot line), but the second and third will start moving things along and be pretty smuty so I hope you all will enjoy that. Just make it through this part, sorry if it seems kinda boring. And I have no real song to go with this chapter so I'm just going to throw one of my fave songs as the title of this chapter that kinda fits but not really.

Song of the chapter: "Fireproof" by One Direction.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Part 1

“You know, we don’t have to tell them right away,” Zayn offers Niall. They sit inside Niall’s truck outside of Louis’s house on this cool February afternoon. They know Louis, Harry, and Liam are inside. Niall and Zayn asked them to gather there, but Zayn still has apprehension about telling his friends about what he and Niall are now: together.

“I really do not think we will be able to hide it from them,” Niall replies honestly.

“Come on, it could be fun! Like on Friends when Monica and Chandler secretly dated for half a season,” Zayn suggests, “That could be us! But hotter, of course, because you and me are involved.”

“That does sound quite enjoyable,” Niall laughs, “But not the same circumstances, since they already know how I feel about you…”

“You mean everybody knew, but me?” Zayn inquires.

“Well when you say it like that… yes,” Niall smiles, “Plus do you really think Louis is not going to notice the change in our behavior… and that hickey on your neck?”

“Niall!” Zayn cries as he bends his neck to look at his dark mark in the reflection of Niall’s rearview mirror, “Well no going back now, is there?”
“Why would I want too?” Niall questions as he grabs Zayn’s hand.

Zayn calms down at Niall’s touch, “I guess it’s like this... Once we go in there, what we are doing is real and official. And once something begins, there is always the possibility of an ending. And if this ends...”

“But if you don’t take a chance, you will never have a beginning to start with,” Niall reminds him, “And it’s you and me, Zayn. You think I’m just going to flake if this ever gets rough? I will fight for us, always. As long as you fight for me back. Will you fight for me, for us?”

“Of course,” Zayn states matter-of-factly.

“Then for right now, we have nothing to worry about it. I’ll be here holding your hand the entire time, as I always do,” Niall kisses Zayn on the cheek, “Give me a squeeze if you feel scared.”

“You make the scary things a lot less scary,” Zayn grins as he looks down at their intertwined fingers.

“That’s my job,” Niall responds with another kiss, “Let’s go. If we keep them waiting any longer they’re going to start having nefarious thoughts about us.”

Niall and Zayn walk in Louis’s house hands still interlocked. They find Jay vacuuming in the front room with a couple of her daughters playing on the floor where she has already vacuumed at. When she looks up to see the two boys, she freezes in place with an ecstatic smile upon her face. Nearly dropping the vacuum, she excitedly claps her hands together at the sight of the new couple. Niall raises a lone finger up to his face to signal for her to stay quiet.

“We haven’t told the boys yet,” Niall whispers in her ear as they walk past her.

“I’m just so happy for you two! We had bets placed on when you’d make your move. It appears like Anne won. Louis is not going to be happy about this; he’s only off by a day,” Jay explains. Zayn rolls his eyes in embarrassment. Literally everyone knew but him. The new couple snakes their way through the house to Louis’s room.

A knock at the door announces their arrival. Louis, Harry, and Liam sit around Louis’s television playing Super Smash Bros Brawl with the sound of button mashing echoing through the room.

“You can’t win the game by pressing the same two buttons every time!” Louis exclaims.

“Knocked you off the map twice,” Harry points out.

“Only because my attacks pushed him over 100% damage first,” Liam barks.

“Eh-hm...” Niall clears his throat as him and Zayn stand in the door way.

“Oh hey guys, what’s up?” Louis asks as each boy looks over their shoulder to welcome Niall and Zayn. But they immediately focus their attention back at the game. After a few seconds, what they saw hits all of them at once. Louis pauses the game as the boys slowly set down their controls on the ground.

“Wait are you?...” Harry begins to ask.

“It appears like they are...” Liam questions as they stand up.

“Are you telling me?” Louis inquires as he approaches his two oldest friends. Niall and Zayn just
respond by lifting of their intertwined hands to show the boys.

“Ahhh!” Louis screams. And it is not a manly scream. It is a complete fan girl scream. A scream that sounds more like one of Louis’s younger sisters than himself.

“Really!? Because if you wanted to say you’re lying and wait till tomorrow…” Louis hints.

“Sorry buddy, your mom already know,” Niall gleams.

“You all had a bet!?” Zayn exclaims, “And just assumed I was going to fall into Niall’s arms?”

“Well they weren’t wrong, dear,” Niall says to Zayn.

“Which I’m quite fine with. I just don’t like them being right,” Zayn replies, “Don’t want to give them that satisfaction.”

“I’ll give you some satisfaction,” Niall winks to Zayn.

“You two are so cute. And disgusting. Please stop,” Louis requests, “My two best friends.”

“Hey what about us?” Liam nags.

“Will you quit stealing their moment?” Louis barks, “Oh gawd, I’m forever the third wheel. This makes it official.”

“Yes, but you are our third wheel,” Zayn chuckles, “We could have a much more fucked up tricycle.”

“I couldn’t be more pleased,” Louis says as he wraps Niall and Zayn in a hug, reminiscent of the first three way hug the boys shared after the fight in the middle school, “If I’m not both of your best man, I’m going to kick so much ass.”

“How could you be both at the same time?” Harry asks.

“This will be years in the future. They’ll have holograms or cloning by that point,” Louis responds obviously.

“Louis, I’m really glad you were held back, because if you weren’t, I’d doubt we’d be here like this,” Niall declares, smiling at Zayn once again.

“For you two, it was worth it,” Louis confirms.

“I helped too!” Harry declares as he leaps on Niall and Zayn.

“That you did,” Zayn chuckles.

“You two fit so well together,” Harry explains, “That’s why it was a bet of when, not if.”

“I’m so happy for you two,” Liam finally says to the new couple.

“Thank man, couldn’t have done it without you,” Niall states.

“He what?” Zayn inquires of Niall.

“He’s the one who really pushed and advised me to tell you how I feel,” Niall confirms, “Reminded me of how much you deserved to know.”
“You did that for me?” Zayn asks Liam.

“You think I wouldn’t?” Liam asks back, “I really care for you, no matter what.”

“Thank you,” Zayn gleams, finally feeling at peace with Liam.

“Think there’s a chance we can start being friends again?” Liam requests.

“I think we can start,” Zayn accepts.

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Telling Louis, Harry, and Liam about their relationship was the easy part. It is the rest of the world that would prove to be a bit more difficult.

First they come out to the school. It is actually subtle. It starts by holding hands, something did relatively often since Zayn’s break up, but normally it was under the table where people most often did not see. But now they do it everywhere.

Niall walks to Zayn to every one of his classes. When Zayn appears stressed by his workload, Niall will more often than not take the books out of Zayn’s hand, even when Zayn protests the action. But Zayn loves it. He would be lying if he said he hate how Niall treats him as if he is breakable and delicate.

It becomes really official when Niall brings Zayn to a potluck dinner that most soccer players bring their girlfriends to. When Niall gives Zayn his letterman jacket that night, all doubts are put to rest about their relationship.

Zayn loves being owned. The way Niall’s last name is printed along his back for the world to see, to know that Zayn is Niall’s… Their coming out does not seem to bother most the team, they all turn back to their food and keep talking as if nothing even happened. Those who act against their relationship resolve their tensions within a few days. Because what Niall and Zayn are is love. And the team, along with the school, cannot deny that.

“So my family wants you to come over for dinner,” Niall says to Zayn at the lunch table.

“Why?” Zayn questions looking confused.

“They said they want to meet my boyfriend,” Niall replies casually.

“You told your parents! When?” Louis interrupts Niall and Zayn’s conversation.

“Last night actually,” Niall answers.

“And you’re now just telling me!” Louis yells sarcastically.

“I think the official boyfriend in this conversation probably has the right to know first,” Niall laughs.

“How’d they take it?” Zayn inquires.

“Pretty well overall. I’ve always had a pretty accepting family. My brother asked a few questions and then didn’t see fazed by it,” Niall explains.

“Why do they want to have me over for dinner? They’ve known me for years,” Zayn points out.

“Yeah, but before you were just my best friend Zayn,” Niall says.
“Just your best friend Zayn? Sheesh, I thought they would hold me to a higher regard than that!” Zayn smirks.

“It does not matter what you were, it matters what you are. And I can guarantee they are going to love you,” Niall gleams, “I know I do.” Zayn’s cheeks turn hot red in response to Niall’s words.

“Gawd you’re cute,” Niall kisses Zayn upon his rose-colored cheeks.

“Gay!” Louis yelps as he rolls his eyes.

“Kinda the point Lou,” Zayn smiles.

“Are you going to tell your parents Zayn?” Harry asks.

“Er, Um… No,” Zayn mumbles.

“Why not?” Harry barks.

“I already know how they feel on the subject,” Zayn replies taking a drink from his milk carton.

“So? This is about who you are,” Harry reaffirms.

“Babe,” Niall says taking back Zayn’s attention, “We’re in no rush. I don’t want you to do anything you’d be uncomfortable doing.”

“What if I never tell them though?” Zayn asks nervously.

“This is about me and you,” Niall replies, “No one else.”

Louis and Nick lie half-naked upon Harry’s bed still recovering from their energetic sexplay. Their chests appear exposed as the sheet from the bed drapes along their waists, covering up their still semi-hard erections. Both boys are covered in a thin layer of sweat, hair stuck upon their foreheads in a curly mess.

Harry is in the shower because this time he was the one whom got covered in the group’s semen. Nick and Louis’s hands are lightly interlocked while their thumbs twirl around one another.

“Did Harry tell you how Niall asked Zayn to Prom?” Louis inquires from Nick.

“He didn’t even tell me they were going to together!” Nick answers.

“Oh gawd it was so adorable. I wanted to strangle them both,” Louis chuckles.

“How’d it happen?” Nick questions.

“Well Niall had taken pictures of all the scenery pieces Zayn had constructed for various plays and shows. He gets the pictures blown up to be about the size of a poster and cuts out the letterings: Will You Go to Prom with Me, My Pakistani Prince? Zayn is then called out of class, being told the most recent piece he was working on was ruined when someone spilled paint on it, which the show took place just a day later. He runs to the auditorium, flustered and anxious as hell. When he steps insides he sees the curtain is down, but hanging from the ceiling against the curtain is all the pictures Niall had cut out. Niall was sitting on the edge of the stage holding a single rose. Zayn looks beyond flabbergasted as the girls who pulled him out of class push him towards Niall. Niall hops off the stage as Zayn finally arrives right in front of him. Will You Go to the Prom with me Zayny? As if
Zayn could ever tell him no. Zayn was grinning ear to ear, so much so all he could was nod. They kiss and then Niall yells up: *He said yes! Let them go!* Then all these rose pedals begin raining down from ceiling. It was beautiful,” Louis describes.

“You were there?” Nick asks.

“Of course! Me, Harry and Liam helped set everything up,” Louis replies, “I hope someone asks me out like that someday…”

“I wouldn’t expect anything less for you,” Nick promises as he kisses Louis on the cheek.

“It’s getting pretty close though…” Louis admits.

“End of April?” Nick inquires.

“Yeah…” Louis stammers, “Would you like to… um… go with me?”

“What?” Nick asks.

“Would you go to Prom with me?” Louis repeats more confidently.

“You and me?” Nick reiterates.

“Well I’m not asking anyone else,” Louis laughs.

“Would Harry be there?” Nick questions.

“No, just me and you…” Louis whispers.

“Yeah, yeah, I’d like that,” Nick responds, “I’d really like that.”

“Great!” Louis yells, “Harry!”

The sound of a shampoo bottle hitting the ground echoes out of the bathroom. After a few moments, Harry’s head, still lathered in soap, pops out of the bathroom door, “What?!?”

“I got a date to Prom!” Louis exclaims.

“Good for you!” Harry congratulates sarcastically, “Who are you going with?”

“Harold!” Nick sarcastically rolls his eyes.

“Would the boy I’m naked in bed with be too obvious?” Louis chuckles.

“Congrats to you both,” Harry states, “Can I get back in the tub now?”

“Yep, that’s all I need,” Louis gleams as Harry disappears back into the bathroom.

“Are we going in a group of people or just you and me?” Nick prods.

“Uh, I don’t know, but I already know the colors I will be wearing will be lavender and black. So get on that,” Louis demands.

“You already had a tux picked out before you had a date?” Nick laughs.

“Would you expect anything less from me?” Louis smiles.
I'll be posting more frequently now that semester is almost over! Hopefully will have this fic finished by the end of summer. thanks for reading!
Chapter 14 Part 2: Fireproof

Chapter Summary

Louis gives Zayn some unasked for sex advice. Louis later learns to love guys with long fingers.

Chapter Notes

Parts 2 and 3 of this chapter are pretty much smut. Hope you enjoy it:) And just finished up the school year so I'll be updating this once a week as I used to before school killed all my free time.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 2

“Ugh!” Zayn groans as he crushes up another piece of paper and throws it into the pile of failed drawings littered around the trashcan. Louis watches in caution, fearing saying the wrong thing could set Zayn off. But whenever has that stopped Louis in the past?

“Trying to kill the rain forest there buddy?” Louis questions.

“No, I’m trying to draw a scenery model for the upcoming play, but I can’t get it right,” Zayn answers as he attempts to start another sketch.

“I think you should take a break. What are you trying to draw anyways?” Louis asks.

“No, I can’t stop. I’m so close,” Zayn jabs his pencil onto the page, “A skyscraper.”

“A skyscraper?” Louis replies, “That doesn’t sound too hard.”

“It’s so fucking hard…” Zayn sighs.

“… Do you need to talk about something?” Louis goes straight to the point.

“Not really…” Zayn mumbles.

“Zayn,” Louis states as he snatches the pencil out of Zayn’s hand.

“Give that back!” Zayn growls.

“Not until you tell me what’s going on,” Louis responds, “I can’t focus with the sound of your pencil dragging across the paper and then wrinkling up the page every few minutes. What’s bothering you?”

“This is going to sound totally weird…” Zayn finally breathes.
“I’m sure I’ve heard weirder,” Louis offers.

“I feel kind of awkward talking bout this with you since you know both the people it involves… like I don’t know if this is a breach of intimacy or TMI…” Zayn rambles.

“There have been too many times to count where I thought something was TMI and you told me anyways… My poor virgin ears,” Louis jokes.

“Me and Niall have been dating for about two months, right?” Zayn clarifies.

“Sounds correct?” Louis confirms.

“We haven’t like… done anything…” Zayn mumbles.

“What?” Louis could not hear what he said.

“We haven’t done anything sexual!” Zayn yelps followed by silence.

“For two months?” Louis finally speaks.

“Like… we make out, a lot. Kissing and grinding and grabbing. But he’s never tried to take off my pants, and because he has not with me I didn’t want to do something he appears uncomfortable with, so I haven’t tried with him either,” Zayn reveals.

“There’s nothing wrong with taking things slow,” Louis points out.

“I know, we agreed to go slow once we started dating. But it’s been two months, and I’m way past the point of blue balls,” Zayn whispers, “They’re literally going to explode.”

“Have you tried talking to him about this?” Louis requests.

“No… Like with me and Liam-“ Zayn starts.

“This is nothing like you and Liam,” Louis interrupts.

“What do you mean?” Zayn asks.

“You and Liam weren’t boyfriend. Yeah, you may have felt that way, but it wasn’t mutual. Do you know what real boyfriends do? They call each other boyfriends. You know what else they do? They talk about their issues. You and Liam never talked about you two because he did not believe there was anything to talk about. Even if you wanted to fix things, there was nothing to fix in the first place. But Niall is your boyfriend. Do you want him to keep being your boyfriend?” Louis explains.

“Of course, I’ve never been happier,” Zayn agrees.

“Then you gotta talk to him. No matter how uncomfortable it may make you feel. There is an issue, and if you don’t want it to grow and spread, it must be confronted,” Louis orders.

“I know… I’m just scared. I know he really cares me, but with us unable to progress sexually… What if he just really loves me, but does not find me sexually attractive? What if he is confusing platonic love for what we are trying to do?” Zayn admits his darkest fear.

“Zayn you’re fucking ridiculous,” Louis laughs, “Do you see the way he looks at you? When you talk, he watches you like you’re the freaking sunset. And I know you aren’t be able to see this, but whenever you bend over to pick something up, his eyes immediately go to your ass.”
“This ass?” Zayn chuckles as he turns his head around to inspect his own body.

“In my opinion, you don’t have an ass to begin with,” Louis says as Zayn swats him, “But yes, as they say *the dick wants what the dick wants.* Or in this case the Niall.”

“Thanks for talking Lou. I do feel a lot better,” Zayn confides.

“I’m just stating the facts. Niall literally bends over backwards to make you smile, like that one time he tried to do a backflip on a trampoline to get your attention,” Louis reminds him.

“Oh my gawd, he scared me to death when he did that,” Zayn remembers with a chuckle.

“So if Niall would nearly break his back for you, I doubt there is much he wouldn’t do to make sure you’re happy. He probably does not even realize there’s a problem to begin with,” Louis rambles.

“I get it Lou. You’re all knowing,” Zayn rolls his eyes.

“And don’t you forget it,” Louis pokes Zayn's cheek.

“Like, what do I ask for us to do?” Zayn questions.

“Hm…” Louis wonders, “Something casual… Like maybe being naked around one another or jerking off together. Something that he normally does alone, but is now doing with you, that way he won’t feel pressured by doing something new and first time fooling around with you at the same time.”

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“Ah, fuck me,” Nick yelps as he dumps his load into Louis’s thirsty mouth. The three boys are naked and spread across Harry’s bed. Louis licks Nick’s dick clean, swallowing down every drop of Nick that Louis can get his tongue on. Louis lies in between Nick’s legs, pulling his head once he has finished off Nick. Harry sits next to Louis’s waist as he lightly jerks off his friend and himself while Louis was focused on giving Nick a blowjob.

“Better than the last time babe, as usual,” Nick compliments as he kisses Louis on the lips as he rolls himself off the bed, “I’m gonna go clean myself off.”

“We’ll be here,” Louis says as he wipes any stray drops of cum off his face. Nick disappears into the bathroom as he shuts the door.

“How do you want to finish this?” Harry asks Louis once the door shuts.

“Wanna grind against my bum? I’ll probably get off just from that feeling while I hump the bed. I’m already pretty close,” Louis responds.

“Sounds lovely to me,” Harry smiles as he rolls Louis onto his stomach. He crawls on top of Louis and places his dick squarely between Louis’s ass cheeks. Harry lays all of his weight upon Louis as a moan escapes his lips. While there is not really any anal stimulation occurring to Louis, the warmth from Harry’s body is almost enough to get Louis off alone.

Louis twists his hips as Harry begins moving his. Louis feels Harry’s chin land upon his shoulder, Harry’s brown curls rubbing against his neck.

“Oh Lou…” Harry moans into Louis’s neck as Harry’s tongue runs against it.

“Shit Haz,” Louis groans once Harry begins gnawing on Louis’s turn-on spot. Precum runs off of
Harry’s cock and the thin smooth liquid softens Louis’s dry skin. A wet slapping caused by Harry’s pelvic thrusts echoes through the room.

“What the fuck!” Nick exclaims as he enters the room, “Are you guys having sex?!”

“Huh?” Louis grunts as him and Harry quit moving and look up at Nick.


“Then what are you doing back there?” Nick asks.

“Just another way to get off I guess,” Louis replies nonchalantly.

“Are you like doing anal stuff?” Nick asks as he slowly walks over to the bed and takes a seat on the edge to better observe his two friends.


“Wait, you of all people haven’t?” Nick asks looking flabbergasted.

“What do you mean me of all people?” Louis scoffs.

“Babe,” Nick laughs, “You are such a bottom.”

“Excuse me!” Louis pushes himself up as Harry unintentionally falls off of him.

“It’s not a negative thing!” Nick replies, “It’s a great thing actually. But your body, your ass, is made for it. Have you ever liked fingered yourself?”

Louis gazes down, doing his best to avoid either of his friends’ glances, “Uh… yeah, a few times, it didn’t really feel that good though.”

“That’s because you don’t have any experience in it. Let me try,” Nick says excitedly.

“Uh… I don’t know…” Louis mumbles

“You gotta try it, babe,” Nick pleads, “You’re going to love it.”

“Quit pressuring him,” Harry barks, “If he does not want to do it, he doesn’t want too.” Louis holds back a grin; he really loves it when Harry acts overly protective of him.

“I know,” Nick sighs, “I’m just saying, I didn’t like it at first either, but then when a guy did it to me who actually knew what he was doing, holy fuck it was the best thing ever. I believe Louis deserves that experience.”

“It was really that good?” Louis questions cautiously.

“Yeah! Like it feels kind of weird at first, but then it gets comfortable, and then, fuck, pleasure. Almost like you feel empty when it’s gone,” Nick explains.

Louis and Harry look each other as if they are asking permission if it would be okay to do this. After a moment, Louis turns to Nick and nods. Nick is ecstatic.

“Okay! Louis, why don’t you flip over and lay on your back,” Nick orders. Louis cautiously nods his head as he rolls over, his hard cock plastered against his stomach.
“Now open your legs,” Nick states as he pulls open Louis’s legs with his hands, “I’m going to need you to relax. Like the more you tense up, the longer it will take for you to loosen up. That’s when it will start to feel good.”

“I’ll do my best,” Louis promises as he closes his eyes and takes in calming breaths to ease his body.

“Why don’t you play with his dick while I get started?” Nick proposes to Harry.

“Yeah, I can do that,” Harry replies as he moves to the right side of Louis. He lazily jerks Louis off, “You’re doing great babe.”

“We haven’t even started yet,” Louis huffs.

“Still amazing,” Harry smiles as he runs his hand up and down the entirety of Louis’s length.

Nick sticks two of his own fingers in his mouth to lather them up in saliva. A light pop bounces off of his lips once his fingers leave his mouth, “You ready?”

“As much as I will ever be,” Louis sighs.

“I’d never do anything to hurt you babe,” Nick gleams to Louis as his fingers dive into Louis’s cheeks. Louis feels Nick’s fingers press into his anus, but not enter into him. The fingers moisten up Louis’s hole as tiny sparks fly from the contact. Louis squeezes his anus in response to the reaction, but then has to remind himself he needs to be as open as he can for Nick.

“Oh…” Louis whispers. With that, Nick takes the initiative and pushes a single finger into Louis’s bum.

“Ah!” Louis yelps as he tightens up once again.

“Hey, be careful!” Harry barks to Nick.

“I know Harry I know,” Nick responds as he rolls his eyes, “I’ll slow down, okay?”

Nick pulls his finger completely out of Louis, and then slowly presses half of his finger back in. Then back out, and back in again. He repeats this opening process over and over again until he can easily enter Louis without much resistance.

“How are you liking it now babe?” Nick asks Louis.

“Not… not bad,” Louis comments as his eyes remain shut.

“Gonna speed up now a bit, yeah?” Nick questions.

“Mhm,” Louis nods. Nick then presses two fingers into Louis. His fingers move in so deep. Before Louis knows it, the knuckles from his other finger his Louis’s butt cheeks.

“Shit,” Louis moans as he feels the stretch occurring inside him.

“All okay?” Harry tries to confirm.

“Yeah… ohhhhh yeah,” Louis whimpers. Oh gawd how have I not done this before?

“You like it?” Nick inquires.

“Gawd yes,” Louis replies.
“You need it?” Nick asks as he pulls his two fingers out of Louis. Then Louis understands what Nick meant earlier when he said *feeling empty*. Nick’s absence creates a void that needs filled. Louis moves his waist in the direction of Nick, trying to pull Nick’s hands inside him with just his movements.

“Answer me,” Nick demands mischievously as he retracts his hand further away from Louis’s hole.

“I need it,” Louis shamefully barks. Nick then jabs his fingers back inside of Louis, causing to Louis to moan lustfully. Louis squeezes and contracts around Nick, furtherly stretching himself out.

“You ready for a third?” Nick asks.

“Are you sure he can handle that?” Harry requests in turn.

“Fuck yeah I can,” Louis whines quickly as he closes his eyes in anticipation, “Go on!”

“Desperate, aren’t we?” Nick giggles.

“I think we’ve already established that,” Louis huffs. Without warning Nick squeezes in a third finger, Louis now really feeling the stretch.

“Holy shit,” Louis moans as he lets himself adjust to the new size.

“You in pain?” Harry attempts to confirm as he sweetly kisses Louis’s cheeks and neck.

“Give me a second,” Louis replies with a sigh. There is a little sting of pain, but it quickly recedes. Louis feels so wide and exposed. As Nick begins to move his fingers once again, Louis starts to pant like a dog. He tries to suppress his squeals of ecstasy, but to no avail does that occur.

That is when Nick’s fingers graze Louis’s prostate for the first time.

“Holy shit, don’t stop,” Louis pleads, “Right there.”

“Right here?” Nick questions as he jabs his fingers back as far as they can possibly go.

“Mhm,” Louis whines as tiny bits of precum leak from his cock onto his stomach, “Deeper.”

Nick attempts to push his fingers back deeper than they previously were but his knuckles are literally hitting Louis’s entrance. He has no more length on his fingers to give.

“I’m sorry love but I think I’m out of fingers,” Nick concedes, “Uh, Harry?”

“I’ve, um, never done anything like that before. I don’t want to hurt him or something,” Harry answers.

“I think you got the biggest hands here, why don’t you give it a try?” Nick offers.

“Yeah?” Harry replies, breaking his attention from the expressions of lust that Louis keeps expressing from the fingering.

“I think you got the biggest hands here, why don’t you give it a try?” Nick offers.

“I’ve, um, never done anything like that before. I don’t want to hurt him or something,” Harry answers.

“It’s not that difficult once you get into a rhythm of things,” Nick explains, “Get back here. Don’t make Louis beg. I’m sure he will pretty easily if you don’t.”

Louis shamefully nods because he knows what Nick says to be true.

“Yeah,” Harry breathes as he moves to the part of the bed where Nick sits.
“He’s already pretty loose so you don’t need to worry stretching him out,” Nick tells as he scoots over to make room for Harry in between Louis’s legs. During their movements, Louis flips over onto his stomach to give Harry better access to his body.

“Louis…” Harry gawks as he looks upon his friend’s asshole, nearly in shock, “You’re so… pretty.”

“Pretty?” Louis scoff, “How could a butthole be pretty?”

“I don’t know…” Harry mumbles, “You just are.” Harry rubs his right index finger down Louis’s crack and over his opening. Louis arches his ass in response to the feeling of Harry.

“You may want to lick your fingers before going in, just to make it a little smoother for him,” Nick adds to Harry.

Harry complies by briefly putting three of his fingers into his mouth. He pulls them out as salvia roll off his fingers onto the sheets of the bed, “You ready Lou?”

“Quit asking me and get on with it!” Louis whines as places his face against the pillow in front of him.

Fearing he could still possibly hurt his best friend, Harry pushes only two finger into Louis as first. But Harry’s hands are bigger than Nick, especially longer for sure. Louis hisses in pleasure.

“Nick! He isn’t loose at all!” Harry exclaims, “He’s tight as fuck.”

Nick chuckles, “Compared to what he was when he started, he’s quite loose now.”

“Damn…” Harry says as he pulls his fingers in and out of Louis repeatedly.

“Hazza, keep your fucking fingers inside me,” Louis orders to Harry.

“Oh, okay,” Harry replies while he complies with the desperate demands.

“Oh shit,” Louis yells as Harry’s sender fingers finally smack into his prostate.

“Did I hurt you?” Harry stops moving.

“If you stop one more time, I swear to God,” Louis warns into his pillow as he pushes his body upward, though Louis knows he has nothing to use against Harry as a threat.

“Way to go Harry,” Nick smirks, “Seems like you know what you’re doing. He’s fucking riding your hand.”

Harry watches in awe at Nick’s statement. Because Nick is not wrong. Harry’s fingers disappear further and further into with every rocking of Louis’s hip. Sweet, dirty moans escape from Louis’s mouth, getting louder and louder at every motion of his hips.

“No, never,” Harry declares as he quickly jabs as deep as they can go.

“Oh fuck!” Louis hollers in pleasure, Harry obviously hitting his sweet spot, “Yeah, right there.”
“I think his mouth needs some attention or else he’s gonna wake up his family,” Nick comments to Harry as he moves down the bed to Louis’s face. Louis flips again onto his back and spreads his legs wide open for Harry. His dick looks harder than it ever has before. With all the blood rushing to it, the head appears very dark red and purple. As he settles back down, his dick flops up and then smacks back onto his stomach. Semen seeps out of his cock in response. His face is flushed pink; he looks wrecked. Nick slips his cock back into Louis’s mouth, hard again even though he recently orgasmed.

“Harry…” Louis whimpers as Harry’s rubs Louis’s prostate over and over again while whines and moans continue to flood out of Louis like a broken dam.

“Oh, yeah!” Harry says snapping back into reality, over taken by how beautifully ruined Louis looks. He rubs his fingers over Louis’s red hole once again. A welcomed groans moves around Nick’s cock.

“Fill me,” Louis commands loosely, though he is nearly inaudible due to Nick’s member blocking his mouth. Harry’s fingers once again easily touching Louis’s prostate. With every few pumps of Harry’s hand, squirts of precum ooze from Louis’s cockhead. Louis’s stomach gleams from the pool forming across his abdomen. All of this stimulation makes Louis relatively useless. He cannot even focus on the dick in his mouth. It is mainly Nick fucking his entrance as Louis’s lips loosely wrap around it.

“Shit,” Nick squirms as he cums in Louis’s mouth again though Louis does not really react besides swallowing. Once Nick removes himself from his mouth, Louis turns his attention back to Harry.

“I’m close,” Louis breaths to Harry, “Keep hitting it.”

Harry nods as he shoves his fingers as far as they can go into Louis. Louis screams as Harry continually presses his fingers on Louis’s prostate. Louis’s hand desperate tugs at his cock, finally being relieved after what feels like an eternity of edging. His fist flies fast against himself, desperately trying to reach his orgasm. Harry feels Louis’s anus tighten fingers.

“Fuck here I cum!” Louis yells as semen soars over his body. This feels and appears like the largest cum he has ever had. Spunk covers his body from neck to groin as Harry pulls himself out of Louis. Louis’s eyes remain closed as he milks the last of his orgasm out of his body. When he finally recovers, he opens his eyes to see Harry still watching him in a state of astonishment. Harry has never seen anything sexier in his life.

“Hazza,” Louis whispers as he notices Harry still sporting a raging erection.

Though he feels extremely weak from his overpowering orgasm, Louis takes his right hand and slides it across his stomach, collecting a large amount of his semen on it. He pushes himself up with his left hand and once he has balance, he wraps it around the back of Harry’s neck. Louis places a soft kiss upon Harry’s lips as he uses his weight to pull Harry back down to where Louis was laying. Harry seems kind of surprised by the action but goes along with it. Louis lays back down on his back with Harry laying ontop of him. With his right hand, Louis grabs Harry’s dick with his cum-covered fingers and gives a smooth tug, using his semen as lube.

“Fuck my hand baby,” Louis commands. All Harry can do is grunt as he begins pelvic thrusting into Louis’s grip. Nick watches in amazement at the two boy’s intimacy.

“You feel so fucking good,” Harry moans into Louis’s neck, “A little tighter Lou.”

“Can do,” Louis whispers as he kisses the side of Harry’s face.
“You feel so tight,” Harry rambles, “Just like your ass. God, it felt good. Almost as good as this.”

“Fuck my hand like you would be if you were fucking my ass,” Louis sweetly orders.

“Your ass would feel amazing. So wet and constricted around me,” Harry imagines as his thrust become more erratic.

“Just for you,” Louis promises.

“Fuck, here,” Harry yells unevenly as sperm spews onto Louis’s hand and torso. Louis and Harry’s semen mix upon Louis’s chest as Louis’s breathing pattern matches Harry’s post-orgasm. When Harry finally stops moving his hips, Louis lets go of his softened dick.

But then Nick notices something neither of the boys appear to bring attention to. Harry slowly lowers his face till his forehead rests upon Louis’s. And Louis looks up to him with those big blue eyes of his, as almost if his eyes were saying Harry is the only thing in the world; the only thing I can see. Harry stares back down as Louis, and there is a simple smile upon his face. As if knowing this is where he belongs.

And Harry kisses Louis. And it is the perfect mix of intimacy and sexuality. For Harry’s lips only press against Louis’s so lightly, in a way that reminds Nick of dandelion seeds flying through the wind on a warm summer day. But Harry’s tongue also slips into Louis’s mouth in the process. And the how their tongues playfully wrestle, as if they’re playing tag for the hundredth time but are enjoying it like it is the first.

He breaks the kiss and places his forehead back on Louis’s. Harry closes his eyes in a comfortable, relaxed state. But Louis keeps looking at Harry as if Harry is the sun and this is Louis’s first sunrise.

And that is when Nick Grimshaw realizes he will never be Harry Styles. Louis will never look at Nick the way he looks at Harry. Never. Ever.

Chapter End Notes

The next part is very short, just one scene, but some pretty good smut between Zayn and Niall if you're still shipping it:) see ya'll next week! Hope all your finals come out well!
Chapter 14 Part 3: Fireproof

Chapter Summary

Taking Louis's advice, Niall and Zayn push into the physical aspect for their relationship for the first time.

Chapter Notes

A pretty short part :) mainly Ziall smut. Hope ya'll enjoy.

Song of the chapter:
"Fireproof" by One Direction

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 3

Niall and Zayn stage another wrestling match upon Zayn’s bed. Their wrestling has taken a new dimension since the start of their relationship though. Now, the victor is not only measured by who is pinned down, but also by who is sorer from pelvic thrusting against the other and by whose tongue is more tired from Frenching.

“Got you now baby,” Niall declares, pinning Zayn’s forearms against the bed with his own hands.

“Don’t you dare underestimate me,” Zayn quips as he wraps his legs around Niall’s thighs. Zayn squeezes his legs as tight as he can, causing Niall to lose his balance and fall off of Zayn.

Zayn quickly rebounds as the boys switch positions. Zayn now holds Niall by the wrists against the bed, “What did I tell you?”

“You never cease to amaze me,” Niall gleams at Zayn then Zayn kisses Niall on the lips. As he does that, he grinds his hips once again against Niall’s groin, causing Niall to groan.

“Got you exactly where I want you,” Zayn whispers into Niall’s mouth.

“Then I’m exactly where I need to be,” Niall comments as he sucks on Zayn’s tongue.

“You couldn’t be more right,” Zayn agrees as he shifts to one hands pinning Niall down. Zayn’s other free hand now travels down Niall’s chest till it firmly grips Niall’s package.

“Getting kind of late, don’t you think?” Niall declares as he quickly throws Zayn off of him. This causes Zayn to land on the floor beside his bed, revealing Niall's strength and how he could have easily won the competition if he actually wanted to.

“What do you mean late, it’s 8:30?” Zayn replies as he brushes the dust off of him.

“Like it’s dark and…” Niall stammers, “Homework! Yeah homework!”
“We did our homework earlier,” Zayn comments.

“Well I have something due next week…” Niall lies.

“Niall,” Zayn states.

“Yeah,” Niall replies refusing to look into his boyfriend's eyes.

“I think we need to talk about something…”


“So, I really don’t mind taking things slow. I prefer it actually… but we’ve been dating for a few months now and we haven’t pushed past first base… and I want to make sure everything is okay, because I feel like I have been pretty obvious about what I want, and you don’t reciprocate… like if you’re no longer attracted to me you can tell me…”

“What? No!” Niall quickly hops down to Zayn’s level on the floor, “How could you ever think that?”

“Because every sexual advance I make on you, you shut down. With no real explanation, besides saying you’re tired or that you have other plans. If you don’t want me just say it… like you don’t owe me anything because we’ve been friends for so long. If you tried dating me and realized it’s not what you want…” Zayn is trying to remain composed during this conversation, but the idea that Niall could end things with him right now is making him break. His voice quivers towards the end of his sentence.

“Oh baby, please stop, don’t do this,” Niall quickly wraps Zayn up and lifts him up into Niall’s arms, “No need for tears.

“Then what’s going on?” Zayn asks as he rubs his face against Niall’s t-shirt, “Tell me what you’re feeling, please. This can’t work if there is a wall between us.”

“It’s going to sound bad…” Niall begins to admit.

“We’ve always been honest with each other,” Zayn argues, “That can’t change with a relationship.”

“When I say this, don’t take it the wrong way,” Niall replies, “But please believe Zayn. I haven’t lost interest. I’ve gained interest in you. In fact, you’ve made me gayer and more sure of who I am.”

“Okay, then what is it?” Zayn inquires.

“Zayn, you’ve been with more guys than me, which isn’t a big number I know that. But you’ve been with Liam and Chad… and I haven’t been with any guy. I don’t know what to do… What if I’m bad? I definitely can’t compare to Chad’s experience… What if you regret me after that?” Niall finally admits.

And Zayn laughs. Laughs louder than he probably should for Niall being so open with him.

“You’re an idiot,” Zayn chuckles.

“What?!” Niall exclaims.

“I don’t want an experience like Liam or Chad. I want you. We will make our own moves, our own rhythm, our own style,” Zayn explains, “Niall, sweetheart… Bad sex isn’t going to make me stop loving you. Never. What we have done is amazing, not because you were the best, but because it
was me and you. We are the best.”

“Stop loving me?...” Niall stammers the statement he stopped listening at, “When did you start?”

“Erm… I didn’t…” Zayn mumbles.

While Niall would love to dive into that conversation, being so into Zayn, already saying I love you nearly every night before they go to sleep even though Zayn never says it back. But Zayn does not appear ready to talk about it. He admitted it, and that is all Niall needs for the time being.

“Okay, well, I feel a bit better, but I’m still nervous. I’ve still never done anything sexual with a guy before… how do we…” Niall inquires. That is when Zayn remembers his and Louis’s previous conversation about taking baby steps.

“You could…” Zayn clears his throat, “Jerk off for me?”

“You want me to what?!” Niall exclaims.

“Sit on the bed,” Zayn instructs, “And give me a show.”

“I’ve never done that before…” Niall admits.

“But you jerk off all the time,” Zayn reminds him.

“Yeah, but, not with somebody else!” Niall states.

“I know… but maybe this will help us transition into what couples normally do together,” Zayn comments as he places light kisses upon Niall’s neck, “You’re so handsome. Sexy as fuck. I know you know what to do. Do it. Show it to me.”

“Sexy as fuck?” Niall repeats.

“You better believe it,” Zayn reveals as he grabs his boyfriend's hand and places it upon his own growing erection, "Feel what that thought of you is doing to me.”

“That’s all from me?” Niall stutters.

“Yup, just from you,” Zayn whispers sensually into Niall’s ear.

“Okay, okay, I think I can do this,” Niall replies feeling a tad bit more confident.

“I know you can,” Zayn kisses Niall softly on the lips.

“You sit there,” Niall orders for Zayn to take the chair by the desk. Zayn complies and spins the chair around to face Niall.

Niall’s cheeks are already pink in anxiety. He has never put on a show before. Karlie may have done a little strip tease for him once or twice, but never Niall for someone else. He has never felt so insecure in his life. But he tries to act sexy for Zayn. As he takes off his belt, he attempts to swing his hips and does a cute dance. Causing Zayn to giggle at his boyfriend's ridiculous attempt. Once his belt falls to the ground, he tries to roll his shirt up his body while thrusting his hips, but this goes horribly wrong. His shirt quickly becomes a tangled mess, wrapped around his head and arms.

“Zayn?!” Niall yelps as he falls backwards onto the bed in confusion. He fights the shirt he wears, though the more he struggles, the more tangled he becomes.
“Babe,” Zayn coos smoothly as he places his hands on Niall’s exposed stomach. Niall quits struggling against his shirt, feeling calm in Zayn’s touch. As if Zayn’s hands can fix all his problems, “I got you.” Zayn grabs ahold of the bottom of the shirt and helps lift it over his head and wrists.

“Thanks, that thing tried to kill me” Niall chuckles uncomfortably as Zayn discards the shirt to the ground.

“Niall,” Zayn describes comfortingly, “I don’t want you to be anything you’re not. Just be yourself; that’s why I like you. I don’t need a go-go dancer.” Zayn pulls Niall back to his feet as he kisses his boyfriend on the cheeks and softly drags his fingertips along Niall’s chest. “You got this. Though, I do find it horribly cute how hard you are trying for me.” Zayn sucks welts onto Niall’s neck and rubs Niall’s crotch, causing Niall’s cock to rapidly harden in response.

“See, you already got it,” Zayn whispers as he grabs the button on Niall’s jeans. Once it pops off, the pants slag down his thighs.

“Sit down,” Niall commands weakly as he kicks off his jeans. Zayn follows his order and leans back down in the chair.

“Lookin’ so sexy Nialler,” Zayn comments as he runs his hand over his own groin. Niall’s attention perks up at Zayn’s movement.

Is he touching himself because of me

That causes Niall to become more assertive. He begins tracing the very apparent boner in his boxers, trying to tease Zayn. He rotates his body so his boyfriend can see his hardened length from different angles, along with showing off his ass. A long shadow fall behind Niall’s hardened cock.

“You ready?” Niall gulps.

“Always,” Zayn sighs impatiently as his eyes focus on Niall’s groin.

Niall grabs the elastic waistband in his boxer, and with a swift tug they fall to his knees. Zayn’s jaw drop upon seeing Niall. It is not that Niall was extremely large or wide by any means, a more than enough size. It appeared rather average in Zayn’s opinion, but his dick just looked so pretty? It points straight out from his body, very light colored skin like the rest of Niall’s body. This causes the veins on his cock to appear very prevalent, and the head of his dick was so pink. Maybe it is not like a porn star's dick, but it was Niall's dick, and Niall is Zayn's, so Zayn finds it more beautiful than any work of art a museum could offer.

“Fuck…” Zayn mumbles, staring in awe.

“What?” Niall squeaks, nearly covering awe himself up with his hands.

“No, you look… amazing. Move your hands, please,” Zayn requests.

“Do you like what you see?” Niall question as he lowers his arms to his sides, now feeling a little more self-assured.

“My gawd I do,” Zayn whimpers, not even trying to hide where his eyes aim for, “Go on.”

“Go on?” Niall reiterates.

“What you were doing, keep going. I want to see you in action,” Zayn lies back further into the chair as he lightly palms himself through his pants.

Niall nods as he grabs ahold of himself once again. He slowly rubs his hand up and down his length
while staring at Zayn. He bites down and licks his lips. His other hand runs up and down his body, feeling his pectoral muscle and abs.

“This is way too much. Do you mind if I join you?” Zayn requests as he peels off his t-shirt.

“Join?” Niall coughs.

“If you don’t mind. You just look so good. My pants feel tight. And I’ve been imagining this for so long and now it’s finally happening,” Zayn explains as he grabs ahold of his belt, though he does not take it off. He looks up to Niall, awaiting permission, which Niall quickly nods in response.

Zayn pulls his pants and underwear in one rapid swoop. And wow he does look painfully hard. Niall gawks at Zayn’s exposed body. His dick is about the same length and girth as Niall’s, but it points up instead of sticking straight out. Precum leaks from his cock onto his dark stomach.


“See anything you like?” Zayn chuckles as he wraps his hand around himself.

“Have I really been missing out on that for three months?!” Niall exclaims ironically.

“I wasn’t the only one suffering it appears,” Zayn replies as he pushes his dick down 90 degrees, now pointing at Niall, and then let’s go to have his cock smack against his stomach. With a small pop, another burst of precum spills out over his abdomen.

“You’re killing me here,” Niall admits as he goes back to stroking himself to the show in front of him.

“Good idea,” Zayn agrees as he also jerks himself off. Both boys focus all their attention on the other as they hurriedly pull themselves. Niall leans back against Zayn’s bed, feeling tired from standing erect during their joint activity.

Zayn spreads his legs apart and closes his eyes. With the hand not jerking himself off, he plays with his balls for a bit, but then runs his fingers down to his hole. He pulls his fingers up to his lips and slips two of them in his mouth.

“What are you doing there?” Niall asks, stopping his motions.

“I do this when I jack off sometimes. I like to think about things… like you,” Zayn responds as he rubs his rim with the two fingers.

“What about me?” Niall inquires.

“You… entering me…” Zayn admits as one of his fingers slips inside himself.

“Fuck, how do I… enter you?” Niall thirsts for the answer.

“We’re in my bed…” Zayn describes with his eyes closed, “I’m on my back, you are on top of me… My legs are pressed up to my chest, my ass in the air. You’re softly kissing me as your cock grinds between my cheeks. You then tell me that you love me, saying you would never hurt me, and order me to relax. You line yourself up and push in…”

“You’re going to be the death of me Zayn Malik,” Niall groans also imagining the scenario, “I’m getting close.”

“Wait,” Zayn commands, at which Niall immediately stops, “I want to watch. Can I get closer?”
“Yes,” Niall whimpers as he holds back his coming orgasm. Zayn pulls his fingers out of himself and hops onto the floor. He then crawls over to Niall and stands on his knees in front of him, nearly eye level with Niall’s member.

“Can I touch it?” Zayn requests sweetly.

“Definitely,” Niall replies as he releases his dick from his grip. Zayn takes it in his hand and holds it. Not giving Niall a handjob, but as if Zayn is measuring and observing Niall’s groin. Zayn compares Niall’s size to his hand, he feel his balls and shaft, and oddly buries his face in Niall’s pubes and takes a whiff. Niall’s cock throbs in response.

“You smell like man, I like it,” Zayn chuckles as he pulls away, “You can finish now.”

“Thanks for the permission babe,” Niall winks a he grips his cock once again. He quickly jacks off as he focuses his attention to the head of his cock.

“You’re looking kind of dry baby,” Zayn comments, “Need some lube?”

“That’s be great actually,” Niall replies in relief. He expects Zayn to get up and go to his bathroom for his hand lotion, but instead Zayn leans up, places his head right in front of Niall’s cockhead, and then sticks his tongue out to lick Niall.

“Whoa!” Niall responds to Zayn’s saliva. Zayn does not suck on Niall’s dick, but just licks where his hand and dick meet to smooth and dampen the skin.

“Wow you taste even better,” Zayn mentions as Niall approaches his orgasm.

“Fuck, here it cums,” Niall yelps. Without realizing it, he releases his cock from his hands and grabs the back of Zayn’s head. Zayn’s tongue just felt so inviting, so warm so wet, Niall wanted more without noticing his actions.

Niall shoves his dick into Zayn’s mouth, causing Zayn to gag around it in response.

“Shit,” Niall curses as his load shoots down Zayn’s throat. Zayn has no option but to swallow all he can, though a few drops run out from the corners of his mouth.

Niall’s eyes are slammed shut as he empties his load, mumbling sweet phrases to him. Finally after his dick becomes too sensitive, he pulls out to look down at his boyfriend.

“Oh babe I’m sorry about that, I-“ Niall is cut off.

“You apologize too much,” Zayn comments as he wipes the remainder of Niall’s orgasm off of his face.

“What?” Niall stammers.

“It’s really cute, how you treat me like this fragile being, who cannot handle being pushed around or hurt. But Niall, I kind of like being pushed and grabbed. I like it rough. I nearly came from the pressure of your fingertips against my head and the forcefulness of your cock trying to jump its way down my throat,” Zayn explains to Niall, “Like if I had a quarter for every time Liam would throw me against the wall and pin me-“

“Yeah, yeah, I get it,” Niall replies jealously.

“The envy in your voice is so sexy,” Zayn whispers into Niall’s ear as his dick pokes Niall in the
“You still haven’t got off,” Niall comments looking down as Zayn’s throbbing member.

“I can finish myself-“ Zayn is cut off as Niall hoists him into the air.

“Oh no babe, you are nowhere close to being done yet,” Niall states devilishly as he throws Zayn onto his bed. “If you thought Liam was rough, you have another thing coming.”

“Oh yeah?” Zayn challenges as he spreads his legs, preparing for Niall to slide in between them, “It appears a lot of things will be cumming before the night is over.”

“Oh that note, you couldn’t be more right love,” Niall declares as he jumps onto of Zayn, quickly sinking his teeth into one of Zayn’s pectoral muscles, causing a hiss of pleasure to leave Zayn’s lips.

The night ends with Zayn covered in his own cum and another load of Niall’s, along with a layer of lovebites stretching from his neck to his groin. Sexually, things go smoothly for Zayn and Niall after that evening.

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter is all Larry. It's really cute, lots of fluff, and I'm trying to figure out if I will split it into two parts or just release a very long chapter because there's no real place to cut it in half. Basically, Harry will be a knight in shining armor.
Chapter 15 Part 1: Let It Go

Chapter Summary

When Louis’s date ditches him on the night of his prom, a knight in mismatched clothing comes to his rescue.

Chapter Notes

Sorry for this being posted a week late! Been super busy moving houses. Hope you all enjoy the upcoming fluff.

Song of part 1:
Let It Go by Idina Menzel

Part 1

“History really does repeat itself, doesn’t it?” Harry says sitting on Louis’s bed.

“It is?” Louis questions looking into his mirror while trying to perfect his hair.

It is the day of the Prom and Louis could not be more excited. Nick will be driving in late afternoon to be his date. They are going with Niall and Zayn, Eleanor and her date Carter, and Stan and his boyfriend Josh whom Niall had hooked him up with. Harry and Liam could not attend being a grade beneath the group, for the Prom would only admit juniors and seniors. The after prom is a little more lax, so Harry and Liam would be joining the group for that.

Louis’s lavender and white tux hangs on the closet door, looking pure and bright as ever, much to counter Louis’s normal dark outfits. He stands in a blank white-tshirt, boxers, and high violet socks while he plays with his hair in the mirror next to his closet, the tux right behind Louis from Harry’s view.

“The homecoming dance your freshman year,” Harry reminds him.

“But we get ready together before every dance Haz,” Louis points out.

“Yeah, but I’m not going with you, like that time,” Harry explains.

“Oh, Harry,” Louis coos as he walks over to Harry and cups Harry’s cheeks in his hands, “Don’t feel bad. I wish I could bring you. I just don’t think the school would be okay with me bringing two male dates. Actually I know bringing two dates is definitely against school policy.”

“I’m not sour about it,” Harry shakes Louis’s hands off of him, “Just saying, very similar.”

“Sure sweetie,” Louis playfully kisses Harry on the forehead and then hops back over to the mirror before Harry can swat him.
“I got Liam this time,” Harry says.

“And at least I know you won’t be running off with my Zayn,” Louis chuckles.

“Did I run off or did you run off from your date?” Harry rebuttals playfully.

“I know my own past,” Louis hisses as he reaches for the lavender button up shirt hanging in the tux.

“Gonna start getting dressed now?” Harry ask as he pushes himself off the bed.

“I know it’s a little early, but I can’t wait any longer! I’ve been dreaming about this night since I started high school: fancy dinner, all night dancing, maybe some snogging and more…” Louis imagines with a grin on his face.

“You sound excited as if it is your wedding night,” Harry compares.

“Perhaps the same outcome…” Louis mumbles.

“What was that?” Harry asks.

“Nothing, nothing,” Louis replies as he begins to button up his shirt.

“What time is Nick getting here?” Harry inquires.

“Uh… I don’t know exactly. He hasn’t answered any of my texts today, but we’ve talked about tonight multiple times. I told him all the times and arrangements. I’m sure he’s driving here, you know he doesn’t like to text while driving,” Louis describes.

“Are you nervous?” Harry asks.

“A little… I kind of feel the same way I felt before my homecoming dance… and before Nicaragua,” Louis admits.

“Why’s that?” Harry questions.

“It kind of just hit me with you comparing this to the homecoming dance… but because you won’t be there,” Louis reveals.

“Lou…” Harry sighs as he hugs Louis, “I don’t like it any more than you do.”

Louis buries his face in the crook of Harry’s neck. He does not understand how Harry still does this to him: scared when Harry is gone and then safety in his arms. Louis assumed he would have grown out of this stage of his and Harry’s closeness eventually. But their intimacy has actually increased with age and the years together.

Harry is always by Louis’s side: Louis’s right hand man. Louis’s right hand. How can Louis go anywhere without his right hand?

“Just a few hours, then I’ll meet you guys at the after prom,” Harry breaths down Louis’s neck.

“I know, I’m sorry. I don’t know why I’m feeling so emotional today,” Louis apologizes.

“Don’t you dare apologize to me about your feelings. They make you who you are. And for that reason, I’ll take them all,” Harry states as he looks down at Louis. Louis pulls away to look up at Harry while still wrapped in his arms. Harry lays kiss upon Louis’s forehead as they do whenever they try to calm the other down. But Louis quickly moves his head right before the kiss lands.
Instead Harry’s lips land upon Louis’s.

Harry does not appear shocked by the move. No, their kissing is way too normalized by now. They sink into the kiss, both of each other’s hands running through each other’s hair. Tongues dance around dirty groans.

“Let’s get off,” Loans moans.

“Now?” Harry squawks.

“Yes, yes Harry,” Loan repeats.

“Before your Prom?” Harry asks. That does remind Louis that he has purposefully not came for a few days now so tonight would be extra ecstatic between him and Nick. But gawd, Harry turns him on, more than any person, let alone a friend, should. Harry’s taste, and smell, and touch are overwhelming this logical sense.

“Yes, please. Let’s do it. A quick sixty-nine. It will be fun!” Louis runs his tongue along Harry’s jawline as he whispers his desire.

“Oh,” Harry nervously chokes on air, “Do we have time?”

“Oh yeah,” Louis hisses sexually as he pokes his growing member into Harry’s thigh, “You’ll prolly get me off after a few minutes inside that pretty mouth of yours.”

“If you think we have time…” Harry concedes to Louis’s demands by re-linking their lips. He picks Louis up and Louis wraps his legs around Harry’s waist, violent slurping sounds raining from their mouths.

Then a knock at the door steals their attention.

“Louis?!” Jay yells from the hallway.

Their heads rapidly turn to Louis’s door, fear taking over their demeanor. Harry immediately drops Louis onto the ground. To clear the scene, Louis shoves Harry face first onto the bed as he turns his body in the direction of closet, so his mother will not be able to see his prevalent boner poking out of the fly of his boxers.

“Sorry to bother you boys,” She declares while opening the door.

“What do you need mother?” Louis asks nervously, hoping Jay will not ask for him to turn around. He acts as if he is buttoning up his shirt, but really he shoves his boner back into his short. Harry rotates his body 180 degrees to face Jay after his push onto the bed.

“Niall’s father just called and asked if we could do take the picture for Prom here. I told her that would be fine. Everyone going to be here soon so hurry up!” She states.

“Got it,” Louis replies.

“Harry,” Jay sighs, “Quit distracting my son, he has people to impress.”

“I’ll pretty him up, don’t you worry,” Harry reassures her as she leaves the two boys alone in Louis’s room. The second the door shuts both Louis and Harry break into a fit of laughter at how close they had been to being caught.

“Learn to control your dick Lou,” Harry chuckles as he wipes a tear from this eye.
“Well if you hadn’t have been kissing me…” Louis points out.

“We’re going to go in circles, let’s get you dressed,” Harry orders as he pushes himself off the bed once again.

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“What’s a Prom mommy?” Daisy asks as she pulls on Jay’s shirt.

“It’s a dance sweetie,” Jay responds.

“What’s a dance?” Pheobe asks right after.

“It’s like a ball, like what Cinderella went to,” Jay answers.

“Oh!” The twin girls reply.

“Did your parents really buy that Eleanor was your date?” Carter asks Zayn, referencing when Eleanor picked Zayn up so they would not know Niall and him were going together.

“They believe what they want to believe,” Zayn sighs.

“What a sausage-fest!” Eleanor laughs. Eleanor stands in the center of the crowd of guys: Niall & Zayn, Stan & Josh, and her date Carter. Eleanor is in a beautiful blue dress similar to that of Elsa’s from Frozen. Her date wears a black tux with a light blue shirt. Zayn’s color is green and Niall’s is yellow. A couple pairs of parents stand a few yards away from the teenagers talking among themselves about how mature their babies look. But Louis sits nervously on his porch looking down the street for the arrival of Nick’s vehicle. Harry stands next to him for moral support though there is not much more than he can give than that.

“Harry…” Louis whispers, “What if… Nick isn’t coming…”

“He’ll come,” Harry replies, “Call him again.”

“I already have five times,” Louis answers, “If he didn’t answer the last five times why would he now?”

“Because our guests are getting restless,” Harry comments, referring to the desperate eyes of the group who are ready to get their night started. They then watch Eleanor’s parents then walk over to her and whisper something into her ear all while looking at Louis.

After that, Eleanor then wanders over to Louis and Harry, “Louis…”

“Yeah El?” Louis replies as he looks up at her from his low position on the steps of his porch.

“Our reservations are in less than half an hour, I think we have to go soon,” Eleanor hints at.

“Uh, he’ll be here soon. Why don’t you all start doing pictures now. If he’s not here by the time that’s done, then we’ll leave,” Louis regretfully says.

“Okay dear,” Eleanor replies in pity. She walks back over the group and they start taking pre-Prom pictures as Louis watches in dread. He tries calling Nick on more time.

It rings. And rings. And rings. But this time, Nick answers.

“Nick! Thank god! Where are you, you had me worried sick!” Louis exclaims.

“Louis,” Nick is interrupted.

“Where are you? I can hold them off from leaving for like half an hour but I don’t think I can do much more than that,” Louis offers before he himself is cut off.

“I’m not coming,” Nick states bluntly.

“Wait… what?” Louis stutters.

“I’m not going to be able to make it Louis,” Nick repeats, “I’m sorry.”

“Why not?” Louis nearly yells, “You could have told me you couldn’t make it sooner.”

“I have a date tonight…” Nick finally admits.

“Nick…” Louis gulps back a cry, “I thought we had something.”

“You know this couldn’t work out in the long run… There are too many outlying factors,” Nick reveals.

“Outlying factors? Like you wanting to get your dick sucked here and there,” Louis shouts.

“Louis you don’t understand!” Nick yells back.

“I perfectly understand,” Louis hollers now gaining attention from the rest of the party.

“It’s more than that, it’s you and Harr-“ But Louis hits off the call before Nick can finish his thought.
Louis looks down at his phone in shame. How could he have been so stupid to fall for Nick Grimshaw, especially with his and Harry’s past? By the time he raises his head to face the crowd, they are already staring at him.

“Louis?” Zayn asks breaking the silence.

“Nick isn’t coming… He has a date tonight back…” Louis addresses the group, “I um…” He immediately runs into the house with Harry, Niall, Zayn, and Eleanor quickly chasing after.

“Louis!” Harry yells as he takes his first step into the Tomlinson home. Louis is already at the top of the staircase and trotting to his room.

“God damnit, if I get sweaty in this thing…” Zayn groans as they sprint up the stairs.

“You’ll still look beautiful as ever,” Niall reassures Zayn.

“Not now guys,” Eleanor sighs dramatically as they arrive at Louis’s locked bedroom door.

All four pound on the door for Louis to let them in, but there is no response from the other side.

“Louis!” Niall yelps.

“Let us in!” Harry says.

“Talk to us,” Eleanor orders.

“We only want to help,” Zayn reminds Louis. But their pleas are not answered, no matter all the knocks and calls of his name.
“What do we do?” Harry asks the group.

“Not much we can do from out here,” Niall replies.

“Maybe we are all too much right now…” Eleanor wonders.

“What do you mean?” Zayn inquires.

“Louis?” she offers softly, “Would it be okay if just Harry comes in? We’ll stay out here.”

“Why me?” Harry mumbles.

“You know why Harry,” Eleanor states frankly while Harry glares at her.

After a few moments they hear the lock of the door pop, signally Louis had unlocked the door, but he does not push the door open.

“That’s your cue,” Niall says to Harry.

“Let us in when you calm him down,” Zayn requests. All Harry does is nod as he enters the room and then shuts the door.

Upon arriving in Louis’s area, Harry sees pieces of Louis’s tux thrown erratically on the ground. As he turns his head to Louis’s bed, Harry sees Louis in only a white t-shirt and boxers curled up facing away from Harry.

“Lou…” Harry feels like total shit seeing Louis like this. First of all, it is his best friend looking utterly destroyed. Harry has never really seen Louis with a broken heart before. Eleanor and Louis’s relationship was nearly dead by the time it ended anyways, and with Stan there were not any feelings there to begin with. So in Harry’s eyes, this is Louis’s first major heartbreak.

Secondly, Harry feels guilty for bring Nick into his life. He knows it is not his own fault for Nick being an ass to Louis, but if it was not for Harry agreeing to meet with Nick, Louis never would have met him in the first place. Harry is not exactly sure what he is supposed to do.

“You can sit if you’d like,” Louis whines still facing away from his best friend.

“One second,” Harry replies as he picks up the wrinkled suit and hangs all the pieces on the chair near Louis’s desk. He then takes a seat on the bed next to Louis, “So what happened?”

“Apparently there is someone more important than me…” Louis regretfully replies.

“Don’t you dare say that,” Harry commands forcefully.

“But it’s true. He didn’t even have the decency to tell me he wasn’t coming. I mattered that little to him…” Louis mumbles.

“I don’t know what’s wrong with him. Nothing seemed wrong the last time we saw him,” Harry comments.

“Doesn’t really matter does it…” Louis swallows a cry.

“I’m sorry. I wish that I could take this back, but I can’t. I’m sorry Nick cannot express his emotions or how he cares for you. But there are plenty of people on the other side of that door who do care about you, and who are waiting for a chance to show you that,” Harry states as he and Louis look towards the closed door.
“And who are already late for their dinner plans!” Niall exclaims from the other side of the door.

“Niall, shut up!” Zayn barks.

“Oof,” Niall yelps, obviously recoiling from a smack to the stomach from Zayn.

“But he does have a point!” Eleanor reminds them.

“Let them in,” Louis orders Harry as he pulls himself up to greet his friends. Harry lets the three friends in as they all sit on the bed around Louis.

“What an asshole,” Zayn obviously states.

“You could say that again,” Louis sadly agrees.

“Babe come on, get your clothes on. You don’t need him to have a good time tonight,” Eleanor kindly states.

“As much as being the seventh wheel sounds fun…” Louis trails off.

“Not seventh!” Niall adds to Louis, “Third! You, me, and Zayn. As always!”

“If that’s okay, dear?” Niall asks Zayn, though already Zayn has the widest smile from Niall’s invitation to Louis. Niall is always so selfless, helping out his friends even at the expense of himself. And what more could make their night perfect, but by adding Louis to their mix. As it has always been, and as it always should be.

“You don’t even have to ask,” Zayn answers, “Put your pants on, Tommo.”

“You all are very sweet… But I’m not going to have a good time tonight. I’m sorry, but if I went I would be in a sour mood the entire night and ruin your time. I’m okay, but I want you all to go and have a good night for me, please?” Louis requests.

“Please, let’s go,” Zayn pulls on Louis’s hand.

“There’s always next year, yeah? Guys really, it means a lot, but I don’t want to go tonight. I’m emotionally not there,” Louis confirms, “Yeah?”

“But a night without you-“ Niall starts.

“If you want to make me happy, you will have a good evening, and tell me all about it and show me all the pictures tomorrow,” Louis describes.

“Are you sure?” Eleanor inquires, “We aren’t going to have a good time without you either.”

“Yes you will,” Louis falsely smiles, “Please. I’m fine.”

“You don’t seem fine,” Harry accuses.

“I have my sisters. We’ll have a girls’ night. I’ll be distracted, don’t worry,” Louis reassures them.

After much debate Niall, Zayn, and Eleanor back off from their demands and agree to let Louis be. So Louis waves them off from his front door as they drive off in their small limo, now in pajamas and wearing a blanket over his shoulders like a jacket. Harry is not easy to convince though.

“You already have plans with Liam,” Louis argues.
“Things change,” Harry replies sitting on Louis’s couch.

“It’d be rude,” Louis reminds him.

“And since when has being rude ever stopped you?” Harry retorts.

“Yeah, but that’s me. You’re the nice one,” Louis states.

“Well maybe taking care of you is the nice thing to do?” Harry points out.

“Either me or Liam is going to be alone tonight. But I got my sisters, Haz, who are currently making a I don’t need no man Disney movie list as we speak,” Louis says as he stands in front of him and runs his fingers through Harry’s hair, “I don’t want to damage anybody else’s night.”

“You’d never ruin my-“ Harry is cut off.

“You’re free rest of the weekend right?” Louis asks.

“Well yeah,” Harry concedes.

“Then I will have you for rest of the weekend. Go with Liam tonight, I’m sure he’ll want to go to the after Prom anyways and he needs a wingman since his and Danielle’s are going through that off again on again phase,” Louis replies, “If you’re really that concerned, text me when the after Prom is finished and see if I’m still awake. I’m sure I will be. You are welcome to come over then.”

“Lou, just say the word and I’ll stay,” Harry offers.

“But Liam,” Louis counters once again.

“Priorities,” Harry articulates bluntly, “That’s you.”

“I’ll see you tomorrow Harry,” Louis orders.

“See you then…” Harry responds hesitantly.

But once Harry bows to Louis’s demand, Louis immediately wishes Harry would have stayed. As Louis stands in his room alone, he notices the silence. He can hear the criticisms against himself slowly growing louder in his head. How he is not good enough for Nick and never was? Did Nick just use him to get close to Harry? Gawd he feels like shit.

“Lew-ee!” his twin sisters yell in unison as they barge into his room.

“Yes girls?” Louis replies as he wipes a tear off his cheek.

“Come with us,” Daisy grabs Louis’s right hand.

“We got something to show you,” Phoebe hints at as she pulls on his left hand.

“Well don’t rip my arms off,” Louis teases as he walks with the girls down the hallway.

“Lottie should be an architect,” Phoebe announces as the approach Lottie’s room.

“Uh oh what did you galls do?” He questions.

“Hold your horsies,” Daisy order when they stop in front of the closed door, “you ready?”
“As much as I’ll ever be,” Louis sighs when the twins push the door open.

There in Lottie’s room stands a magnificent blanket fort stretching all across the room. Pillows from all over the house tower around Lottie’s bed, as blankets drape over the pillows, leaving an opening on the bed that faces towards Lottie’s television set. The rest of Louis’s sisters attempt to make the fort bigger and taller, stacking up more pillows and sheets along the side. They stop once Louis enters the room.

“Girls…” Louis smiles.

“Ta-duh!” Félicité exclaims as she hops off the bed, “Your castle, your highness.”

“So here’s what I got planned: Mulan, Frozen, and Tangled. None of those princesses needed a man, and you don’t either!” Lottie proclaims as he steps onto the floor next to her sisters.

“I couldn’t have picked better movies,” Louis replies as he pulls all of his sisters in for a hug.

“Girls! Where did the couch cushions go?” Jay yells as she enters the room, “Oh my.”

“We made Louis a pillow fort, see?!” Phoebe points to the pillow castle.

“I do! It’s beautiful darling,” Jay replies, “I guess not having a couch won’t kill me for one night.”

“Mom, I’m hungry,” Daisy states while pulling on her mother’s shirt, “My belly is rumbling.”

“Of course it is. What are you all hungry for?” Jay asks.

“Pizza!” the twins exclaim with large smile.

“Does that sound fine for you Louis?” Jay directs to her son.

“I’d be perfect,” Louis gleams.

“Can we start the movies before my bedtime please,” Félicité requests.

“Yes, yes, let’s begin!” Louis herds the girls onto the bed.

“You got some great sisters,” Jay concludes.

“Yeah, I do,” Louis agrees with a relaxed smile.

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“Let it go! Let it go!” The Tomlinson family sings, “Can’t hold it back anymore!”

Daisy and Phoebe dance around the bed, holding blankets up like dresses pretending to be Elsa. Félicité is already asleep at the foot of the bed as Louis and Lottie sit in the deepest part of Louis’s pillow castle watching the movie.

“That perfect girl is gone! Here I stand, In the light of day, Let the storm rage on, The cold never bothered me anyway!”

But the cold did bother Louis. He is so cold. He became too comfortable with Nick’s warmth. And with Harry’s warmth gone as well, he might as well be ice.

Lottie’s hand soon grabs Louis’s. She does not say a word and does not have too. That is the thing
about Louis and Lottie, they always found a way to support each other without saying a lot. Almost as if they understood each other with a silent language.

*Ding-Dong* the doorbell rings.

“Pizza!” Phoebe and Daisy yell as they run out of the room.

“Finally I’m about to die of starvation,” Lottie sighs.

There is a long pause, as the older Tomlinson siblings await the arrival of their food. Louis swears he hears a gasp from his mother, but he cannot be for sure due to the distance from the front door. Then there is another silence.

“Louis!” Jay yells.

“Can mom really not carry that up here on her own?” Louis asks Lottie as he pushes himself off the bed while making sure not to disturb Félicité in her sleeping state.

So Louis stomps his way down the hallway, eventually standing upon the top of the staircase of the second floor, “Mother, I’m sure the you’re strong enough to bring the Pizza to us on your-”

But that is not the pizza man standing in the entrance to the Tomlinson house. There stands a boy with his hair slicked back, holding a bouquet of flowers against his chest. He wears black blazer, a buttoned-up white shirt with the couple top buttons undone, dark blue slacks, and black dress shoes.

“Louis,” He breaths.

“Harry?” Louis questions as he cautiously paces down the staircase, “What are you doing here?”

“I’m here to ask you something,” Harry states as he steps forward.

“Where’s Liam?” Louis asks as he finally lands upon the ground floor of the household.

“Louis?” Harry disregards Louis’s question as he gets down on one knee, “Will you go to prom with me?”

Chapter End Notes

Next week will show the events of their prom night, I hope ya'll enjoy its quite adorable.
Chapter 15 Part 2: American Pie

Chapter Summary

When Harry comes in to save Louis's disastrous prom night, it becomes increasingly difficult for Louis to hide from his ever apparent feelings for his best friend.

Chapter Notes

I had lots of fun writing this. We're going to see more how Louis and Harry interact, and how they think in regards to their relationship between each other. Rereading it while I was editing, I even teared up a little bit because we are really going to start getting into their heads and their thought processes. I can easily say we are now in the last year of their story.

Song of the chapter:
American Pie by Don McLean

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 2

“Louis?” Harry repeats while on one knee, “Will you be my date tonight?”

Anne walks into the house and stands next to Jay, both of them smiling at how adorable their sons are being in this moment. Louis appears star struck, in fact he may not even be breathing.

“Louis,” Phoebe says as she and Daisy push Louis in Harry’s direction, “Prince Harry is asking you to the ball.”

“Don’t you want to go to the ball?” Daisy questions.

“It’s not polite to leave a man on his knees dear,” Jay reminds Louis with a chuckle.

“I know we cannot go to the prom, but I thought we could dress up, go to a nice dinner, then join our friends at the after-prom. What do you say? I think you deserve this night,” Harry explains, “My mom has agreed to be our chauffeur.”

“Wherever you boys want to go or eat, I’ll take you,” Anne confirms.

“Harry… I… this is the sweetest thing,” Louis rambles as he touches for the flowers, “I…”

“Say yes?” Harry requests.

“Yes! Yes!” Louis declares as Harry sweeps him up into his arms.

“I knew you couldn’t tell me no,” Harry gleams as Louis is lifted off the ground due to Harry’s height.
“But what about Liam?” Louis asks again.

“My mom brought up this idea on the way to his house. When I got to his house and explained the situation to him, he immediately agreed this is where I needed to be,” Harry answers, “He’ll meet us at the after prom, don’t worry.”

“This means more to me than you will ever know,” Louis reveals.

“As cute as this is, if you two want to get dinner anywhere, we better go soon,” Anne reminds them.

“Yes!” Louis exclaims as Harry puts him down, “I gotta hot date tonight, don’t want to let him down! Mom will you get the corsage out of the fridge?”

“Of course, go get dressed!” Anne agrees.

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“I… um… need help,” Louis admits as Harry enters the room.

“Your tie?” Harry chuckles as he approaches Louis.

“I know, I know, I need to learn to do it on my own,” Louis rolls his eyes as he turns towards Harry, fully dressed except for the tie that remains unbound around his neck.

“Probably so, but not as long as I’m around,” Harry replies as he grabs ahold of the tie by both ends.

“You didn’t have to do this. I would have been okay tonight,” Louis says.

“Louis, you’re strong. I know you can always take care of yourself, but you shouldn’t always have too,” Harry responds as he bites his lower lip while focusing on doing the knot.

“Thank you,” Louis replies as he looks hungrily at Harry’s lips.

“I’m sorry I’m not matching. When I got home, I immediately went to my closet to pull out my suit. My jacket still fit but my legs had outgrown the pants. My mom called up a tux rental store in town, but the only pants colors they had in my size were navy blue or tan, and I thought blue would look better than brown,” Harry explains, “And the store did not have any corsages left at this late hour so the bouquet had to do.”

“You have already made this night flawless, small details do not matter,” Louis compliments graciously.

“There,” Harry states as he pulls the final knot of the tie as close as to Louis’s neck as he can, “Perfect.”

“You look perfect,” Louis adds as a light blush spreads across Harry’s face.

“Yeah, this hastened non-matching outfit. I couldn’t even find a tie to match anything,” Harry excuses himself.

“But you did it for me,” Louis points out.

“And?” Harry asks.
“Harry, I love yo-“

“Out Harry,” Lottie declares as she barges into the room.

“Why?” Harry asks as he steps back from Louis.

“You’ll see. Go wait downstairs for him,” Lottie commands while carrying a hairdryer, curling iron, and a can of hairspray.

“I’ll see you downstairs, apparently,” Harry gleams as he leaves the room and shuts the door.

“Sit down,” Lottie demands as Louis takes a seat in front of his mirror.

“What are you doing there Lottie?” Louis asks.

“The fringe is cute Louis, don’t get me wrong. But tonight demands something more special,” Lottie declares as she plugs the hairdryer into the wall, “Where’s your hair jell?”

“Here he comes!” Lottie announces as she stands on the top step of the staircase.

Louis walks into the view of the stairwell as everyone stares in awe. Lottie has really played with his hair. His fringe is now pulled to the right and then layer after layer are twisted around each other. His hair is no longer flat, it spirals in various directions around his head.

“Oh my baby,” Jay says admiring her son. His normal bowl cut always made him look so young, but the way Lottie styled his hair up makes him look a lot more mature. The black and lavender coloring of his tux only adds to his age. And he walks it. He walks down the steps like he knows he looks different, confidence in his footsteps.

“Harry?” Louis asks as Harry is speechless himself.

“Yeah?” He coughs.

Anne then steps up behind Harry and whispers something into his ear. Harry quickly clears his throat and steps forward.

“You look beautiful, man,” Harry declares awkwardly yet sweetly.

“You too, dude,” Louis jokes with an exaggerated playful punch upon Harry’s arm.

“Put this on him sweetie,” Jay commands as she hands Louis the corsage. Louis nods as he places it upon the left breast of Harry’s jacket. He carefully sticks the pins through the corsage so it will stay on his jacket without stabbing Harry.

“I wish I had something for you to put on,” Harry admits.

“I got you,” Louis coos as the girls in the room aw.

“Pictures! Pictures!” Jay yelps as she pulls out her camera.

“Is that really necessary?” Louis comments as he blusses a dark red.

“Of course it is! I can’t ever let you forget this night!” Jay declares, “By the staircase, hurry up!”
Louis and Harry heed her command as they stand next to each other uncomfortably. They do not really know how to act around one another since they could not really tell the boundaries of the night, especially being on display in front of their families. It is one thing to cuddle when they are alone when watching a movie; it is another to purposefully be affection in front of everyone on camera. Their first few poses are very distance. The first is them next to each other, the one after that is back-to-back like Charlie’s Angels.

“Oh come on, put your arms around each other!” Anne giggles.

The two boys finally begin to loosen up with their mothers’ lax nature. They slings their arms around each other, dissipating any personal space they had between each other. After a few more pictures, Harry grabs Louis and turns him around. He then wraps his arms around Louis’s waist, holding him in the typical prom stance.

“Don’t move!” Jay commands as she takes the photo from various angles.

“This is ridiculous, isn’t it,” Louis whispers to Harry, unable to contain his smile.

“Not at all. We’re both beautiful people, it’d be a travesty against nature if we did not record this for the history of time to see,” Harry replies as he squishes his cheek on the side of Louis’s forehead.

“I know this is cute, but we gotta go. We are already off to a late start,” Anne retells the group.

“Don’t remind me,” Jay says lowering the camera from her face, “Make sure to be home by midnight Louis.”

“Mom it’s prom night. The after prom does not even start till 11:30 anyways,” Louis pleads.

“Let the boys have their fun, I’ll make sure they get home safe,” Anne confirms.

“Okay… 2 a.m. please, I’ll be waiting up for you,” Jay replies as she hugs Louis, “Feels like just yesterday I was dropping you off at your first middle school dance with Niall and Zayn, and look at you now.”

“Mum, we have to leave,” Louis responds giving her a quick hug back.

“Keep my boy safe, Harry,” Jay requests from Harry.

“As always,” Harry grins.

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“Do we really have to go here?” Louis asks as he looks out the backseat window of Anne’s car, “There are so many other restaurants in this town.”

“Yes, we are doing your night just as planned,” Harry replies as he hops out of the car, “Thanks for the ride Mom!”

“You’re welcome! Text me when you two are done eating, and I’ll come pick you up!” Anne responds. Harry then runs around the back of the car to open Louis’s door for him.

“I can open my own door, Harry,” Louis sighs.

“Not tonight princess,” Harry quips.

Louis looks up at the restaurant in front of him: The Mad Greek. The same place Louis was
supposed to enjoy his evening with Nick. Green vines are painted all over the wall of the building, trying to replicate the appearance of a Greek grape or olive field.

“Lou?” Harry coos as he sticks his arm out for Louis to grab onto, “You ready?”

Louis turns his head away from the restaurant. Harry is next to him, looking gorgeous as ever. All of this is for Louis: his slicked back hair, his unmatching clothes, and now Harry’s arm. “Yeah,” Louis smiles as he takes hold of Harry’s bicep muscle. And then they just stare at each other for a moment, becoming lost in each other’s eyes.

“Louis?!” Eleanor screams.

Louis and Harry snap out of the trance to look at the front door of the Mad Greek, from where the prom party exits from.

“Harry?” Zayn squeaks.

“Your hair! You look absolutely magnificent!” Eleanor exclaims as she lightly presses her fingers against the swirls and spikes on Louis’s head.

“Don’t ruin it!” Louis laughs as he jokingly smacks her hands off of him.

“What are you two doing here?” Stan asks Harry and Louis, “Did Nick arrive?”

“No,” Harry states as he places his hand upon Louis’s hip, “I’m taking him.”

Zayn and Niall grin mischievously all each other.

“We’ll wait for you! Eat fast!” Niall chants.

“Even if Harry Styles could eat fast,” Louis playful jabs Harry in the stomach, “Harry is still a sophomore and can’t get to the prom. You all go ahead and we’ll meet you at the after prom. We’ll probably be the first ones there.”

“But you two look so lovely,” Eleanor comments as she touches Harry’s overcoat.

“Louis is right you know,” Stan’s date points out, “And he already made us late enough as it is.”

“Fine, fine, we’ll see you soon darlings,” Eleanor kisses both boys on the cheek as her elegant dresses brushes against them as the group walks towards their limo.

“Really happy you came out Lou,” Zayn hugs Louis, “You look stunning.”

“What about me!?” Harry retorts.

“Sexy as hell mate,” Niall laughs as he slapped Harry on the arm, “Don’t take too long. I don’t know what you guys do, but you’re always late to everything.”

“Why do you look so sad?” Harry asks as he lays his fork on his plate, which is still covered in noodles and chicken Parmesan.

“I’m not! I’m have a great time,” Louis fakely smiles as he twirls his fork in his pasta.

“Do you really think I’m that stupid?” Harry questions, “Do you really think I don’t recognize your
fake grin?"

“Harry,” Louis breaths.

“Lou,” Harry replies, “It’s okay. I know you’re going through and feeling a lot. I just wish I could make you enjoy tonight...”

“It’s not you, I promise,” Louis admits, “What you’re doing is amazing... revolutionary.”

“I know, now tell me what you’re feeling,” Harry orders, “As always.”

Louis takes in a deep breath and sets down his silverware, “I’ve never had a boyfriend, Harry.”

“Oh,” Harry sighs, “What about Stan?”

“Me and Stan were makeout buddies, at best,” Louis reveals.

“Eleanor?” Harry suggests, to which Louis laughs.

“And that’s all I got,” Louis admits, “Kind of sad, isn’t it?”

“All I’ve had is Taylor for the most part,” Harry reminds him as he takes a bite from his food.

“But do you want more than that right now?” Louis inquires.

“Not really...” Harry answers.

“Well I do... and the one person I thought could be that person for me, chose somebody else,” Louis acknowledges, "And just like my father, he's gone..."

“Nick is a giant asshol-" Harry nearly yells before he is cut off by Louis.

“Yes, I’ve heard that in several forms tonight,” Louis chuckles, “But Hazza, in all of this, I’m the common thread. Nobody wants me.”

“I want-“ Harry begins to say, but then stops himself. He then appears deep in thought for a few moments before opening his mouth again, “You’re so young. Do you really expect to have it all figured out by now? Kinda cliche to meet your soulmate in high school.”

“I’m not saying I want the one. No, that quite terrifies me. I’d probably run from it if I saw him. I just want a somebody. I don’t think that’s too much to ask for, is it?” Louis questions softly.

“I guess it’s not,” Harry replies taking another bite of food, “You’ll get it, I promise you.”

“I don’t think you can make that promise,” Louis laughs, “You’re not in love with me.”

“I guess I’m not...” Harry mumbles, “But for you, I can be tonight.”

“And on top of it all, I kind of thought I’d be losing my virginity tonight,” Louis divulges honestly.

Harry chokes on his food at that comment, causing a large coughing fit as some chunks of chicken fly out of his mouth. His fork slips from his grasp and loudly crashes against his plate. Louis squeals in laughter, largely heard across the restaurant.

“I don’t expect you to fulfill that this evening dear,” Louis wipes a tear caused by laughter from his eye.
“You two haven’t had sex yet?” Harry asks as he clears his throat.

“We haven’t… I know its super cliché, but I was hoping for the stereotypical prom experience. Cute pictures, fancy dinner, slutty dancing, and then me and him would break off… He’d kiss me softly, sensually undress as he praises how fun our night was, then he’d fuck me so rough—” Louis explains.

“I get it, I get it. The whole restaurant does not need to know your deviant fantasies,” Harry jokes. Though Louis could swear he could hear jealous in his words.

“Anyways, now that I know Nick’s true colors, I couldn’t have a better date than you Haz,” Louis comments.

“The night is still young,” Harry states as he raises his glass.

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“You two are the first ones to arrive to the party,” The school para comments while looking down at Louis and Harry as she guards the front door into the school.

“Things haven’t gone according to plan tonight,” Louis admits to the middle-aged woman.

“And a tiny bit too early,” The para declares looking down at her watch, “We’re going to need more time picking up the mess left in the gymnasium.”

“Can we just go in and see it? We could even help clean!” Harry suggests.

“What are you doing?” Louis whispers to Harry.

“Sh, I got a plan,” Harry replies as he returns his conversation to the para, “My buddy’s date bailed on him like an hour before the prom. Can you please let us in just to briefly bust a move? What damage could two guys do?”

“You’d be surprised! A few years back I remember walking into the office with green and yellow paint all over the-” She describes.

“But we don’t have any paint or anything! You can body search us!” Harry exclaims.

“That won’t be necessary,” The woman chuckles.

“Then may we please enter? I feel really bad he hasn’t been able to enjoy the night like he thought he would,” Harry pleads.

“Everything is nearly wrapped up. I’m positive the sound speakers have already been taken down. There is not much left to see,” She explains.

“Please. This guy is my best friend, he deserves so much better than what he’s got tonight,” Harry begs.

“I didn’t let you guys in,” The para states as she closes her eyes and open the door for Harry and Louis, “If anyone asks, you boys were hiding in the bathroom.”

"Thank you!” Harry grabs Louis by the wrist as they trot inside the school. They run to the gym, hoping that the para is wrong in her assumption about how fast the clean-up crew is working.

But she is correct. The streamers are being removed from the wall and ceilings as balloons line the wall that were obviously previously on the middle of the dance floor. One speaker remains set up as
the rest of the sound system is being packed onto a cart.

“Looks like everyone had a good time…” Louis whimpers as he looks around disappointingly.

He may have been in a shit mood earlier, but with Harry by his side he feels ecstatic. Seeing all the celebration he missed, he feels so weak knowing he let Nick’s disappearance ruin his night. He squandered away a great evening because of a stupid boy who will not even matter to him in a few months.

“Let’s go wait for everyone else outside…” Louis gives in as he turns to the exit of the gymnasium.

“No, wait,” Harry commands as he grabs Louis’s hand to prevent him from leaving, “Don’t move a muscle.”

Harry then jogs over to what is remaining of the sound system and whispers something inaudible from Louis’s perspective to the prom’s DJ. The DJ looks at Louis and then back at Harry before nodding his head. Harry hands the man his phone while the DJ says something into his headset.

Harry turns in the direction of Louis with his beautiful large smile plastered on his face. Of course, Louis has to smile back. Louis does not know why he is smiling, but Harry’s smile is always complimented by Louis’s smile. Always has been. That is when the overhead lights turn down, except for a single light shining down in the middle of the gym floor.

“Harry?” Louis question as he see Harry begin to walk toward him. Louis takes a step towards Harry unconsciously. He does not know why his feet are moving, but Louis has a natural inclination that Harry is where he is supposed to be.

*A long, long time ago. I can still remember how that music used to make me smile…*

Don McLean’s “American Pie” plays from the lone speaker, from which the DJ had plugged the aux cord into Harry’s playlist on his phone. With each step Louis’s heart beat drums louder. Why does Harry make his heart beat like this, year after year of knowing each other?

“May I have this dance?” Harry ask as they both meet in the limelight.

*And I knew if I had my chance, That I could make those people dance, And maybe they’d be happy for a while…*

“I don’t know… I got a lot of offers,” Louis laughs, ironically gazing around the room.

“Shut up and dance with me,” Harry commands as he grabs Louis’s hand and gives him a swift spin.

After his 360 degree twirl, he feels Harry’s hand land on the lower end of his back, pulling him against Harry’s body. The song begins out very slowly, during which Harry and Louis slow dance around the boundaries of the single light shining down upon them.

“Where’d you learn to dance so well?” Louis ask, feeling the entirety of each other’s bodies pressed against one another. If they were alone in this room, Louis would probably have him pinned against the ground by now.

“This stud taught me how couple years back,” Harry laughs.

“He must be very good. And sexy as all get out,” Louis jokes.

“You could call him that,” Harry spins Louis another time.
This'll be the day that I die

As Louis faces Harry again, the speed of the music picks up as the first verse of the song begins. Harry shows off some impressive disco moves, causing Louis to laugh louder than a hyena.

Did you write the book of love, And do you have faith in God above, If the Bible tells you so?

The two boys dance around one another, Louis doing the Macarena while Harry swings his hips and squeals at how ridiculous Louis appears.

Now do you believe in rock and roll? Can music save your mortal soul? And can you teach me how to dance real slow?

“Are you sure they’re here?” Eleanor asks as she walks down the hall of the school way with her date, Niall, Zayn, Stan, Josh, and Liam.

“Harry said they got here fifteen minutes ago…” Zayn replies as he scrolls through the messages on his phone.

“That lady up front acted like she didn’t know anything,” Niall comments pulling his phone out of his jacket pocket, “I will give them a call.”

“Wait,” Eleanor places her hand softly over the screen of Niall’s phone as they turn the corner into the gymnasium, to where they see Louis and Harry dancing.

Well, I know that you’re in love with him, ’Cause I saw you dancin’ in the gym

To Louis and Harry, the bright light shining above them make the rest of the room seem very dark from their perspective, not that they are looking at anything but each other anyways. So their group of friends now watching them do not noticeably gain their attention. Harry then grabs Louis and tugs him into Harry’s arm. One of Harry’s hands lands upon the lower back of Louis, the other hand of Harry’s holds Louis’s hand, steering them in the direction of their dance.

You both kicked off your shoes. Man, I dig those rhythm and blues

“Do you think it’s finally happening?” Stan quietly asks the group.

“Harry and Louis?” Niall questions back.

“Who else are we watching dance together?” Eleanor replies sarcastically.

“Please yes. I’m sick of watching this game,” Liam says with sigh.

“No, this would be easy for them. I give it another year,” Zayn comments as he squeezes Niall’s hand.

Louis has never felt cheerier in his life than in this moment. Here, he is having the perfect dance to a prom night. A beautiful boy who he loves glides with him around the gymnasium floor which is coated in colorful balloons and streamers. The light upon them makes Louis feel as if they are on a stage for the world to watch: to see his happiness.

But while “American Pie” is a very long song, the song would eventually would come to an end. And Harry is not Louis’s boyfriend.

So Louis looks up at Harry to find some reassurance in his fears of loneliness. But the bright light shining above Harry leaves only a shadow for Louis to see. Curly hair and a shadowed face. For
brief moment, Louis thinks the person above him is Nick, both Nick and Harry having curly dark hair.

But it is not Nick. Because Nick did not choose Louis. Even with this night with Harry, it does not change the fact that no man has ever chosen him romantically.

A tear rolls down Louis’s face. And another. And another. It would not be a stereotypical prom night without one person crying. And tonight that person is Louis.

“Lou?” Harry inquires as he stops their dance. Louis cannot respond in between his cries though. *I was a lonely teenage broncin’ buck, With a pink carnation and a pickup truck. But I knew I was out of luck The day the music died*

That is when Harry notices his friends in the corner of the room. Louis buries his face into Harry’s chest, trying to quiet his breakdown, with his back to the group.

Their friends watch with confusion and horror upon their own faces. Harry places one of his hands on the back of Louis’s head to cradle him, and his free arm bends around Louis to put him in a tight hug. Harry slowly shakes his head at the group, obviously asking for them to leave the room. A couple of the kids nod in return as they back out of the room and shut the doors with them.

“Babe…” Harry coos as Louis cries even harder.

Louis could not point to a single reason why he is crying, because there is definitely more than one. Maybe he is crying because he feels alone. Maybe is crying because Nick dumped him over some stranger that Louis had no idea even existed.

But the true reason why Louis is crying is because Harry is the sweetest boy in all the land. Nobody else treats Louis like this: like a prince.

Louis Tomlinson is crying because nobody is ever going to love Louis more than Harry Styles does, but Harry does not love Louis in the way Louis needs him too.

They continue to sway to the sound of “American Pie” until it disappears from the speaker.

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Louis actually has a pleasant time for the rest of his night. After gathering himself back together emotionally, he and Harry join their friends for a night of games, karaoke, and unhealthy food. They leave the after prom after two o’clock in the morning, and Louis is exhausted. He did have a big night, physically and spiritually draining. He quickly passes out on his ride home with Harry.

“Lou?” Harry pokes Louis on the shoulder, attempting to make him stir.

“Good luck waking him up. He’ll most likely spend the night in this car before walking on his two legs,” Anne comments as she parks her vehicle in front of the Tomlinson household.

“I think I’ll stay the night here, if you don’t mind,” Harry says to his mother as he gazes at Louis.

“I didn’t expect you to come home with me,” She laughs, “How you going to get him inside?”

“I have my ways,” He replies as he hops out of the car. Once out, Harry sticks his upper body back in the car and pulls Louis towards his already ajar door.

“Sure you got him?” Anne asks.
“Wouldn’t be the first time,” Harry retorts as he picks Louis up and balances Louis’s weight against his chest, “Thanks Mom. I’ll see you tomorrow?” Harry shuts his door with a swing of his hips.

“Of course dear,” Anne replies as she drives off into the night, “Love you.”

“How are you so strong?” Louis mumbles into Harry’s chest as Harry strides to his front porch.

“It’s not my first time carrying you,” Harry chuckles, “Can you twist the door knob for me?”

“Mhm,” Louis grunts as the front door opens up.

“Boys!” Jay yawns from her couch as Harry kicks the door shut.

“You didn’t have to wait up for us,” Harry offers.

“Louis! I know you didn’t dance your legs off. Get off of poor Harry!” Anne orders.

“I’m fine, really!” Harry yelps.

“Let’s go to bed Harry,” Louis suggests as he hops onto the floor from Harry’s arm.

“I guess we’re going to bed,” Harry comments as Louis pulls him out of the room by the arm, “We’ll tell you about our night, tomorrow.”

“I’m too tired to listen to you anyways,” Jay replies with another yawn, “I’ll see you in the morning boys.”

“Hazza,” Louis moans as he tugs on Harry harder, “Bed.”

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“You gotta take your suit off Lou,” Harry watches Louis flop onto his bed.

“Too tired… Don’t care,” Louis groans into his pillow.

“It’s going to wrinkle,” Harry argues as he unbuttons his own shirt.

“I don’t give a fuck,” Louis turns his head towards Harry.

“I know I know. Badass Tommo doesn’t care about wrinkles, but I do,” Harry replies as he sets his shirt upon Louis’s chair near his desk.

“No,” Louis declares lazily.

“Are you going to make me count to three?” Harry jokingly threatens.

“I dare you,” Louis whines with a yawn.

But instead of a challenge, Harry glides over to Louis and sits next to him on the bed.

“What are you doing?” Louis asks with his eyes struggling to stay open.

“I guess you did have a big night,” Harry replies as he begins to unbutton Louis’s shirt.

“I’m not a baby,” Louis whimpers.

“You’re not. I know. But everyone deserves taken care of sometimes,” Harry replies as he forces
Louis to lean up so he can slip off his shirt.

“I thought I took care of you,” Louis comments as Harry removes Louis’s belt.

“Can’t it be mutual?” Harry unbuttons Louis’s pants, “Lift your bum.”

“You’re too kind to me,” Louis says as he complies to Harry’s order. Harry easily pulls off Louis’s pants and socks, leaving him in only underwear.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Harry asks as he pushes himself off the bed to hang up their clothing.

“Like I’m totally closed off to anyone but my family, you, the boys, and El. I’m a sarcastic little fuck. I’m mediocre at soccer, at best. I can’t seem to keep a boy interested for more than a few months…” Louis rambles.

His eyes travel down his body. Every insecurity he has ever faced jumps out at him. For why would not a boy want him? He is so tiny, but not at all at the same time. His thunderous thighs, leading to wide hips, and not flat tummy. Maybe that’s why he thinks. “I think I’m going to start working out soon.”

As soon as Harry hears those words, he immediately turns around to Louis. Louis may not be crying, but Harry can read the pain on his face. Louis’s eyes that are deep in thought, overanalyzing every detail and every curve on his body.

“Why are you saying that?” Harry barks.

“Like, it wouldn’t hurt right?” Louis sighs.

“It depends on why you do it,” Harry replies as he lays the clothes upon the chair in front of Louis’s desk.

“I don’t know… maybe somebody would notice,” Louis whimpers.

Whatever Harry is holding at that moment drops to the floor. In the blink of an eye, he flies across the room and lands upon Louis’s lower body.

“Please stop,” Harry pleads as he places kisses all over Louis’s thighs, “You don’t need to do anything.”

“Harry…” Louis watches. These kisses feel different. Harry has kissed all over Louis’s body too many times to count. This time, his lips do not translate sexual desire, but of desperation and comfort.

Harry’s head moves from Louis’s thighs, over his groin, and then lands back on Louis’ stomach, “I notice it, okay? I see.” Harry’s lips press aggressively on all the possible surface area of Louis’s abdomen.

“You say you’re closed off, but is that a bad thing? You’re selective about who deserves you and that shows self-worth and value. And those who you let in Louis, they love you. Even if you are a sarcastic little fuck, every part of you is why they love you. Every mood, every habit, every inch of your skin, I see you. I see every line and curve of your body. And you’re still more perfect than anything I could ever imagine.”

The kisses become few and few in between unless Harry rests his head upon Louis’s tummy. It is nearly three o’clock. Louis watches the clock as it ticks, with his fingers now intertangled with
Harry’s curls. It is so late into the night, and Harry still attempts to perfect Louis’s ruined night. And Harry does not stop no matter how much resistance he meets from Louis or fate. Nobody tries harder for Louis than Harry. And that makes Louis feel beautiful. Because no matter what life throws at them, the one thing Louis can depend upon is Harry.

“I’m not worthy for all you give me,” Louis finally admits.

“Let me decide that,” Harry looks up at Louis from his position on Louis’s body. A yawn then escapes from Harry’s mouth.

“I think it’s time for sleep, love,” Louis coos as he softly grabs Harry by under the arms and pulls him up to Louis’s place in bed.

“See, you take care of me too,” Harry points out as he crawls under the covers.

“You mind being the big spoon tonight?” Louis whispers vulnerably.

“Whatsoever you want,” Harry agrees as he curls around Louis, slinging his arm over Louis’s stomach to pull him in close to his body.

Louis reaches over the hit the light off from his lamp, and then pushes himself back into Harry’s chest once the darkness settles. It is not long before little whimpers are spilling from Harry’s lips onto the back of Louis’s neck. The soft breaths from his best friend secure Louis in the safety of his arms.

It was nearly two years ago when Louis finally admitted his sexuality to Harry. He remembers the second Harry held him in his arms after the admission, how Harry’s arms symbolized full acceptance and love for what Louis was. And Louis does not know why it took so long for him to spill his secret to the one person he tells everything to.

Louis recalls how empty Stan felt in comparison to all Harry was. He remembers thinking that Harry was enough.

And tonight reassured Louis of that. In fact, all doubt of Harry left Louis. Louis does not need Stan or Nick or anyone. Louis has a Harry. And Harry is, by far, more than enough.

Chapter End Notes

So I'm trying to focus a lot more on writing since I've somehow happened to catch up with my editing and how much I've written, and I really like to be a couple a chapters ahead of myself before publishing. Since I am approaching the end, I recently made a timeline of how much I have left to cover. It's going to feel like it's moving faster compared to the rest of the story and it's going to be quite dramatic. Not many sex scenes left, but I'm kinda happy because while the sex scenes do show the intimacy between characters, it often stops the plot until the scene is done. So anyways, I can't wait to post more and see you next week.
Chapter 16 Part 1: Sleeping with a Friend

Chapter Summary

Louis is forced to beg something from Harry as they adjust to Nick's absence. Zayn's world is turned upside down when his parents find out about his and Niall's relationship.

Chapter Notes

Chapter 16 is a filler chapter to prepare for upcoming drama and angst of this final year of this story. So enjoy the fluffy sexual cuteness while it lasts, because things will be changing dramatically soon.

Song of the chapter:
"Sleeping with a Friend" by Neon Trees.

Part 1

Louis should be sad about Nick leaving. He really should. And it is not that he is happy all the time. There are moments where loneliness flashes into his mind. But then he sees Harry: either writing a song or watching TV with Louis. And then Louis smiles. Harry can feel his warmth, looks over, and smiles back. Who could possibly think about Nick when there is a boy sitting right next to Louis with the brightest green eyes in all land and smile with dimples that can stretch from one edge of the skyline to the next?

"What are you looking at?" Harry questions with that grin that breaks Louis down.

“Oh, nothing,” Louis lies with a smirk, “Nothing dear.”

There is nothing Louis would change. Okay, maybe one thing. While Harry and Louis have kept up their cuddles, and date nights, and sharing of clothing and beds, things have not been sexual since Nick’s departure. Which Louis did not mind at first! In the aftermath of the heartbreak, he has not been in an overly sexual mood to start with. But now… or maybe as he always has been… He is dick-hungry. He did not realize this need when he constantly had two dicks at his beck and call to fulfill his urges. But he went from two dicks to none, and now he truly know what the term thirsty means.

“I’m going to die!” Louis whines as he crashes his head onto his desk in self-defeat.

“Nobody has ever croaked of being too horny,” Eleanor states, not looking up from her book as her and Louis study in the library.

“Are you sure about that? I need to see the receipts,” Louis replies.

“I hate to ask the obvious question, but have you asked Harry if you can suck his dick?” Eleanor
asks as she turns a page. Yes, he told Eleanor about all what him, Harry, and Nick were doing; something he did not tell the rest of the boys. He feels guilty about hiding this secret, but with Eleanor being outside his friend group, he believes she can give a more unbiased opinion about what is taking place.

He can already picture all of the boys’ reactions. Liam would focus on what they are defined as: boyfriends, friends with benefits, or whatever. That boy is always needing order. Niall would try to act like it does not matter whatever they are doing, but he would be worried how this could affect their group dynamic. Zayn would be passive aggressive, arguing that this proves Louis and Harry have feelings for each other, which they don’t. We don’t Louis swears to himself.

“Just ask him? That sounds like the most awkward conversation I could ever have in the history of time,” Louis declares as he rolls his eyes.

“From personal experience, I have never had a guy turn down the opportunity for some head,” Eleanor points out.

“This is different,” Louis tells her.

“How? Because if you guys actually talk about this, it may bring up other conversations like why you two do this kind of stuff together in the first place?” Eleanor quips.

“What does that even-“ Louis says before he stops himself mid-sentence, “I thought you said you’d never bring this up again unless I brought it up?”

“Isn’t this you bringing it up?” She retorts, “You desiring to suck Harry off?”

“I’m not in love with him El,” He responds forcefully, “Yeah he’s beautiful, and smart, and artistic, and… but I’m not in love with him. I’m just horny as hell.”

“I never said you did love him,” Eleanor reminds him as she turns another page, “But why would you assume that I could think such a thing?”

“Because…” Louis cannot think of a valid response to Eleanor’s answer that would not support her claim.

“If it’s really not about Harry, why don’t you go ask some random bloke then?” Eleanor suggests, “Lots of dating apps out there. I’m sure if you put your pretty little face on Grindr, you’d have your pick of ten dicks within a few minutes.”

Louis pauses at her statement. Because she is not, not right. He does have plenty of avenues to achieve said dick. But… “With Harry though it’s a lot safer. Me and him have only fooled around with each other and Nick, so no risk of STDs or whatnot. And it takes such a long time to get there with guys. Me and Harry are already there, so it saves time. Plus I know what he likes and he knows what I like…”

“Excuses excuses Louis,” Eleanor says bluntly, “I really don’t care if you lie to me, but don’t lie to yourself? Because you deserve to treat yourself better than that.”

So Spring comfortably turns into Summer. With Nick gone, the group easily goes back to being the five: Niall & Zayn, Liam, and Harry & Louis. This summer feels like it will last forever. Niall and Liam both get jobs to get experience in the work force; Zayn continues to cashier position at Dillons; Harry starts part time job at the local bakery; Louis volunteers his time at the local hospital. Their
nights are spent with campouts and bonfires. But the flames of adulthood are lapping at the door of their future.

While Louis disregards most his and Eleanor’s conversation, she does have one valid point: maybe asking Harry, being straight forward, is the best option to his problem.

But when is a good time to ask… or beg… your best friend to let you suck his dick?

One Saturday morning early in the Summer, Louis finally cannot take it anymore.

Laying in Harry’s bed, he listens to his best friend lather himself in the shower. Naked, wet, water running down his muscular body. Harry is already naked, so half of the task is already complete. Louis eyes the door to the bathroom, repeating to himself “I’ll go inside in 1 minute… I’ll go inside in 30 seconds… I’ll go inside in 15… I’ll go inside in a minute.” But his dick hardens with every passing second. With anxiety induced butterflies fluttering in his stomach, he crawls out of Harry’s bed in only his underwear and makes his way to the bathroom.

“Harry?” Louis knocks on the door, “Can I come in?”

“I thought we were passed the point of knocking on doors,” Harry chuckles.

Louis enters the steamy room and shuts the door. The mirrors are all fogged up and a light haze coats the room. He sees Harry’s outline in the glass door of the shower. His nudity causes Louis’s boner to become only harder, but Louis moves it up into the waistband of his underwear to hide it. Though after that movement he does not know why he tucked his dick away since hiding boners from Harry is the last thing he wants to do.

“Do you have to go to the bathroom or something?” Harry asks, “Or did you come in just to stand there?”

Louis coughs, “Actually I needed to talk to you about something.”

“And it couldn’t wait till after my shower?” Harry inquires.

“Um… No?” Louis stammers.

“Well spit it out,” Harry commands, though that is one sentence Louis never wants to hear from Harry again.

“I’m… really… Uh… becoming a conservationist!” Louis squeaks.

“You’re becoming conservative? Louis, people who believe like that want to repress your rights!” Harry argues.

“You’re becoming conservative? Louis, people who believe like that want to repress your rights!” Harry argues.

“Not conservative,” Louis sighs, “Conservationist. I want to help save the environment.”

“And this is important now because?” Harry asks again.

“I need to take a shower. And not to waste water, I think we should take it together,” Louis explains.

“Oh my gawd Louis,” Harry laughs loudly, “That is literally the most pathetic excuse for anything I have ever heard of.”

“Well if you want to slowly kill the Earth, I guess I can’t stop you,” Louis turns away from Harry in embarrassment.
“No, no,” Harry gives in as he pushes open the glass door to the shower. “Come on in. I wouldn’t want to be the cause for the downfall of mankind on this planet.”

Louis sighs in relief as he pulls off his boxers and turns around the face Harry. He steps into the shower, feeling the mist fly from the water hitting Harry’s body. Harry has his back to Louis. And while Harry does have some very cute butt muscles, he did not get into the shower for them.

“How’d you sleep?” Harry breaks the silence.

“I think pretty well,” Louis says as he lathers up his body, “How about yourself?”

“You kept squirming in your sleep, poking my thigh,” Harry describes.

“Oh shit sorry,” Louis replies.

“Heh, used to it,” Harry laughs, “Kind of like how you are now.”

Louis looks down to realize he did not realize how close he was standing to Harry. His dick presses against Harry’s backside, “Damn sorry for this reoccurring theme,” Louis takes a step back from Harry.

“Whatsoever,” Harry says while lathering his hair, “So why you really here Lou?”

“I have a confession to make,” Louis admits.

“And it is?” Harry requests.

“While I do love the environment… That’s not why I hopped in the shower with you,” Louis reveals, “What I do love… is sucking cock.”

“Really now?” Harry playfully confirms while still facing away from Louis.

“Yeah, like I should maybe seek counseling for this addiction,” Louis says, “And it felt pretty easy with you so…”

“Oh, you only want me because I’m easy?” Harry retorts.

“No! You’re not easy, we are easy,” Louis attempts to explain, “And we haven’t done… that since Nick left.”

“I wasn’t sure if we were only doing that because of Nick,” Harry explains his caution, ”Since we did not do some of that stuff before he joined us. Part of me worried, maybe it was only because of him. Maybe you really didn't want to do that stuff with me.”

“I understand why you had some apprehension,” Louis gives Harry, “But even while we were fooling around with Nick, I would suck your cock when he wasn’t with us.”

“Good point. So what exactly are you suggesting?” Harry asks.

“For you… to shove that dick down my throat,” Louis croaks.

“Heh,” Harry scoffs nonchalantly, “Doesn’t sound like you want it that bad.”

“What?” Louis snaps.

“You must not really want it,” Harry repeats.
“Are you… are you making me beg for it?” Louis inquires slowly.

“I never said that,” Harry snickers, “But it sure wouldn’t hurt.”

“Are you really making me do this?” Louis whines.

“I’ve been in the shower long enough. Probably time to get out and put clothes on,” Harry reaches for the shower knob.

“Wait!” Louis sighs as he drops onto his knees, “Harry. Let me suck your cock.”

“Didn’t say the magic word,” Harry giggles.

“Please,” Louis pleads ironically, “Please, oh please, put your dick into my mouth. I don’t know what I’ll do without it.”

“If you’re not going to be serious Lou I’ll get out of this shower right now,” Harry threatens.

“My fucking gawd,” Louis rolls his eyes but he is getting desperate by this point, “The only thing I want, in the entire world, is for you to shove that fat cock of yours into my throat.”

“And?” Harry asks.

“Harry,” Louis begins placing soft kisses upon Harry’s butt muscles, literally kissing his ass, “Please.”

“See was that so hard?” Harry chuckles as he turns around, his large erection smacking Louis in the face as he does so.

“Fucking finally,” Louis gasps as he immediately attacks Harry’s cockhead with his lips.

“You need it Lou?” Harry asks as he pulls back in the slightest.

“More than you will ever know,” Louis sighs as he tries to move himself closer to Harry’s member, “Need you in me; need your taste.”

“I would be rude to not help the needy,” Harry breaths as he hips thrust towards Louis.

“I’m a charity case now, huh?” Louis says as he puts Harry’s head in his mouth.

“The most beautiful one I know,” Harry gasps at the initial feeling of Louis’s warm tongue.

Louis runs his tongue up and down Harry length, trying to rememorize all that he has missed over the past couple months. Harry’s cock throbs in reaction to Louis’s tongue, with slurping sounds soon spilling from Louis’s lips.

“How often do you think about it?” Harry asks smoothly as he grabs his dick and lightly smacks it upon Louis’s tongue.

“On the fucking daily,” Louis replies while water from the showerhead flows down Harry’s body and now onto Louis.

“Give me the quality of two months then babe,” Harry orders, letting go of his cock for Louis to have more control over. Louis takes ahold of it with his lips and directs it back into his mouth. His head bobs up and down, taking more and more of Harry’s dick in with every movement of head. Within a few minutes, Louis is taking in the entire length of Harry. His pubes brush against Louis’s
nose as the head of Harry’s member pushes into Louis’s throat. Louis gags enjoyably.

“Oh yeah just like that.” Harry moans as his hips cannot help but thrust towards Louis’s wet mouth.

But after a while, Louis’s movements become slow and he frequently pulls his mouth off of Harry to give his jaw a break, causing concern in the one receiving, “You alright babe?”

“Yeah… my jaw is kinda sore. Guess I’m a little rusty,” Louis sighs as he tries to open his mouth wide once again.

“Hold on, I have an idea,” Harry declares as he picks Louis up by the arms and softly moves him against the wall of the shower. He then grabs Louis by the jawline to lift his chin up, “Say ‘ah’ sweetie.”

“Ah?” Louis questions, but apparently that is not exactly what Harry wanted. Harry proceeds to then tug Louis by the hair on the backside of his head. Pulling down, this causes Louis head to yank back due to the force of the pull, and his mouth gapes open. Harry then easily slides his dick along Louis’s tongue and into his mouth.

“Gonna fuck your mouth babe, okay?” Harry states, “Thought it’d be easier for you.”

Louis does not exactly know if it would actually be easier on him, but the way Harry is taking control of his body is turning him the fuck on. Louis attempts to loosen his throat as Harry pushes deeper and deeper into him, until Harry is literally fucking his throat.

Even with the pain, Louis loves it. It is almost as if he is proud of himself that he can take a cock of this size, that he can control his gag reflex enough to take it, and that he is giving Harry so pleasure.

Harry’s thrust become a bit rougher, causing Louis’s head to smack into the wall of the shower. Louis does not seem to mind, Harry’s cock is taking too much of his attention.

“Baby, you doing okay?” Harry asks, briefly taking his cock of out Louis’s entrance, granting Louis a chance to breath.

“I’m fantastic,” Louis pants.

“You’re doing so wonderfully,” Harry slaps his dick against the side of Louis’s right cheek, “I’m getting close, I just wanted to let you know. I assume it’s okay if I nut inside?”

“Don’t say nut,” Louis commands as he sticks his tongue out for Harry to smack his cock upon, “And I’d kill you if you didn’t let me swallow.”

“I know you too well,” Harry replies as he shoves his dick as far back down Louis’s throat as he possibly can without warning. Harry grabs the back of Louis’s head to hold him in place, leaving Louis at the full mercy of Harry’s cock and thrusts.

“Oh yeah, oh yeah, just like that,” Harry grunts, “Good Lou.” Harry’s balls are now smacking against Louis’s chin with great force. In anticipation, Louis grabs ahold of his own prick and quickly jerks himself off, hoping to catch up to Harry by the time he orgasms.

“You ready baby, you ready?” Harry asks though he could not stop his coming spunk even if Louis had tried to say no. As Harry cums, Louis tightens his throat, causing Harry to release a high-toned moan of pleasure. As Harry throbs through Louis’s mouth, Louis shoots his orgasm, landing upon the left leg and foot of Harry. After a few moments, Harry releases his grip upon Louis’s head and slides out. He soon sits on the floor next Louis as they both recover from their orgasm.
“Only took two months of me placing a sex embargo, did you finally come to me on your knees,” Harry chuckles, “You held out longer than I anticipated.”

“So you weren’t fooling around with me just so I would beg for it?” Louis inquires.

“It started out at first as me respecting your boundaries after your heartbreak, but after a while I could feel your longing stares and constant boners. Then it became a game after that,” Harry admits.

“I hate you Harry Styles,” Louis pouts, “Good thing you’re cute-”

“And that I got a dick you seem to be addicted too,” Harry points out.

“That too,” Louis agrees, “Or I’d never put up with you.”

“Sure sure, you know you love me,” Harry states as he turns off the shower.

“I know I do,” Louis says as Harry helps him to his feet to exit the shower.

As Harry dries off with a towel, Louis moves to check his phone. Whatever happiness he gained from his shower experience is lost to this incoming text.

Niall: Louis, this isn’t good. Fuck. Zayn’s parents caught us fooling around and kicked him out. I don’t know what to do. Come to my house IMMEDIATELY.

“So he’s just been laying there?” Louis asks as he, Harry, and Liam poke their heads into Niall’s bedroom.

“Has barely moved since we got here,” Niall replies as he quietly shuts the door to give Zayn his space without the spectating eyes of his friends.

“So what happened exactly?” Harry asks as the boys walk down the hallway from Niall’s room to the Horan’s kitchen.

“Well it was late in the evening. Me and Zayn were fooling around in his bed and I guess both of us thought the other had locked the door. His mom walked in and she froze when she saw me on top of him. But she wasn’t the worst part. She then screamed for her husband, and he came in and started screeching at us while me and Zayn struggled to get out clothes back on. Eventually the fight moved into the front room with Zayn’s sisters watching from the hallway. Zayn couldn’t say a thing, he didn’t know how to defend himself. I didn’t either, but I refused to leave without him. I think his mother began to see the error in calling for her husband. She wouldn’t say anything either, but signaled his bedroom with her eyes to me. I went up there, grabbed all my stuff, quickly packed a bag of Zayn’s clothing, and then told him we were leaving. His father kept repeating this is sick and what you’re doing is against God. When I tried pulling Zayn out of the house, his feet were like cement to the ground. And then his father said if you leave this house you can never come back. Zayn looked at his mother for her to defend him, or at least say he could come back, but she just averted her eyes from the scene. I knew there was no point in staying, they weren’t going to change their minds in such short of time, so we left. And he’s been in my bed ever since,” Niall describes as the group sits at the table in Niall’s kitchen. Niall’s father, Bobby, makes tea and coffee for the group.

“Fuck,” Louis groans, “What are we going to do?”

“Well of course I’m not going to kick Zayn out,” Bobby declares as he passes around drinks, “He can stay here as long as he needs… But… it would be easier if he could find somewhere for him to
“Why?!” Niall nearly yells, “Because he’s my boyfriend?!”

“Niall, no,” Bobby attempts to soothe his son by rubbing his shoulders, “This has nothing to do with you being gay. I know you may feel a little defensive from what just took place, but if you had a girlfriend kicked out, I would be saying the exact same thing. If anything, I’m probably more lenient because he’s a boy and one of your best friends for years.”

“I didn’t mean to snap,” Niall says while rubbing his temple, “Yeah, I guess for a parent the idea of their child’s significant other living in the same house maybe kind of weird, no matter the gender.”

“But where else can he go?” Liam asks, “Yeah, he has a part time job but that can’t pay rent. Unless he dropped out of school for a full time job or something.”

“He’s not dropping out,” Niall states defiantly, “If he needs some financial assistance, I can help him out.”

“Let’s not make any grand gestures,” Bobby points out, “What about the rest of you boys?”

“I’d love to, but I got two sisters living at home,” Liam tells the group, “Don’t think my parents would be on board with another mouth to feed.”

“And I got more sisters than him,” Louis sighs. Then all the table looks at Harry.

“My house?” He stammers.

“Shit, fuck, Harry I’m not trying to impose,” Niall rambles.

“I’ll let you guys figure this out,” Bobby mumbles as he leaves the kitchen.

“Isn’t your hot sister moving out for university?” Liam asks.

“Hot sister?” Harry reiterates.

“Point being,” Louis redirects their attention to the problem at hand, “You do have an empty room right now.”

“I do but…” Harry says in a low tone.

“But what?” Niall snaps.

“I can’t make this decision right now!” Harry yelps, “I’m not against it! But this has to do with more than just me. Like my mother.”

“Duh…” Niall feels stupid for yelling once again, “Gawd, this is all my fault.”

“How?” Louis asks.

“He wasn’t even in the mood… I was and-“ Niall is cut off.

“This isn’t your fault Niall,” Louis replies, “This just happened to be the time and place for it. Seeing the way his family reacted, this would have happened at some point anyways. Yesterday just happened to be the day.”

“Even if you two would have told them in a manner where you weren’t naked on top of their son… I
doubt his father would have reacted much differently,” Liam defends.

“Yeah, yeah… But like what do I even do? I don’t even know what to say to him right now,” Niall declares miserably, “My one job is to make sure he is at least emotionally okay, and I can’t even do that right.”

“As someone who has been in a similar situation to Zayn, even if the outing at my previous school was just a rumor, the thing I remember the most is feeling alone… Like that no one had my back or even wanted to be around me,” Harry describes to Niall, “Go be with him. He may say he wants to be alone, but he doesn’t. In fact it’s probably his greatest fear, because he believed his family would love him unconditionally and now it appears they don’t. And if they couldn’t do it, he will now be scared that people such as us could stop loving him as well… and in particular, you.”

“I’d never stop-“ Niall asserts.

“We know,” Harry agrees, “But Zayn just went through something extremely traumatic. Rationality is not a luxury his mind has right now. He never thought he would lose them and he did. And I know he thinks he could never lose us either.”

“This sucks so fucking hard,” Niall sighs into the palm of his hands.

Louis, Harry, and Liam stay late into the evening attempting to comfort Niall and Zayn, but after a period of time they believe the couple needs their alone time to grieve.

“Don’t forget what I said,” Harry reminds him, “Show him there is nothing to fear.”

“Zayn,” Niall whispers as he enters his bedroom after saying goodbye to his friends, “How are you feeling?”

“Like shit,” Zayn comments bluntly as he still faces the wall, looking as if he has not moved from his spot since the boys peered in at him, “Don’t worry. I got up and took a piss earlier. I can still function.”

“I never doubted that you couldn’t,” Niall replies as he gently sets himself onto his bed, “My dad says you can stay here as long as you need.”

“I don’t want to put your family in a tough spot,” Zayn regretfully whispers, “I know I have the habit of being a burden…”

“We got more than enough room to accommodate,” Niall states as the room goes silent. He has no idea what to say.

“You’re not alone,” Niall finally pledges, “You don’t have to doubt where I’ll be. I’ll be next to you, always.”

“Please don’t say always,” Zayn requests.

“But I am. Like if you ever need to talk, I’m going to listen. I know what you’re going through, like with-“ Niall is not allowed to finish my thought.

“You know what I’m going through? YOU KNOW WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH?! You have no idea what I’m going through! What happened to you? Lost a few mates on your football team?” Zayn yells, “This is my family, Niall. I’ve lost my family.”

Niall freezes. This is the first time Zayn has legitimately raised his voice at him. Sensing that, he
realizes his boyfriend is correct. Niall has nothing to equal Zayn on this level.

“You’re right,” He concedes, “I have no idea what you are going through. And normally I would say but I wish I was going through this with you so I could know, but I don’t for this. This is fucking horrible, and I wouldn’t wish it upon anyone, even my enemies. I don’t understand and I’m happy that I don’t, and especially for that, I am sorry.”

Zayn does not know why he expected a fight from Niall. Zayn has always been one not to compare suffering, believing everyone is valid to their pain. But Niall folded, which Zayn did not want. Maybe Zayn wanted an excuse to scream at someone, to let his anger out from this whole predicament. But Niall could not give that to him, because Niall has never given Zayn a reason why he would.

“Can you quit being so perfect?” Zayn whines into Niall’s pillow.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” Niall stammers, “What do you want me to do? Do you want to yell?”

“Oh my gawd,” Zayn complains, because Niall is actually doing what every boyfriend should do for their partner, but Zayn does not want that in this current mood.

“Come on, let’s do, let’s fight,” Niall eggs him on, “I’ll start… Um, I think your quiff looks kind of dumb sometimes.”

“Oh really.” Zayn laughs at how ludicrous Niall sounds trying to be mean, “What else don’t you like about me?”

“That way you crinkle your nose when you’re pretending to be mad…” Niall guesses, “No, wait, I actually think that’s pretty adorable… Um…”

“You really can’t think of anything?” Zayn inquires.

“Give me some time…” Niall replies before Zayn buries his face in Niall’s chest.

“I shouldn’t be acting this way towards you,” Zayn whispers, “You’re all I have left.”

“I am not all you have left,” Niall gently rubs Zayn’s back as a sign of support, “Louis, and Harry, and…”

“But you love me unconditionally,” Zayn whimpers.

“And you think Louis doesn’t?!” Niall asks in confusion.

“It’s different… I shouldn’t be letting this out on you. I don’t want to lose you too…” Zayn explains.

“Zayn,” Niall refutes clearly, “You could yell at me every day and there is still a 110% chance I’d still go to sleep next to you every night. Don’t change your behavior because you want to keep me around, because that’s not why I fell in love with you. I fell in love with you because of who you are. Because you don’t change who you are for anyone.”

“I love you too,” Zayn finally admits a sigh, finding comfort in the heartbeat his head rests upon.

“I’m not going anywhere,” Niall kisses the top of Zayn’s head.

“But to be honest, the Bradford Bad Boy thing is kind of ridiculous.” Niall’s final comment may have started an actual fight.
See ya'll next week :) part two will be very short in comparison to part one.
Chapter 16 Part 2: Sleeping with a Friend

Chapter Summary

Harry must find a way to convince Zayn to move in with him. Two small events that occur at school will have massive repercussions on the boys' lives.

Chapter Notes

Heh, this part is quiet boring, but luckily very short. I'm sorry, it's developing up things for next chapter which are going to be very dramatic and set the plot for the rest of the story.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 2

“My mom said yes,” Harry breaks to the group, excluding Zayn, as they stand outside Niall’s house.

“That was a faster turnaround time than I expected,” Niall replies.

“She loves Zayn,” Harry admits, “After explaining the situation, she couldn’t say no.”

“How couldn’t she love him?!” Niall asks rhetorically, “So how do we do this?”

“We’ll all go talk to him, for moral support?” Liam offers.

“Let’s try that,” Niall agrees, cautiously though, as if he is not sure that is the best move, but he does not have a better plan himself.

“Hey buddy,” Louis carefully says as the group enters Niall’s bedroom in which Zayn is drawing in.

“Hey?” Zayn replies in a confused tone while he sets down his pencil, “What’s going on?”

“We just wanted to talk to you about something,” Harry comments as he sits on the bed next to Zayn.

“Whoa is this an intervention?” Zayn barks defensively, “I know I smoke sometimes, but trust me I know people who smoke a lot more than me! And you all have smoked too so why you getting on my case?”

“That’s not why we’re here babe,” Niall retorts while rolling his eyes, “Harry wanted to ask you something.”

“Yeah?” Zayn questions, shifting his eyes to Harry.

“So since you’ve been kicked out, we’ve been trying to find you a place to stay…” Harry begins.
“And?” Zayn asks back.

“Well I got an empty room in my house, and you have nowhere else better to go, so I was thinking…” Harry trails off.

“Look, this means a lot but you don’t need to baby me,” Zayn snaps.

“I’m not babying you, I’m trying to take care of you,” Harry charges back.

“I don’t need taken care of either! I’m not some charity case you can help to make yourself feel better,” Zayn stands up, causing the whole group to take a step back.

“I’m doing this because you’re going through a rough time, and I feel bad for you!” Harry states defiantly.

“Well I don’t need it,” Zayn argues angrily, “You can keep your pity! I am nearly eighteen. I have a job, I’ll figure it. Thanks but no thanks.” Zayn then clears out of the room as the rest of the group remains stunned.

“Uh… what the hell just happened?” Louis asks.

“That didn’t go the way I expected it too,” Liam states, looking down in failure.

“What the hell is his problem?” Harry hisses, “I was just being nice.”

“That may actually be the problem,” Niall blurs out.

“What?” Harry asks.

“Harry I made need you to do something for me…” Niall starts.

“Well the last favor went so well,” Harry replies sarcastically.

“I may need you to beg Zayn to live with you,” Niall suggests.

“But I don’t need him to live with me,” Harry laughs.

“I know you don’t,” Niall confirms, “But Zayn doesn’t like being looked down upon. He has too much pride.”

“Like during the fight in middle school,” Louis remembers, “He didn’t talk to us for a day because he was embarrassed that he didn’t throw the first punch himself. Only after he cooled off and realized his ego was not as important did he come to the conclusion he were actually trying to help him.”

“So you’re saying? I have to punch him?” Harry questions in disarray.

“Go tell him you need him, please,” Niall asks, “If not for him, do it for me, okay?”

“You cradle him way too much,” Harry chuckles.

“I do,” Niall agrees, “But right now, especially, he deserves it.”

“How about instead of us all going to him at once, I think Harry should go alone,” Louis offers.

“I don’t know why we didn’t think about all of this in the first place. You got this Harry?” Niall questions.
“We’ll see,” Harry says as he leaves Niall, Louis, and Liam in the bedroom.

Harry walks in upon Zayn stress cleaning the Horan kitchen area, scrubbing endlessly using cleaner infused with bleach on countertops that are already perfectly white.

“What do you want Harry?” Zayn asks coldly, not breaking eye contact with his area of intense housework.

“I don’t think you understood what I was trying to ask you earlier,” Harry begins with as he cautiously takes away the spray bottle from Zayn and sets it below the sink.

“I am really positive I know exactly what you were saying,” Zayn replies.

“No you didn’t,” Harry repeats, “I’m not asking for you to move in for your benefit. I’m asking you for you to move in for mine.”

“Huh?” Zayn releases the rag from his tight grip.

“Look… I’m lonely,” Harry lies, “With Gemma moving out and my mom working long hours to keep a roof over my head, it’s… very quiet.”

“But you have Louis,” Zayn points out.

“Yeah… Yeah I do. But he doesn’t live with me. He has somewhere to go back to, to take care of the girls and what not. So it may have felt like, when I sprung the idea on you, that I was doing it just for your own good. But I was actually doing it for mine, and in turn we both get something out of this situation.”

“Oh,” Zayn sighs.

“It would be nice to have someone always there. I mean like, I know you have a job and Niall to preoccupy your time with. But my house gets really creaky at night. It would probably relax me knowing I could blame the sounds on you rather than a murderer or ghost.”

“How do you know I’m not murderer?” Zayn jokes.

“Zayn,” Harry inquires seriously, “Will you please move in with me?”

“Well, if you are that desperate, scared to be in your own fucking house alone at night,” Zayn replies dramatically, “I guess I can.”

“Thank you Zayn,” Harry chuckles.

Zayn then wraps Harry in a brief tight hug, “No, thank you Harry,” For it was pretty obvious that Harry was lying, “I’m going to go pack then!”

At the sound of agreement, the rest of the group exits Niall’s bedroom and joins Harry and Zayn in the kitchen.

“Looks like I got a new roommate!” Zayn exclaims, “Apparently Harry is a wee bit lonely and afraid of things that go bump in the night.”

“Sounds like he really needs you,” Louis laughs, “He really doesn’t handle thunderstorms well.”

“Gawd damnit Louis,” Harry rolls his eyes, “Haven’t you ever heard of things called secrets?”
“No secrets between roommies!” Zayn yelps, slapping Harry on the bum as he exits for Niall’s bedroom.

That is how the last school year of Louis, Niall, and Zayn begins. Zayn and Harry quickly adapt to being roommates, something they both enjoy more than they thought they would. Harry and Zayn’s house rapidly becomes the hangout spot for the group. Harry teaches Zayn the benefits of home cooking, while Zayn instills the tastes of foreign foods in Harry.

Still under stress and pressure from the eviction of his family, Anne performs an amazing job at making Zayn feel like one of the family in Style’s household. With Zayn preferring his home clean and orderly, she jokes about adding Styles on the end of Zayn’s official name. Which is nice, so nice of Anne, but it feels like a backhanded slap from his family. Was one little detail about Zayn’s whole being worth him being removed from his family unit? Did all the good qualities of Zayn not outweigh this one negative one? (Negative in the perspective of his parents). These are questions that keep Zayn awake at night.

When the school year starts, Louis walks to Harry and Zayn’s place every morning, saving Niall considerable driving time with the majority of the group now being stationed at one location. It quickly becomes an easy routine as Niall then drives by Liam’s after that and the boys embark on each day together. But not today.

“Why’d Liam say he didn’t need a ride?” Louis asks as he, Harry, Niall, and Zayn dreadfully approach the school on foot about a month into the school year.

“Didn’t say. He’s been pretty busy being editor-in-chief of the school newsmagazine though,” Niall comments while grasping his boyfriend’s hand.

“I still can’t believe he got that spot not even being a senior,” Harry comments.

“It’s amazing the influence El had in the journalism department,” Louis replies, “She suggested to her teacher that he get the position before she graduated, and he received it before this school year began.”

“Hey, don’t give all the thanks to Eleanor,” Zayn barks, “Liam earned this, going to all the school events people didn’t want to, late nights and weekends taking pictures and writing stories. I can’t imagine how fun reporting to the chess tournaments was.”

“We aren’t talking Liam down babe,” Niall states as they enter the school through the cafeteria. Upon entering they see something they do not expect. On the edge of the line of tables sits Liam and Danielle. She holds one of his hands with her own and looks at him apologetically. After watching them exchange a few words that are inaudible from the distance between the couple and the group of guys, she finally kisses Liam on the cheek and walks away from the table as he sits there looking defeated.

“We should go…” Harry says as he leads the group towards Liam.

“Is everything alright man?” Zayn asks as they surround the table.

“Um… Yeah… I mean, no,” Liam spits out.

“What happened?” Niall asks.

“I guess me and Danielle are done,” Liam whispers.
“Like done done or the off again on again thing you two have been doing for the past few months?” Louis questions bluntly.

“She says she’s talking to someone else already… So it’s done done,” Liam reveals.

“Group cuddle!” Zayn yelps as he clings to Liam, followed by the rest of the group in suit.

“Guys I don’t-!” Liam tries to prevent before his face is plastered by the various chest of his friends. And while he may argue that he does not need this, he does.

“Thanks for the support boys,” Liam finally releases between the tight hug of the group.

“You feel better yet?” Louis asks.

“Not really,” Liam admits, “But at least I got you guys.”

“Always,” Zayn replies as they let go of Liam, “We’ll walk you to class, come on.”

“The four of you? We’ll take up entire hallways,” Liam laughs as they begins to trek around the tables in the lunchroom.

“The only four people’s opinions I care about in this school are right here,” Louis explains, “So yes we will.”

“You mean three?” Zayn laughs.

“Huh?” Louis turns around to notice Zayn’s counting is right. Harry is not in line with them.

Harry quit moving with them a couple tables ago. His feet are frozen on the floor unable to move.

“Harry?” Louis calls out as he trots over to his best friend.

“Who’s she?” Harry asks while not blinking or turning his head from the direction of his stare.

“Who?” Louis questions.

“Oh her,” Niall responds, “Her name is Kendall. She’s new here, just joined choir. Not the best, but definitely not worst either.”

“Surprised I haven’t noticed her before…” Harry mumbles.

“Come on Haz, we’re going to be late for class. Hurry your ass up,” Louis tugs on Harry’s arms.

“Yeah, yeah…” Harry says as he starts to walk but keep his head turned in the girl’s direction, who does happen to be very beautiful with long brown hair.

Louis does not think much about the encounter due to the situation being focused on Liam, but little did he know, that girl Kendall would be his downfall.

Chapter End Notes

Really can’t wait for next Friday guys :) hope you all will enjoy. Thanks for baring with me through this chapter.
Chapter 17: Talk About You

Chapter Summary

Louis suspects Harry is finally about to make his move. A desperate action by Liam causes Zayn to reveal a wonderful secret. While Louis tells himself he does not Harry, a performance by Harry makes Louis realize he cannot lie any longer.

Chapter Notes

The story is going to be very dramatic from here on out... I don't know, like these scenes feels great in my head, I don't know if my writing can capture the emotions being felt by the characters. I hope ya'll like it.

Talk About You by MIKA is the song of the chapter

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 17: Talk About You

“Lou?” Harry asks while he and Louis study for their class together at Harry’s home.

“We got that test tomorrow in calculus, Harry, and I’m totally freaking out about it. Does what you say have to pertain to the exam?” Louis inquires while flipping a page in his textbook.

“No… No it doesn’t,” Harry sighs as he gazes blankly on his own book.

Louis looks over at Harry to see him in minor distress. He sighs, giving in to Harry’s request for attention, “What is it Haz?”

“Oh!” Harry gleams, “I got some hypothetical questions for you.”

“Mhm, what are they?” Louis questions back.

“Let’s say somebody wanted to ask you out, how would you like them go about that?” Harry explains.

“How I would like to be asked out?” Louis stutters.

“Yeah. Like if somebody wanted to ask you out for a 100% chance of a yes response, how would they go about doing that?” Harry restates.

“Hm…” Louis wonders. He has never given this too much thought before. But Louis then starts remembering back to what he believes were the most romantic moments in his life so far. And oddly they all involved Harry.

“I think I would like a show,” Louis finally reveals.
“A show?” Harry questions, not knowing exactly what Louis means.

“Yeah, like from a movie. I would want someone to make a scene for me. Maybe we are at a school dance or at my house. He would grab my attention and then sing me a love song, like Isn’t She Lovely by the 4 Seasons or I Can’t Help from Falling in Love with You by Elvis.” Louis remembers from the first song Harry ever sang to him. “Then I would want him to grab my hand and pull into a clearing, where me and him would slow dance as he sang to me.” This brings back memories of when he taught Harry to slow dance before Louis’s first high school homecoming night. “Then he would give me a flower, a Pot Marigold, like the one you gave me after the first show of mine that you saw. He would look me in the eyes and say ‘I think to some extent, I’ve wanted you since the moment I saw you. Will you be mine?’ I would say yes, of course, and then we would share the best snog of my life,” Louis concludes as he appears lost in his fantasy.

“That’s very specific,” Harry laughs.

“You asked! And I told,” Louis chuckles.

“Very cute, I’ll try to keep that in mind.” Harry hums as he redirects his focus back onto this school work, but Louis stares at Harry for a while longer. Why would he ask such a thing? Louis wonders.

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“Isn’t that a very strange thing to ask?” Louis squeals into his phone.

“Really? You’re still talking to me about Harry,” Eleanor whines, “Louis, I’m in college now and you call me about this high school angst?”

“If you’re too busy…” Louis sighs.

“Well I’m already on the phone, so let’s go at it,” Eleanor concedes.

“Why would he ask about that?” Louis repeats, for the thousandth time what has replayed in his head over and over again.

“Do you think he’s going to ask someone out?” Eleanor replies with a question.

“He hasn’t mentioned any girl to me for the most part, so who else does that leave?” Louis inquires.

“Liam seems pretty fit. I’d ask him out,” Eleanor jokes.

“Seriously El. And ew, Liam, really?” Louis makes a puking sound.

“Louis, what do you want me to say? Your name?” Eleanor states.

“You think Harry is going to ask me out?! Are you still stuck on that?” He barks back, though that is exactly what he wanted to hear.

“Who else is there, as you said?” She declare.

“Do you really think so?” Louis asks again.

“Sure Louis,” She gives in, “And how do you feel about that?”

“I don’t know! Like it’s Harry, my best friend for years, and if this went south it’d be really bad… but at the same time…” Louis debates inside himself.
“But what would you say if he asked you to be his boyfriend?” She states blankly, because Eleanor already knows the answer to the question at hand.

“Like what me and Harry are doing… the physical aspect, is it really that different from an actual relationship?” Louis retorts.

“Well you two are already doing what you and me used to,” Eleanor points out.

“I think I’d say yes El,” Louis finally admits to himself.

“I’ve been telling that to you for years darling,” Eleanor finalizes.

“No, no I wouldn’t,” Louis does not want Eleanor to be right, not about this, “There’s too much to lose. And our dynamic as a group would be changed forever, I don’t know if it can handle another couple.”

“Well someone’s heart is getting broken when the night it comes,” Eleanor promises, “And it looks like you just decided it’s going to be Harry’s.”

“Let’s get turnt up!” Niall yells into the crowd, causing them to shout back in agreeance. He shoves the tequila funnel into his mouth as the crowd at the party screams again.

“I never thought I’d fall for someone like Niall,” Zayn smiles at Louis as he watches his boyfriend be the life of the party, “He’s an absolute idiot.”

“Babe! Watch me, watch me!” Niall calls to Zayn as a couple guys flip Niall upside down to properly place him over the beer keg.

“Love is a crazy thing, isn’t it?” Liam slurs as he takes a sip of his fourth beer, causing himself to lean drunkily against Zayn.

“Don’t you think you had enough?” Louis asks, trying to take the drink out of Liam’s hand.

“Zayn’s driving. I wanna get drunk enough to forget Danielle ever existed, this is happening,” He says right before he chugs the rest of his red solo cup.

“Your life I guess,” Louis agrees as he takes a sip of his own. His eyes dart desperately across at Harry talking to Kendall.

“You alright Lou?” Zayn asks, trying to distract Louis from his obvious focus of attention.

“Just dandy,” Louis lies, his eyes not moving from Harry.

“Let’s go out for a smoke,” Zayn suggests.

“No, we’re good,” Louis replies as he takes a small sip from his drink.

“I wasn’t asking, I was telling you. I’m going,” Zayn states clearly.

“I’ll go with you,” Liam interrupts.

“Alright, we’ll be on the porch,” Zayn says as he gently grabs Louis’s arm to show moral support, and then exits out a hallway that leads to the backdoor with Liam.
“Where are they going?” Niall shouts as he bumps into Louis.

“Cigarette I think,” Louis replies shortly.

“Do you think that…” Niall trails off.

“Hm?” Louis redirects his focus onto Niall.

“Liam and Zayn?” Niall yelps.

“What about Liam and Zayn?” Louis repeats in confusion.

“They’ve gotten pretty close since Danielle’s breakup,” Niall suggests.

“They’ve always been close Nialler,” Louis reassures him.

“But the last time they were close they were… swapping handjobs late at night when they were alone,” Niall reminds Louis, “Zayn was really into him.”

“Yeah but there is a big difference between then and now,” Louis says.

“That is?” Niall questions.

“You,” Louis replies as he grab’s Niall by the right shoulder, “He loves you, more than I know why.”

“But there’s something about the first time… you know, the first time you fall in love with someone, that always bring them back to it,” Niall comments.

“Have you ever thought that maybe you are that first person for Zayn?” Louis offers.

“But he loved Liam! I remember!” Niall proclaims louder than he should due to being the tiniest bit tipsy… or a lot tipsy.

“Yeah he loved him, but it was superficial. And it was not mutual. He may have loved Liam, but he’s in love with you. What you have given him is so much more than what Liam ever could have or ever did. And Zayn is never going to forget that,” Louis reminds him sweetly.

“Perhaps you have a point,” Niall chuckles, “And are you okay with Harry being… so friendly… with Kendall?”

“He’s allowed to make friends with whoever he wants,” Louis declares defiantly, “Why would I be against that?”

“Because I know you,” Niall states obviously, “They’re just really friendly.”

“If Harry liked her, he would have told me,” Louis states, “I have a girl friend named El. Harry deserves to have that as well.”

“Well if you ever need to talk, you know where to find me,” Niall replies unconvinced of Louis’s convictions.

“I think something good is coming,” Louis finally reveals to his oldest friend.

“Good, what do you mean good? With Harry?” Niall questions.
“I don’t want to jinx it,” Louis blushes.

“Oi Louis, your ambiguity kills me,” Niall rolls his eyes, “I’m going to take a piss, be right back.”

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“Didn’t think you smoked Liam my boy,” Zayn coughs as he sparks a flame from his lighter.

“Eh, I don’t. But why the fuck not,” Liam chuckles nervously.

At the same time, Niall walks past the back door to return to the main room of the party. As he passes, he hears the two voices of his boyfriend and Liam talking. And while Louis had made a rather convincing argument, the insecurities in the back of Niall’s mind were becoming increasing loud as the alcohol in his body overrode his common sense. He decides to ease drop on their conversation, telling himself that if Zayn had nothing to hide, there was nothing wrong with listening anyways. He just happened to stop walking at the spot, and Liam and Zayn just happen to be in listening distance from Niall.

“Do you want your own cig?” Zayn asks as he prepares to pull out another for Liam.

“Nah, I’ll just share yours,” Liam replies, “Is it really that weird? We used to swap saliva all the time.”

“Heh, guess you’re right,” Zayn replies nervously, since this is one of the first time Liam has mentioned their previous sexual relationship since its end. It strikes Zayn as very odd that Liam would bring it up since as their friendship has reblossomed in recent months, both of them like to pretend that it did not happen.

“It’s weird thinking about how much things have changed in the past year,” Liam proclaims as he takes a drag from the shared cigarette, “But how much hasn’t at the same time.”

“That’s so John Green of you,” Zayn chuckles, “What do you mean exactly?”

“Like think where we were a year ago, not even talking. And now somehow we found our way back to each other,” Liam rambles though the alcoholic content in his blood causes what he says to sound like gibberish.

“Well I’ll always be here for you buddy,” Zayn replies with a friendly smack on Liam’s arm.

“No, I don’t think you understand what I’m saying,” Liam replies as he takes ahold of the same hand that Zayn had just touched him with, “Maybe I ran away from the idea of us a little too fast.”

What the fuck Niall thinks.

“Liam, that was a long time ago,” Zayn defends as he tries to take a step back from his friend.

“But the way you loved me. So pure and so true… and with Danielle gone,” Liam reminds him as he fills the void between him and Zayn with his own body.

From this angle, Niall receives a full on view of the interaction between Zayn and Liam. When Liam grabs both of Zayn’s hands with his own, rage surges through Niall’s body. Niall knew it, he fucking knew it. Because as Zayn stares up at Liam with those doe eyes, Niall remembers the years Zayn pined for Liam, how no other boy could compare, no matter all the flaws and mistakes committed by Liam. It only makes sense this is how Niall and Zayn would end: Zayn going back to the boy he got with Niall in the first place for.
“I think we’re having a misunderstanding…” Zayn says bluntly.

“No, you don’t get it. You’re mine,” At which Liam lunges for Zayn’s lips. Niall is not sure how his feet remained stationary on the ground, because he does not know what he wanted to do more: slug Liam for kissing Zayn or yell at Zayn for betraying his trust.

“What the fuck dude?!” Zayn yells as he kneels Liam in the groin in self-defense.

“Shit!” Liam yells as he recoils back from Zayn.

“The hell?!” Zayn repeats, “What do you think you’re doing?”

“What we’ve always done…” Liam answers honestly in self-defeat.

“Liam, do you know how long ago that feels?” Zayn asks, “A lifetime ago.”

“But you loved me,” Liam reminds him as he rubs his own groin to smother the pain.

“I did. I’m not going to lie. I loved you so much. And I would have waited forever for you,” Zayn replies softly, “But forever turned out to be Niall.”

“Think about us,” Liam begs, “You can’t deny the sex was great. And the way you cared…”

“But with Niall the love is great. Look, when you were trying to find yourself with Danielle, I found my soulmate. And you just have to accept that,” Zayn proclaims firmly.

That causes Liam to sober up real fast, “Your soulmate?!”

Soulmate?! Niall also thinks loudly.

“Fuck,” Zayn swears, “It’s just a word, yeah?”

“You think Niall is your soulmate?” Liam tries to confirm.

“I’m way too young to be thinking such things…” Zayn attempts to hide his smile, though his response is not denial to his earlier saying.

“But you said it,” Liam replies, “And there are no rules about finding the love of your life, you know? There’s no age requirement.”

“Either way,” Zayn clears his throat, “I don’t want Niall to know. We’ve been dating for less than a year-“

“You’ve known him for much more than that,” Liam says, “This is not like some new relationship. It’s also a continuation of something else.”

“Liam,” Zayn says bluntly.

“I’m an idiot,” Liam laughs, “I didn’t mean to… I’m an asshole.”

“Yes, yes you are,” Zayn laughs, “It’s understandable though. When times get tough, there is desire go back to something familiar and safe. But there’s nothing to go back to Liam. No one is waiting for that to start again. And most importantly, nobody owns me. Claim me again, and you’ll lose a limb.”

“I just really missed you more than I realized… and being with you the past couple months… Can we just pretend the past 10 minutes didn’t happen, because I really appreciate you in my life, and I
can respect the love you now have for Niall,” Liam declares, “Won’t happen again.”

“As all as you pretend the whole soulmate thing hasn’t happened either,” Zayn accepts.

“I can do that. Shit, if Niall knew I just did that I’d feel like the biggest prick,” Liam agrees, “Ready to head back in?”

“I’ll be in right after you, I just need a minute to clear my mind and finish my smoke. I’ll meet you where we were before we came out here?” Zayn inquires.

“Can do,” Liam smiles, “Thanks again, friend Zayn.”

“Friend Liam,” Zayn replies with a weak smile.

As Liam’s footsteps approach the back door, this reminds Niall he should not have heard the conversation in the first place. He flees the hallway before either boy can be aware of his presence. But everything moves in slow motion for Niall. All Niall can hear is soulmate soulmate soulmate repeating in his head over and over again, cancelling out all the music playing and people hollering at the party.

“Ope excuse me,” Liam says embarrassed, obviously feeling guilty about the move he just made on Niall’s boyfriend. But Niall does not even react to Liam bumping into him.

“Yeah,” is all Niall can squeak out. Soulmate soulmate soulmate.

As Niall looks for Louis, he sees Louis now next to Harry, both of them not-so-ironically twerking to a Ke$ha song as Kendall and her group of friends laugh at the two boys.

“Nialler!” Zayn calls as he throws his arm around Niall’s waist, “How you doing, love?”

“Yeah,” Niall replies with foggy eyes.

“Are you okay?” Zayn questions with concern in his voice, attempting to look Niall directly in the eyes. Niall cannot seem to focus on the situation around him, being in a completely other world.

“I gotta… I gotta go,” Niall proclaims shakily as he runs out of the house.

“Niall! Where you going?!” Zayn shouts in confusion, “Your truck is the ride home!”

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“I’ve never seen you try on so many clothes,” Louis points out as he watches Harry change out of the third outfit he has tried on tonight, “Your fashion game is always on point.”

“Well it’s a big night, you know?” Harry states nervously as he tries to put his tie into a knot, but fails, "Give me a hand here?"

“It’s just the homecoming dance,” Louis sighs as he glides over to help Harry, “It’s not like it’s the first one you’ve gone to.”

“It’ll be different, you’ll see,” Harry responds while Louis finishes the knot, “What do you think? Think this will impress people?”

“Looking pretty formal for a school dance Harry,” Louis replies as he pats Harry chest to press out any of the wrinkles, “But breathe taking as ever.”
Honk! The sound of a truck horn echoes through the house, announcing Niall and Zayn’s arrival.

“I guess it’s time,” Harry states cautiously.

“Whatever you are nervous about,” Louis says sweetly, his arms draped over Harry’s shoulders, “I’m sure it will go much smoother than you think. All you have to worry about is if the person breathes when they see how amazing you look tonight.”

“You think so?” Harry replies more confidently from Louis’s praise.

“No doubt,” Louis smiles, “Let’s go.”

As Louis and Harry trot to Niall’s truck, Harry exclaims, “Oh shit, I forgot the most important thing. Tell the couple I’ll be right out!” Harry then runs back inside as Louis hops into the backseat of the truck.

“This is your only free night this weekend? Babe, I barely get to see you at all anymore,” Zayn whines.

“Gotta get paid somehow,” Niall sighs.

“But why’d you get two new jobs at the same time,” Zayn further scrutinizes, “You didn’t even have one before a month ago.”

“It’s good to stay busy though,” Niall lies. Zayn can sense something in Niall’s voice, he can sense something is off, Zayn just cannot pinpoint what it is yet.

“I… I miss you baby,” Zayn admits somberly.

Niall appears extremely hurt by that fact, as if he is secretly guilty about making Zayn feel such a way. “I’m… just doing what’s best for our future,” Niall subtly reveals as he squeezes Zayn’s hand.

“What’s that supposed to mean?!” Zayn becomes quickly alert to what is being said between him and his boyfriend.

“Oh uh!” Niall stumbles with his words, knowing he has said too much, “Um Lou what’s taking Harry so long?”

“I don’t-” Louis turns his head to the window, to see Harry walking out of his house while he gently stuffs a Pot Marigold into his coat jacket, to keep it safe and so the boys would not be able to see it.

“What are you all smiley about?” Zayn asks Louis, “Your happiness makes me suspicious. What are you planning?”

“Oh I don’t have anything planned,” Louis hums as Harry takes the seat next to him.

I guess tonight is the night Louis thinks to himself.

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The dance feels different. Harry spends most of his time hopping between various people: the DJ, whoever is in charge of the lights, and school officials. All while whispering things that are undecipherable from Louis at his far distance. Looking similar to the prom, balloons and streamers of the school’s official colors cover the room. Different although, Louis and Liam sit at one of the tables located in the periphery of the school dance while Niall and Zayn slow dance in the middle of the
crowd. But every once and a while, Harry will turn to Louis and send him a thumbs up or funny face, causing Louis’s apprehension to momentarily leave his body.

“I’m surprised you’re not out there shaking your rump,” Liam comments, breaking Louis’s fixed gaze on Harry.

“Thought I might save some of my dancing skills for later tonight,” Louis says casually, but the anticipation is building inside.

Louis does not know what he expect from this evening or Harry. He does not even know exactly what he wants. Yeah, Harry is amazing, but he is also Louis’s best friend. There is so much to lose and so much to gain. All Louis is sure of is that he cannot lose Harry. So Louis believes when push comes to shove, he will probably turn Harry down. But in front of everyone? Especially if Harry does everything Louis suggested he do?

There is not even any guarantee that Harry is going to do what Louis thinks he is going to. But Louis saw the flower, the exact flower Louis received years ago, that meant so much to him when he touched it. And just a few hours ago he saw the same colored pedals being carried by Harry. So maybe it does mean a lot to Louis that Harry is making this perfect just as Harry has made everything else perfect… ever since Harry dropped his books in front of Louis and Louis helped him pick them up from the lonely ground.

Louis can see the exact moment in his mind. And he has not really thought about the meeting since then, beyond brief moments of trying to remember his earliest times with Harry. But now he is reliving it, and it feels like Louis is remembering things he did not feel in the moment of the occurrence. He was drawn to Harry by an unknown force. It is not that Louis was ever purposefully rude to people, but he was not the type to encroach on other people’s business, no matter what he saw. But he watched Harry’s books tumble to the ground, and the next thing he knew, he was on the floor next to the unknown boy. And then Harry looked up at him, with those gorgeous green eye that felt like without firing a shot, they broke down that high wall surrounding Louis’s heart. Louis can literally feel his heart skip a beat just from the memory.

“What’s going on?” Liam whispers to Louis.

But Louis cannot answer. He just smiles and looks at Harry. This is it Louis thinks.

“I asked someone really close to me exactly how I should do this. He said I should put on a show. I didn’t know specifically what he was trying to tell me until I figured out the importance of doing it in front of all of you. I want everybody to know how I feel about this person. I don’t want to be a secret or unknown. There is someone in here who has stolen my heart, and I want you, and the world, to know that I am so proud to be falling for you like the way that I am.”

Louis unconsciously stands up and focuses his vision upon Harry on stage. Harry gives him a quick nod to him and carries on.

“So the one thing I am good at it is singing, so that’s the performance I’ll be putting on to express how I feel for you. And one song comes to mind to convey what you need to know,” Harry declares.

“Hit it,” Harry orders the DJ, as the same man from the prom hits the play button on his sound system.
“Wise men say, only fools rush in. But I, can’t help, falling in love with you,” Echoes out of Harry’s mouth.

_I Can’t Help Falling in Love with You_ by Elvis Presley is sung by Harry for the entire school to hear. The first song Harry sang for Louis so many years ago in the front room of Harry’s home, which also eventually turned into Louis’s home.

Louis’s heart is beating so loudly and has never glown brighter. This is it. And Louis cannot deny it any longer. He wants this. He wants Harry. He wants that flower. He wants Harry to never stop singing from now till eternity. He wants his dance. He wants his Harry.

“Shall I stay? Would it be a sin? If I can’t help falling in love with you,” Harry proclaims as he hops off the stage and begins to walk in the direction of Louis. And Harry has never looked more beautiful and collegiate. He wears a blank white t-shirt with a tight blue jacket that is very open towards his neck, and even more constricting kakis. Angelic would be a more proper word in Louis’s vocabulary. The crowd of students part like Moses dividing the Red Sea with every step Harry takes. Louis’s cheeks turn red as he finds his feet moving in Harry’s direction. Louis cannot wait another second to have Harry in his arms, in his grasp.

But then Harry takes a sharp right turn in his strut. Where’s he going Louis thinks to himself as his heart begins to sink like a stone.

That is when Louis sees Harry’s hand reach out before him, and a girl grasps it. Not Louis, but a girl. Using Harry as a weight, Kendall pulls herself up as the crowd awes for the couple. That sound comes from everybody in the room but Louis. Harry then pulls the flower of his inner lining of his jacket to give to her. She takes a large whiff of the scent and blushes at all the attention.

Because this looks like a scene from a Disney movie. Where the charming prince whisks off the princess as the whole kingdom watches the celebration. All of the students, and staff, and even the fucking DJ look so happy and pleased. But Louis is not. Does that make Louis the villain in this case? Because no matter how beautiful this scene is, this is not his happy ending. This is the last thing Louis ever wanted.

The crowd clears a spot in the middle of the gym floor for the couple dance. Harry takes his girl by the hand while placing his other hand on her back, leading her in the dance. She smiles up at him as she takes her part as the one being led. They spin and they twirl as Harry continues to sing that handsome voice of his, serenading her with all his praise.

Louis’s heart fractures at that moment. As if every little scratch that has ever been carved out on his heart through all the pain in his life is hit with a hammer. Louis has taken a lot of damage over the years: Louis choosing his stepfather over his biological father, dragging Eleanor along as he figured out his sexuality, and Nick abandoning him to some stranger. All of these events created weak spots inside of him, but this, watching Harry choose someone else over him, is it. Louis’s soul shatters. If the room had been silent, everyone could have heard Louis’s heart fall inside his body, hitting the hollow empty cage that he has inside, and then crash into pieces.

“For I can’t help falling in love with you,” Harry finishes the last verse of the song. “Kendall, I think to some extent, I’ve wanted you since the moment I saw you. Will you be mine?”

Kendall smiles that lovely smile up at Harry and nods rapidly. Harry then grabs her by the cheeks and places a soft kiss upon her lips. With that, the crowd breaks into applause for the new couple. With that song now ending, the DJ puts on a new one: _Talk About You_ by MIKA.

Every single person in the room, but Louis. Mine he thinks. That is my song. That is my dance. That
is my flower. This is my kiss. Louis taught Harry all of those things. Louis taught Harry the confidence in his singing ability; Louis taught Harry how to dance; Louis taught Harry how to kiss, the exact way Louis liked it. And now all those things that were properly Louis’s are now somebody else’s. That is my Hazza.

Instinctively, Niall and Zayn look from where the performance took place to where Louis stands. They can see the brokenness of their shared best friend.

“Oh no,” Niall says to Zayn as they watch him.

That is when the dam breaks. Louis cannot hold it back anymore. He wants Harry Styles. From his awkward humor to the way Harry’s lanky body curls around Louis at night to how adorable Harry looks when he cannot stay up another second longer late into the evening.

Louis does not know exactly what makes him realize that in this particular moment, because there were plenty of other times he should have came to the same realization: such as when he came out to Harry, or their first makeout session in the pool after dreaming of Harry’s kiss all Summer, or the time Harry saved Louis’s prom night from disaster. But this is the moment. This the moment Louis realizes…

A single tear runs down Louis’s right cheek. He slowly raises his hand to his face, wipes off the liquid, and then looks at the damp spot upon his hand. It is odd. He does not feel like crying, or even that he has an urge to fight it, but the tears are running down his face. Normally, a person can feel a sobbing fit before it starts to take place, but Louis does not. The dam of emotions that he has been holding back since the first moment he saw Harry will not give Louis time to prepare.

“What do you think is going on?” Niall asks Zayn.

“He’s realized it. Oh fuck,” Zayn says as Louis runs out the gymnasium.

And it does not help the situation when the chorus of MIKA’s song replays over and over again I said you’re the only one I wanna talk about. Louis cannot take it anymore. As Harry and Kendall continue to twirl as the rest of the crowd dances with them, Louis flees.

“Shit Louis!” Zayn yells as he and Niall run fast behind him.

As soon as Louis exits the gymnasium, he takes a sharp turn right to continue his flight out of the school. But he turns too hard and crashes into the wall next to the door. But he does not fight it. He bows to gravity’s demand, falling in self-defeat. He sobs profusely, not like it matters. The hallway is empty with everybody watching Harry’s big show.

“Louis,” Niall gasps as he and Zayn squat on their knees next to Louis, “What’s wrong?”

“Oh my gawd,” Louis cries, “I’m in love with Harry.”

Niall and Zayn look at each other with regret. They wanted Louis to come to this realization for a while now but not like this. Anyway but this. If a balling Louis would have been known to be the eventual conclusion, they now wish Louis never would have figured it out.

“You can’t do this here,” Zayn references Louis’s breakdown, “We have to go.”

Louis nods and tries to swallow back his tears, but he cannot. His body physically will not let him.

“Why did you run off so fast?” Liam asks turning the corner to join the group, “Oh.”
Louis tries to hide his face into the wall for how pathetic he looks, but in his perspective no one seems shocked by the emotions taking place, so where is the incentive to hide?

“Lou,” Liam says tenderly as he brushes a tear off of Louis’s cheek, “It’s going to be okay, I promise.”

“We need to get him home,” Zayn orders, “Liam, you need to stay here.”

“What?!” Liam snaps, “Louis is my friend too! I can help take care of him.”

“I know,” Zayn agrees, “But someone needs to be here with Harry. If all of us leave at once, he’s going to know something is up.”

“So if Harry asks…” Liam leads.

“Say I didn’t feel well, and since Louis assumed Harry would be spending his time with Kendall, he decided to leave with me and Niall before I threw up,” Zayn explains.

“We’re not going to tell him?” Liam questions.

“I think that is something for Louis to decide,” Niall answers, “And I don’t believe he’s in that state of mind to make that decision.”

Louis nods sadly in agreeance while tears continue to flow.

“Niall,” Zayn commands, “Just pick him up and take him to the truck.” Niall quickly follows his order and cradles Louis in his arms bridal-style.

“You’ll let me know how he’s doing?” Liam clarifies.

“We’ll text ya,” Niall confirms as Liam watches Niall and Zayn leave while carrying Louis.

“I’m in love with Harry… I’m in love with Harry,” Louis whines as he folds his face into Niall’s chest to prevent anyone from seeing him so distraught.

“It’s going to be alright babe,” Zayn responds with a light squeeze of one of Louis’s hand.

“What happened to him?” The para guarding the front door asks, the group almost making it all clear on their exit.

“Uh danced a little too hard, he may have sprained his ankle,” Niall lies, “We’re going to take to the ER just in case.”

“Hope ya’ll didn’t miss the entertainment! I didn’t get see it, but it’s already the talk of the school,” The para laughs, “I heard it all on my walkie-talkie here. Now if only all men could act as charming as that.”

“We couldn’t have missed it,” Zayn sighs as she opens the door for the group to leave.

Niall sets Louis inside the back seat of his truck and Zayn climbs himself in right next to Louis. Louis curls into Zayn's side, still repeating his love for Harry in between his crying fits. Throughout the drive to Louis’s house, Zayn and Niall share sympathetic glances through the rearview mirror of Niall’s truck. This is bad. This is so bad.

They both knew Louis’s day of reckoning had to come eventually, but they never thought it would come at the cost of Louis’s happiness and emotional well-being. Will they be able to put their
Once arriving home, Louis gathers enough of his composure to be able to walk again, though his face looks like it is in a zombified trance, deep in thought replaying the events of the nights on repeat.

“Dear?” Anne asks, standing up at the boys’ entrance into her house, “Why you home so early?”

“Uh… Harry asked out this girl and…” Niall replies nervously.

“Oh baby,” Anne coos realizing what Niall means, “I’m so sorry.”

Almost as if he does not recognize her presence, he simply glides out of the interaction and up the stairs to his room.

“I guess we’ll talk to you tomorrow,” Zayn states somberly as he and Niall follow right behind Louis.

“What are you… how are you feeling?” Niall questions while Louis crawls under the covers of the bed.

“Stupid,” Louis replies while he pulls down the bed-sheets for Zayn and Niall to hop in, “Don’t want to talk about it.”

“You want us to sleep with you?” Zayn reiterates.

“You don’t have too…” Louis whispers from embarrassment, “When we were younger we’d sleep together when we were scared of storms so I thought…”

“We’ll weather this storm,” Zayn confirms, “Together.”

“Time to dream dear,” Niall says to Zayn as he pushes him onto the bed while Niall hits off the lights.

“We got ya babe,” Zayn says to Louis as he cuddles up behind Louis, with Niall jumping in the bed behind Zayn, “We love you Louis.”

“More than we can describe,” Niall agrees as he spoons Zayn from behind.

“You won’t judge me if I cry some more, will you?” Louis states though he knows he will be balling some more no matter their response.

“Of course not,” Niall replies.

“We won’t tell a soul,” Zayn ends as he lightly presses a condolence kiss on the back on Louis’s neck.

Chapter End Notes

Louis's character is going to spiral… See you all next week :) Have a happy and safe 4th of July weekend.
Chapter 18: Mr. Brightside

Chapter Summary

Zayn lays the smackdown on Louis about his relationship with Harry; Liam accidentally lays the actual smackdown on Harry. No matter all the support from his friends, nothing seems to be able to prevent Louis from spiraling into self-destruction.

Chapter Notes

Sorry for not posting last week! I almost thought about splitting this into two parts just so the readers realize there is a large time gap in between two of the scenes, but because this chapter is pretty short and for not posting last week I decide to leave it together as a one part chapter. Hopefully its clear that not every happens within a week in this chapter, but is something that occurs over a period of time. I warned you guys the rest of this story would be moving pretty fast.

Song of the chapter: Mr. Brightside by the Killers

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Louis wakes the next morning to a bed that is two-thirds full. He wipes the crust out of his eyes as he adjusts to the light. Niall is no longer in the room with him, but Zayn lies on top of the covers facing Louis while sketching a picture.

Upon Louis’s movements, Zayn looks up at his friend and grins, “Good morning Sleeping Beauty.”

“Sleeping beauty?” Louis question as he pushes himself up to sit against the wall behind his bed, “I think you mean Anna from Frozen.”

“Tell me what you think?” Zayn asks as he flips around his sketch pad to show Louis the picture he has been drawing. Upon the paper is Louis’s asleep, his eyes closed and his mouth slightly ajar with the tiniest stream of drool running from it. His hair twists in different directions upon his pillow, but he does look angelically asleep.

“Yup, definitely Princess Anna,” Louis replies as he stretches, “Where’s Niall?”

“He had work earlier this morning at Paul’s Café,” Zayn answer as he turns his sketch pad back his way, “I woke up with him to send him off. Been sketching ever since, luckily you yourself are something to make art out of. You say the strangest things in your sleep.”

“I think I need my morning-“

“Already next to you,” Zayn points at with his pencil. On the table next to Louis’s bed already sits a hot cup tea with honey and sugar right beside it.

“Damn, I’ll have to have mental breakdowns more often if this is the treatment I get the next day,”
Louis chuckles trying to make light out of the situation as always, “Thank you. You could have left, you know.”

“I kinda feel like you need someone right now,” Zayn nods solemnly.

“Gawd, please tell me last night was just a horrible dream,” Louis whines as he covers his face in embarrassment.

“The fact you have to ask answers that question,” Zayn responds.

“Neither you or Niall seemed pretty surprised by my revelation…” Louis takes a sip of his tea.

“Were we supposed to be?” Zayn inquires.

“How… how long have you guys know?” Louis asks.

“Uh, I expected it since middle school,” Zayn admits.

“Oh my gawd,” Louis swears, “It’s been that fucking long?”

“Yeah,” Zayn smirks, “When I first talked to Niall about it, he didn’t believe me. But as we got older he became more open to the idea… and then he caught two you diddin’ the skittle a number of times so that solidified him in joining team Larry. And whatever doubt I had disappeared while being roommate with Harry. You two aren’t quiet at all.”

“Team Larry?” Louis barks, “What the hell is that?”

“Oh, uh, it’s the name we all came up for you. Larry Stylinson to be exact,” Zayn reveals with an awkward laugh.

“We all?” Louis yelps.

“Me, Niall, Liam, Eleanor, Stan, your mom…” Zayn lists off.

“So everybody knew about my feelings, before me?” Louis clarifies.

“You really didn’t know?” Zayn says confused, “I thought you just weren’t telling them to anyone.”

“I had no idea until I saw Harry… kiss that girl,” Louis sighs.

“Shit man,” Zayn breaths, “That explains a few things. You really are oblivious.”

“Hey, I knew you liked Liam long before you told me,” Louis shakes his finger at Zayn, “I guess… I don’t know… I just didn’t want what you felt for Liam to be me.”

“Thank Lou,” Zayn jeers.

“Do you blame me?!” Louis explains, “You were miserable… happy when he was around, but miserable nonetheless… Bloody hell, how did this even happen?”

“Do you want to hear my analysis on that?” Zayn offers.

“I’m going to get it even if I say no,” Louis confirms taking another drinking.

“You fell in love with Harry the moment you laid your eyes on him,” Zayn describes, “And that terrified you. You fought it all you could, but you compromised. Instead of making him your
boyfriend, you called him your best friend or your brother, because it felt safer. Maybe it was because you weren’t ready to come to terms with your sexuality yet, or maybe you felt you could lose a boyfriend, but best friends appear a lot more permanent at our age. That way you could still have Harry in your life without the potential risk factors that come with dating. And then you two started getting physical…”

“He’s the one who suggest we start fooling around together…” Louis whimpers.

“Perhaps so, but you were the one who taught him to jackoff in the first place. That was your idea, not his. So to some extent, you were always looking for an excuse to push your and Harry’s friendship to the next level. And when you had it, you took the opportunity. Things continued to escalate, going from impersonal masturbation in the same room to swapping blowjobs and kissing. You were doing things not only to get yourselves off, but also to please the other. And then Nick came along.”

“What the fuck does he have to do with this?” Louis hisses.

“Everything actually,” Zayn answers, “I could see your, Harry, and his dynamic. You all were humping around together. But before that, you and Nick had the romantic aspect that you and Harry did not properly display to one another. You both were able to use Nick as a surrogate, you were doing things, such as date nights, with both of them that you were scared to do with Harry alone, because that would look more like a relationship than fuck buddies. So the three of you were nearly in a polyamorous relationship without calling it that, and that was a safe way for you to express your romantic desires for Harry without wondering what to call it, because you believed Nick was your main guy, differing from reality that Nick was a means to an end. I’m not saying you purposefully used Nick, but subconsciously it was probably an influence. After Nick left, you and Harry really did not change things. You kept on with the dates and nearly relationship activities.”

“Do you think Harry has feelings for me as well then?” Louis breaths.

“I… I’m not for sure. I think he does, but like you, I don’t think he fully realizes the scope of things,” Zayn admits.

“Then what the hell is Kendall!” Louis snaps.

“I think he was ready for something more, but with you two pretty much doing the same thing for the past couple years, he never thought it would move beyond that. Harry’s a romantic. When he found the chance at a relationship, he seized it,” Zayn sadly says.

“Fuck, what am I going to do?” Louis sighs with his face buried in his hands.

“Well what are you going to do about it?” Zayn then brings up.

“What do you mean?” Louis asks back.

“Are you going to tell him how you feel?” Zayn clarifies.

“Do you… Do you think he feels the same way about me?” Louis replies.

“Well I’ve never talk to Harry about it…” Zayn says.

“Oh please, I know you don’t need to talk to him to know what’s up,” Louis points out, “So what’s the verdict, the great and powerful Zayn?”

“I think he’s like you… where he does not fully grasp the extent of his feelings for you,” Zayn
“And now that he has Kendall, it would be a completely douche move of me to tell him the day after he gets a girlfriend,” Louis whines.

“But all of this stuff is special circumstance,” Zayn argues, “You’re right, Harry might find it suspicious that now is the moment you realize you like him. But on top of it all, I think you should tell Harry. You never know what might happen.”

“That maybe the exact reason why I shouldn’t tell him,” Louis sighs drinking his tea.

The doorbell rings to announce someone’s arrival, to which Zayn stands up, “You’re family left to run some errands earlier; I’ll get the door.”

“And some more tea too?” Louis suggests cutely, using a high pitch voice while holding up his cup.

“Ahh Louis I spoil you,” Zayn rolls his eyes as he takes the cup and leaves the room.

Shortly after a knock on the door announces Liam’s arrival, “Hey man, how you holding up?”

“Well I’m not crying so that’s a good sign,” Louis chuckles.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t have been more help last night,” Liam concedes as he sits himself upon Louis’s bed.

“No, you did exactly what I needed you to last night, thank you Liam,” Louis attempts to smile, “How’s Harry?”

“I wish I didn’t have to report this, but pretty dang happy,” Liam describes, “Though I’m sure he’s tried to get ahold of you a few times.”

“Good for him,” Louis says sadly, while he does check his phone for the first time since his crying fit. And Liam is not wrong, Harry has attempted to contact him asking how Zayn was, and Louis as well. The contact between the two stabs Louis in the heart. Everything that had no meaning now has meaning. And while it is sweet that Harry attempted to reach out, it reminds Louis he is probably with Kendall right now and not with him.

“Louis, I’ll be here for you,” Liam confirms to Louis, ”Through all of this.”

“You’re being really sweet,” Louis states cautiously. It is not that Louis and Liam were ever mean to each other. They always had a blast at group events together, but their personalities often felt incompatible. Louis is so outgoing and loud, while Liam comes off as a little more docile and occasionally abrasive to Louis's affectionate demeanor. So given Liam's sudden intimacy, Louis feels uneasy about the approach. Not that he does not want to be closer with Liam, it just appears out of character given past interactions.

“Look... I know I’ve fucked up a lot in my past. I’m not the person I want to be. I abandoned Zayn when he probably needed me the most. I wish I could change that, but I can’t. What I can do is change my future and decision making,” Liam explains, "So I’d like to make it up, somehow."

“So you’re hoping that by helping me, it will fix the wrongs you’ve done?” Louis clarifies.

“If you let me,” Liam pleads sincerely, “I want to start proving to myself, and to all of you, that I can be the good guy. I can be the hero.”
That is when Zayn enters with Louis’s new cup of tea in hand, while also giving a light smile to both of the boys. Louis then fixes his gaze upon Liam. Upon Liam’s face there is a smile, but also guilt. It is so hidden that the feeling would not be noticed by someone who was not searching for it. Louis does believe that Liam is honest in what he is saying, and he does not want to hold something against his friend when Liam wants to change his ways. Sure, it kind of feels like Liam is also using Louis as a means to an end during this process as well, but the overall sentiment is of the heart, so Louis will let it slide.

“I’ll let you,” Louis agrees with a squeeze of Liam’s shoulder, followed by Zayn handing him his tea.

“What are you all discussing?” Zayn asks not understanding the situation.

*BANG* the sound of something falling from hallway echoes through the house. The three boys quickly hop out of bed and stare at Louis’s closed door.

“Didn’t you say my family was out of town?” Louis attempts to confirm from Zayn.

“Yes they are…” Zayn says in a low voice.

“And if my family was home, they would have announced themselves and made a lot more noise than just that,” Louis describes.

“You two get behind me,” Liam orders as Louis and Zayn quickly obey. Liam changes into a boxing stance, holding both of his arms up in fists as if he was in the ring. Behind him stands Louis, and then Zayn following him as he clings to the fabric of Louis’s shirt.

The doorknob begins to shake while Zayn hides his head behind Louis’s torso.

“Three… Two… One…” Liam counts down.

*SMACK!* As the door opens, a single fist of Liam flies and smacks a figure in the face. But it is not stranger, it is Harry.

“Ouch fuck!” Harry recoils as he bumps into Kendall next to him.

“Harry!” Liam drops from his offensive stance, “It’s you.”

“Who the hell did you think it was?” Harry asks as Kendall helps Harry stand up straight by holding onto him by his arm.

“Coulda been a murderer…” Liam whines feeling stupid.

“Are you alright?” Kendall asks concerningly. Harry bends down for her to inspect the bruise, and then she presses a soft kiss against the bump on his forehead. Louis’s heart is knifed.

“Why didn’t you use the doorbell?” Louis barks.

“Since when have I used the doorbell or knocked at your house?” Harry questions in confusion. Which sadly, he is right. Neither Louis nor Harry have asked to come into each other’s houses since middle school.

“That’s right!” Harry remembers, straightening of his posture, “The reason why I am here. I was planning a better entrance than that, but here!” Harry extends his arms in front of Kendall, as if he is showing her off like a prize on a television game show, “Is my girlfriend Kendall!”
The three boys try to smile at Harry’s proclamation, because it is super cute how excited Harry is for this, but with Louis in the same room it is hard to act so supportive.

“Hi, I told Harry this was unnecessary since I’ve already met you all at various times, but hello again I’m his girlfriend,” She gleams to his friends.

“You hear that! My girlfriend!” Harry cheers.

“You seem really… joyful,” Louis comments, attempting to hide his sadness but failing epically.

“How could I not be? Got the girl of my dreams right here,” Harry replies as he squeezes Kendall into the side of his body.

“Of course,” Louis replies looking down at his feet.

“Where’s Niall?” Harry questions gazing around the room.

“Had a shift at Paul’s Café this morning,” Zayn answers as he rubs Louis’s back with one of his hands as a sign of moral support.

“Looks like we got one more place to hit baby,” Harry says to Kendall, “Ready to bounce?”

“Are you sure? We just got here. I don’t want to ditch your friends or anything,” She comments looking at the three boys.

“I’m sure you’ll be seeing a lot more of them from now on. Plus I think Louis needs to shower, he looks like a mess,” Harry giggles.

“Thanks for that Harry,” Louis glares sarcastically.

“I’ll see you guys later tonight? Oh wait, do we have plans?” Harry questions the boys, but then Kendall.

“Didn’t you want me to meet your mom once she gets off work?” Kendall reminds him as she lightly places her hands on Harry’s chest.

“That’s right!” Harry exclaims, “I will see you guys tomorrow then, let’s go.” Harry then interlocks his fingers with Kendall, pulling her out of the room as she waves with her free hand.

“Lou?” Zayn finally breaks the silence caused by Harry’s departure.

“What are you feeling?” Liam asks Louis, for what feels like the hundredth time.

“I’m never going to tell him,” Louis declares.

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Louis does not know where to go from here: from realizing you love your best friend. He cannot tell Harry. Harry has never appeared happier now that he has Kendall. But like sand in his palms, Louis is slowly losing pieces of Harry to her. And he knows the harder he squeezes, the more he has to lose.

But Harry is still Harry and Louis is still Louis… for now. They still have their closeness, but now that Louis is aware of his need for Harry, nothing seems sufficient anymore. Louis needs more but he cannot demand it. Even then simplest things he enjoyed about their friendship are being taken by Kendall.
“Gosh she wants me to meet her extended family this weekend, I’m so nervous,” Harry complains in his underwear as him and Louis watch a movie.

“I have never met one person who didn’t like you on first impression, I don’t know what you’re concerned about,” Louis sighs as he cannot help but check out his best friend’s half naked body.

“But the opinion of a girl’s family is very important,” Harry says, “Like if my friends’ parents don’t like me, so what, does it really matter? But if her family does not like me…”

“This is the 21st century Harry,” Louis replies, “She is allowed to have her own independent thoughts about you aside from her family.”

“You just don’t understand,” Harry whimpers.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Louis challenges.

“Um… with you liking guys it’s kinda different,” Harry offers quietly.

“So I can’t relate at all because I’m gay?” Louis attempts to confirm with hurt in his voice.

“That’s not what I meant,” Harry sighed, “Let’s go do something else.”

“Oh speaking of which, I found this really hot porn video I think you’d like,” Louis comments as he reaches to the floor for his laptop.

“Wait,” Harry says sharply, “Can we talk about that for a second?”

“What’s there to talk about?” Louis asks backs.

“I know we’ve always been really… comfortable around each other… but with me now having Kendall, I feel kind of… wrong about it,” Harry slowly admits.

“Wrong?” Louis questions, “What do you mean wrong?”

“Like it’s cheating,” Harry clarifies.

“We don’t have to touch each other, we can just sit and jack off to the same video,” Louis offers.

“I know, but it still feels like it’s pushing the boundary… I only want to be sexual with her, you know? What you and me were doing was just sex; we can turn it off and on. I’m sure you thought about the same thing when you and Nick were getting close to dating,” Harry suggests.

But Louis stares at Harry with the blankest expression. Just sex? Louis had hoped that maybe there was more to their actions. That the sexual exploration they experienced together symbolized something more that they both wanted but were both too scared to say. But not for Harry. Louis feels so used, even if Harry thought they were using each other. And never once did Louis think about ending things with Harry if things got serious with Nick, but Louis guesses that only shows where Louis’s priorities were and where Harry’s are currently.

“Yeah,” Louis lies, “Yeah, totally.”

“So we’re good?” Harry attempts to confirm with a thumbs up.

“Completely good,” Louis thumbs up back. Louis and Harry may be on good terms, but Louis himself is the complete opposite.
“You are not leaving this house!” Jay yells to Louis as he stands at the front door holding his backpack, Zayn waiting on the front steps for him.

“Why the hell not?” Louis hollers back.

“You’ve gotten D’s on your last two tests and you aren’t leaving this house until your grades are at least all C’s,” She screams, though Louis looks at Zayn with the most sickening look and pretends to shoot himself with a gun made of his fingers.

“You really expect me to study for four hours this evening? Goodness woman, I’ll study when I get back,” Louis declares.

“Louis William Tomlinson! I swear to God if you-“ But before Jay can finish her comment, Louis shuts the door and hops off the porch, assuming Zayn would be following after him.

“I thought we were hanging out at your home?” Zayn questions.

“Heh, not today let’s go to your place,” Louis suggests.

“I don’t know if Harry will be there, just so you know?” Zayn attempts to confirm.

“Wouldn’t matter to me if he was or wasn’t,” Louis replies as they start to walk down the street.

“What was all that about?” Zayn asks referencing the fight between Louis and Jay.

“I dunno,” Louis sighs, “She’s a fuckin’ bitch sometimes.” Zayn stares at him for another moment. This is not like Louis at all. Well it has become more frequent over the past couple months but it still shakes Zayn whenever he sees Louis acting as such… an asshole.

Zayn cannot put an exact date on when Louis became this. It was a gradual spiral down into the abyss. As Harry became closer with Kendall, Louis tried to keep a smiling face. But one day it was too much, too exhausting to keep up the charade. One Saturday he laid in bed all day, staring at the ceiling while playing the world’s angriest playlist known to man, only crawling out of his room to eat and piss.

After that became a repetitive pattern, the boys started taking him out to parties and raves to distract Louis from whatever was eating him alive. But Louis became addicted to the rush, chugging down whatever alcohol he could find followed by random pills some stranger would give him. Louis Tomlinson transformed into a party boy, every event becoming blackout drunk within the first couple hours.

That is when Louis’s grades began to collapse, particularly in the classes that he shared with Harry. The varsity soccer coach removed him from the team when he refused to clean up his act. But that was not motivation for self-improvement. It instead gave Louis more free time to hookup with random guys and scour for drugs.

“Man, you need a haircut,” Zayn says as he attempts to measure the length of Louis’s hair with his fingers, “How long has it been since you got one?”

“Uh…” Louis wonders, “I got one right before the homecoming dance so two months?”

“And your scruff…” Zayn hints at.
“You don’t like how manly it makes me look?” Louis chuckles.

“A hedgehog with an angry face is more like it,” Zayn laughs.

“You’re just jealous,” Louis replies.

“Jealous of what? I can actually grow facial hair and make it look good,” Zayn smirks as Louis punches him on the arm, “I only choose to shave so guys like you have a fighting chance to appear as sexy as me.”

“Cocky aren’t we?” Louis jabs.

“It’s not cocky if it’s true,” Zayn points out.

“I actually didn’t mean to grow out my whiskers,” Louis explains, “I just got kinda lazy and thought well who do I have to look good for anyways?”

“Yourself,” Zayn answers, “And what about all those dates you’ve been going on recently?”

“Heh, who gives a fuck what they think,” Louis shrugs his shoulders.

“You apparently,” Zayn states, “So what do you wanna do?”

“Smoke,” Louis says casually.

“I don’t think I have any on me,” Zayn replies.

“Don’t worry about it. I got a gram here in my bag,” Louis shakes his backpack.

“A gram?!” Zayn exclaims, “Where did you get the money for that?”

“I’m really good at giving head,” Louis answers bluntly. Zayn laugh loudly at that comment, expecting it to be a joke. But when he looks over at Louis, he does not even have a smile.

“Oh,” Zayn coughs, “You aren’t lying.”

“What can I say,” Louis sighs, “I give amazing head. One of the only good things I am capable of doing lately.”

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“Pass me back the bowl,” Louis commands as he and Zayn sit on Zayn’s bed at his and Harry’s home. Zayn and Louis face away from each other, leaning against each other back-to-back.

“Dude you just gave it to me,” Zayn playfully hisses, “Chill.” Zayn then takes a hit from the pipe as Louis hands him the emptied paper towel roll filled with used dryer sheets.

“Ahhh there’s my baby,” Louis gleams as Zayn hands the pipe to him. Zayn exhales his smoke into the emptied roll.

“It’s a very beautiful babe,” Zayn comments admiring it.

“It’s wicked!” Louis laughs, pointing at the various twists of green and black glass inside the pipe, artistically made to look appealing on the eyes.

“How’d you get this? Back alley handjobs?” Zayn giggles.
“Blowjobs dear, my specialty is blowjobs,” Louis replies as he takes another hit.

“My bad, I must have misread your ad in the newspaper,” Zayn quips.

“Nah, I actually saved up for it,” Louis says as he gives the pipe back to Zayn, “Niall was able to get me some part time hours at Paul’s Café.”

“What a sweetheart…” Zayn whispers, “Can I ask you something?”

“Probably,” Louis fidgets as he breathes his smoke into used paper towel roll.

“Has Niall been acting strange to you?” Zayn asks as he lights the bowl on the pipe.

“Well Niall is a very strange kid to begin with,” Louis points out.

“Lately he’s become so distant… getting two jobs out of nowhere…” Zayn exhales.

“I’m sure he’s just trying to be responsible,” Louis suggests.

“One time he said to me he’s trying to do what’s best for our future… What if he thinks us breaking up is best for our future, but he does not want to break up with me, so he’s creating conditions for me to break up with him?” Zayn guess.

“Whoa whoa whoa,” Louis turns around to face Zayn. Zayn is not expecting this movement and nearly rolls backwards onto the floor, but Louis quickly catches him and spins him around to look at Louis, “Aren’t you getting a little head of yourself?”

“It makes sense,” Zayn whispers, “I barely see him anymore. He appears so preoccupied…”

“Look I can’t say much,” Louis says softly grabbing his friend by the shoulders as a sign of support, “But what I can say is that he’s not going to dump you, and neither does he want you to dump him. Gawd fuck, it’d destroy him.”

“Can’t say much?” Zayn repeats, “What do you know Louis Tomlinson?”

“Hm?” Louis grunts.

“You know more than you’re letting on,” Zayn points at Louis’s face, “Spill.”

“Do you want another hit?” Louis tries to change the subject.

“Hey?” Harry comes into the room unannounced, “Can you keep it down, me and Kendall are-“

Louis quickly grabs his drugs and hide them behind his back as him and Zayn turn to face Harry.

“Zayn, what did I say about that shit in my house?” Harry accuses.

“It’s mine, not his, I’m sorry,” Louis quickly defends.

Harry sighs and rolls his eyes as he exits the room, “Niall just showed up by the way.”

In Harry’s absence from the door, Niall appears to fill his place, “Hey babe! I got a free hour so I thought I could eat you out the way like- oh Louis!”

Zayn turns bright pink as Louis laughs so hard at Niall’s suggestion that he rolls off the bed, him and his backpack flipping upside down.
“Didn’t know you would be here,” Niall whimpers as he shuts the door during his entrance.

“Sorry, don’t mean to be a cockblock… or in this case an assblock,” Louis laughs again.

“I haven’t seen you in a while either so that is just fine,” Niall grins as he stands next to Zayn, slightly rubbing his shoulder.

“I actually should be going.” Louis replies as he picks up his bag from the floor, closing the top zipper as he does so, “You two deserve some alone time, being a couple after all.”

“But you just got here!” Zayn whines.

“I gotta date with this Asian twink named Frank,” Louis says as he pushes himself to his feet, “It’s really no problem.”

“So I finally have an evening with you, and you just bounce?” Zayn complains.

“Fish gotta swim, birds gotta eat, Louis gotta suck dick,” Louis comments, pulling the backpack over his shoulder, “I will see you two tomorrow at school and we’ll make plans for some time soon, yeah?”

“All you ever do is hook up with guys anymore,” Niall charges, causing Louis to burrow his eyebrows in frustration, “Come on, just stay for an hour more.”

“I’ll make it up to you guys, I promise,” Louis swears, “Scout’s honor.”

“I wish I believed you…” Zayn whispers.

“What was that?” Louis barks.

“Nothing Louis,” Zayn rolls his eyes, “We’ll see you around.”

All Louis can do is somberly shake his head at his two friends while he exits the room. Zayn throws himself against the bed in defeat, feeling the pressure that he cannot keep anyone in his life that he deeply cares about.

But Zayn opens eyes, being able to peer over the edge of his blanket to see a green folder lying halfway under the bed. He assumes it must have fallen out of Louis’s bag when he crashed onto the floor only moments early. Zayn then calls, “Louis I think you dropped something!”

Zayn notices the bright colored edge of a broacher peeking out of the folder. As he gathers up Louis’s item and opens it up to inspect it, he sees it is a pamphlet from a college a couple states away. It is not the only thing in there. There is information from several universities within the folder, along with notes written by Louis about the pros and cons of each college. Louis is leaving Zayn thinks.

“Yeah?” Louis asks as he reenteres the room.

“Louis?” Niall mumbles while looking over his boyfriend’s shoulder.

“What the fuck is this?!” Zayn hollers, “You’re abandoning us?!”

“Sh!” Louis commands as he quietly shuts the door.

“You weren’t even going to tell us?!” Zayn yells in rage.

“Quiet, I don’t want Harry to hear,” Louis begs.
“What the fuck,” Zayn repeats as he tosses the folder at Louis, all of the broachers and pamphlets falling to the ground after hitting Louis in the stomach.

“Please, calm down,” Louis orders as he attempts to gather up the mess Zayn had created.

“You don’t have the right to tell me that,” Zayn hisses.

“Try to understand,” Louis pleads from his friends.

“Understand what? That you’re running away,” Niall answers, “From us?”

“Don’t you see how miserable I am?!” Louis finally releases in a fit of anger. Niall and Zayn go quiet to let Louis vent, “For the past two months all I have felt is sadness… that eventually drifted into depression. And now I just feel empty. And I don’t know which is worse because feeling something, even shitty, is better than feeling nothing at all. And the only relief I get from this is a drug induced haze or the occasional pointless hookup. But after those pass, all I want is Harry to feel that void. And he can’t. And I hate being this needy and dependent on him. This version of myself that I am now, I don’t want to be it.”

“You know Harry won’t be with this girl forever,” Niall states.

“If it isn’t her, it would be someone else,” Louis replies, “Harry ignited a fire inside of me. At first it was a slow burn, but now it’s developed into this out of control wildfire that is razing everything to the ground. And I can’t stop it. It still feels like I love him a little more every day, even as it feels like he’s growing farther away from me. Harry could have me whenever we want me, and if he does not realize that by now, when will he? I read a quote that said sometimes the person that sets your heart on fire is not the person you spend the rest of your life with. Harry lit that fire. And maybe I have to face that he’s not meant for me.”

“That doesn’t mean you have to leave us…” Zayn whimpers.

“Guys, but every time I see Harry…” Louis sits on the bed next to Zayn and gently rubs his hand, “It burns. And I know it’s not going to stop burning anytime soon. Every time I see him, he causes this fire to re-erupt. I need to go somewhere where I won’t see him everyday to let myself… move on. Please understand, this is my last resort. I may not be able to stop him from being the fire in my life, but maybe the best thing I can do is stay away from it…"

“But we made a plan. That we would stay here together a year after graduation to wait for Harry and Liam,” Niall states defiantly.

“I can’t do that. I know what I said, but look at me. I’m a walking train wreck. I need to do what’s best for me, and right now that is being away from Harry. Please don’t tell Harry about this, or Liam either just so Harry does not find out through another set of lips. I can’t apologize enough. I wish I was strong enough to do what I said I would, but I’m not. And I want to be happy. Please tell me I at least deserve that,” Louis pleads.

“We won’t tell… But please don’t keep us in the dark. Let us know your plan,” Zayn gives in.

“I will when I have one. Right now, the possibility alone of being able to escape this personal hell I’m in is the only thing keeping me going… I gotta go meet Frank, but we can talk about this more later, okay?” Louis attempts to confirm.

“Yeah… more later,” Zayn solemnly nods.

“Thanks guys. I love you both,” Louis says while he exits the room for the second time.
Niall and Zayn stand in the middle of the room devastated by the secret just revealed. For both of them, the longest constant in their lives since they moved to this shitty town has been Louis, and now he will be gone. The one thing they assumed they could always depend on will soon be no more. Sensing Zayn’s abandonment, along with desiring his own comfort, Niall tightly hugs his boyfriend.

“I lost my family… and now I’m losing Louis as well,” Zayn whines into Niall’s neck.

“No, not if I have anything to say about it,” Niall vows with disgust, anger, and regret due to the feeling of powerlessness with the events taking place around his life.

Chapter End Notes

Hope ya'll been handling all the 1D drama this past week! If there are any readers out there who just enjoy reading about them but don't actually follow the band, keep doing that, it's good for your health.

Anyways, next chapter will be extremely fluffy, cute, romantic, smutty, and a plot twist. So, I'll see you all next Friday! It's my birthday next week by the way so if the chapter does not come out on time, that's why.
Chapter 19: Act My Age (Future Mr. Horan & Future Mr. Malik)

Chapter Summary

Niall finally executes his grand plan upon Zayn, but will Zayn go along with it? This situation causes a nose-diving Louis to commit a radical act of desperation.

Chapter Notes

This is so late and I am so sorry. My birthday and OTRA KC kept me hella busy, plus this chapter turned out to be a lot longer than I thought it would be. So bare with me, I really enjoyed writing it and I hope you all like it as well.

Chapter's song: Act My Age by One Direction

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Zayn sits in the backrow of his English classroom doodling a picture of a very large Louis standing on top of the globe with a suitcase in hand. Unusual to the picture though, Louis’s feet are on fire and large burnt craters are around his flamed feet.

He has not been okay since Louis told him his plan to leave. Well to be fair, Zayn has not been okay for a long time. With his family kicking him out, Niall hardly giving any time to him, and Louis spilling his strategy for departure, Zayn has been on a very lonely road. His wardrobe has become increasingly filled with pure black, and tattoos now line this body as a way for him to escape from all free time that he has increasingly collected.

Zayn looks to the two desk on either side of him. Normally, Louis sits to his left and Niall sits to his right, but today neither of them attended class. So the nearly empty hole around him in the student-filled classroom is just the most terrible metaphor for his life recently. Niall nor Louis answer his text messages about where their whereabouts are.

“Mrs. McKinney?” The school intercom system interrupts the class, “Can you please send Zayn Malik to the office. He will not be returning to class so make sure he brings all of his belongings with him.”

“Can do,” The curly-haired blonde teacher replies with a smile, “Zayn?”

“Ohhhhhh” The class moans in unison, acting as if they believe the office called Zayn for a disciplinary reason.

Zayn lets out a large sigh as he collects a book and binder from on top of his desk and pushes them into the backpack.

“Tell Louis and Niall hi for me,” The teacher says with an obvious large grin.

“What?” Zayn question.
The teacher’s eyes shoot open as if she knows she has said too much, “Nothing! I’ll see you Monday, probably.”

Zayn walks down the long hallway of the school, replaying various scenarios in his head for the possible reason why he could be called to the office. He does not have any weed on him currently, so it could not be for that. He has never cheated on a test before… okay, one time but who has not? He has skipped class before, but why would they punish him now for that today when it was so long ago?

What if this has nothing to do with him? He has been unable to contact Louis nor Niall all day. What if something happened to one or both of them? That would explain a lot of things. Shit by the time he arrives to the office, he has internally worked himself up into a nervous frenzy thinking of all the ways the two most important people in his life could be hurt.

“Zayn,” One of the school’s secretaries gleams with a warm smile, “You are being called out of school for the remainder of the day.”

“What?” Zayn inquires, “How?” That reminds Zayn of one of the few issues he has with living in the Styles’ household. With Anne not officially being his legal guardian, she is unable to do things such as call him out of school or make medical decisions for him during times of emergency.

“Your mother called earlier today,” The secretary hands Zayn an official excusal notice along with an envelope attached to the slip, “She asked for you to go to the home of Harry Styles as fast as possible.”

“She did? Did she say why?” Zayn questions.

“I guess you will just have to leave to find out,” She smirks, “Open the envelope once you arrive outside.” She obviously knows more than she is letting on Zayn thinks. But rather than waste his time prodding her for answers, he takes the items she hands him and exits the building.

As soon as the sunlight hits him, he tears open the envelope to see a lone car key. Upon feeling its grooves, Zayn recognizes where the key fits in to: Niall’s truck. But this is not the key Niall owns. It appears new.

Zayn then looks up the sidewalk to see Niall’s truck parked in one of the first parking spots closest to the school. Why would Niall’s truck be at school if he was not in class? Nothing is making sense in light of the events taking place, but Zayn sure does not want walk all the way to Harry’s house. And he must have that key for a reason. Zayn hops into Niall’s vehicle and drives to his home.

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“Anne? Harry?” Zayn asks to the empty house as enters his home away from home.

“Up here sweetie!” Anne calls out, sounding to Zayn like she is located in his bedroom.

“What’s happening? Is everything okay? Look I know there were some dishes left over from last night’s meal, but I swear they’re not mine,” Zayn rambles.

“Way to throw me under the bus man!” Harry laughs as he and his mother sit upon Zayn’s bed, both of them smiling ridiculously for no reason known to Zayn.

“Then what?” Zayn inquires, “I know only my mother could have called me out of class? Did something happen at home? Is my family okay?”
“Zayn,” Anne walks over to Zayn, peacefully putting her hands on his shoulders in a motherly essence, “Sh… Nothing bad is going on I swear. Will you calm down? You’re talking a mile per minute.”

“Okay, okay,” Zayn inhales and exhales a few calming breaths, “Can you please tell me what I’m doing here?”

“Think it’s time mum?” Harry asks, horribly failing at hiding his grin.

“Read it Harry,” His mother agrees.

“Read it?” Zayn repeats.

Harry pulls out another envelope that was hidden under his bum. He rips the top open and removes a folded letter from within it.

He then clears his throat:

“Zayn my love,

Oh I am so overjoyed this day has finally come.

While there are many places this could have started,

I chose here because Anne opened up her house to become your home,

Just as your love became my home.

But now let’s go back to where this really began,

You, me, and Louis sitting in the sand."

“What?” Zayn questions blankly.

“Would you rather read it yourself?” Harry ask as he raises the letter towards Zayn. Zayn seizes the letter and quickly reads over it. It is Niall’s handwriting: a messy cursive message.

“Wow he really sucks at poetry,” Zayn chuckles.

“That’s your first comment, really?” Anne smirks.

“Began… sitting in the sand… The playground!” Zayn exclaims exciting, understanding where the poem wants to take him next.

“Oh, I almost forgot,” Anne stops Zayn from sprinting out of the room, “There’s a surprise for you in the closet.”

Zayn glides to his closet and opens up the door. All of his usual clothing has been pushed to the far walls, as a black, long-sleeved buttoned shirt with white lightning bolts stretching all the fabric hangs alone. A red tie is also draped over the shoulders of shirt.

“Shit,” Zayn swears as he touches the fabric of the shirt, “This is high quality.”

“Do you like it?” Harry question while Zayn stares in awe of the shirt.

“Fucking- I mean freaking love it,” Zayn corrects himself in the presence of Anne.
“Well put them on!” Anne lightly jumps in excitement.

“Who picked this out?” Zayn inquires while he pulls off his current band t-shirt to put on his new clothing.

“Niall,” Harry scoffs, “Who else would it be?”

“Didn’t realize he had such great fashion taste,” Zayn replies as he buttons up the shirt bottom to top.

“He doesn’t,” Harry laughs, “But you do, and he knows you.”

“What is all of this even for?” Zayn asks while he unfolds his collar up to place the tie around his neck, “I know it’s not our anniversary…”

“You still have no idea?” Harry asks unbelievably.

“It’s a good thing you’re cute sweetie,” Anne winks.

Zayn walks over to his mirror watch himself correctly put the tie in a knot. Once he is finished, he folds down his collar and tucks the bottom of the shirt into his black skinny jeans. Stepping back, he admires his full body image in the reflection. He feels absolutely beautiful, the lightning on the shirt stretching all over his body and disappearing into his jeans as the red tie adds a hint of color to the entirety of his black and white outfit.

As he attempts to rub the few wrinkles out that are left on his shirt, he feels a small card in the upper left pocket. Pulling it out, he unfolds the paper to see the writing of Niall: *You must look absolutely breath-taking right now ;)*. Zayn cannot help but smile at the comment as he reads.

“You best be off dear,” Anne brings Zayn back to reality, “I believe you have somewhere to be.”

“Yes, yes,” Zayn agrees, “The playground.”

“Good luck man,” Harry smiles as he hugs Zayn.

“Oh me too!” Anne cheers as she wraps her arm around both the boys.

“Am I dying?” Zayn chuckles, “Why’s everyone being so nice?”

“We’ll see you at home tonight,” Anne dodges his question with a light push towards the door.

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By the time Zayn arrives at his old elementary school, all the students already vacated the premises. As he parks the truck on the edge of the playground, he sees a single figure sitting near the tree where he, Niall, and Louis congregated as children. The person has his or her back to Zayn, wearing a baseball cap flipped backwards and a loose tank top of the Derby County Football Club.

“Niall,” Zayn breathes as he unbuckles his seatbelt, “Finally.”

Zayn lightly jogs towards the figure. He probably should not work up a sweat in his outfit, but the suspense kills him. Normally he is the one who knows everything and everybody else is left in the dark, but not this time and he hates it. This needs to change fast.

"Hey you," He finally arrives where the person sits, “What the fuck is going on?”

The individual stands up with his back still to Zayn. The revelation of the person's height forces
Zayn to realize that the person is too small to be Niall.

“Surprise bitch,” the person’s voice reveals his identity: Louis.

“Mother fucking gawd,” Zayn swears, “Why in the hell are you wearing Niall’s clothing, you twat.”

“You really thought I was Niall, didn’t ya?” Louis smiles, “Don’t even know the backside of your true love? How sad.”

“Clever disguise,” Zayn rolls his eyes.

“Can’t believe he made me wear this,” Louis rubs his arms for warmth, “Fuckin’ freezing. I must really love you guys.”

“What do you got for me Louis?” Zayn sighs, realizing his adventure is not over yet.

“Needy, needy, needy,” Louis chants as he pulls an envelope out of his pocket. After ripping it open, he proclaims:

Little did I know seven years ago,
A boy on a swing disguised himself as my soulmate.

If I would known that then,
I would have ran in the opposite direction out of fear.

But now that I know all that you are
And all that you have make me feel
I would have sprinted to you at the speed of light
Just to say hello.

Now come on Romeo
To where you became my Juliet

Zayn looks over at the same swing where the three boys met all those year ago. He remembers the isolation and how different he felt from everybody else around him. And then these two random bubbly faces appeared out of the chaos of recess.

“You can’t believe how relieved I am that I was held back. I don’t know who I’d be without you or Niall. Plus fuck, I can’t imagine being an adult right now. I can barely take of myself. But for all the shit I’m going through, if you think I’m a mess now, I’d be nothing without you two. After my parents’ separation, I really did not believe in love or people who are meant to be together. While you and Niall are my best friends, you two are like my surrogate parents at the same time. So thank you for giving me something to believe in,” Louis describes to his best friend, causing a large grin from Zayn, "No matter how much I am hurting now, you and him prove to me that love is real."

“Where is all this coming from?” Zayn wipes a lone tear from his eye.

“Because I know I freaked you out when you figured out I had a plan to leave. After I told you guys, Niall yelled, a lot. I have never been more scared of him in my life to be honest. But realize, where ever I go, you’ll be with me. I’ll call you and we’ll Skype and we’ll do trips. I’m just saying, we
aren’t done. I promise you,” Louis hugs his friend tight, pressing a light kiss on his cheek, “You look so lovely tonight. Niall has no idea what he has coming.”

“Why is everyone being so sentimental with me?!” Zayn finally squawks sincerely.

“Because…” Louis opens his mouth and then stops, “I think you idled here long enough. Don’t want to make you late. Do you know where you are to go next?”

“Romeo and Juliet… That’s…” Anxiety fills Zayn, “My old home…”

“Sh…” Louis attempts to calm Zayn by grabbing his hands, “You have nothing to fear… well as long as you get there on time. So you better move your happy ass along. And here, if it feels like you can’t do it, take this. It’s Niall’s favorite snapback. He’ll be with you, always.”

“Okay, I can do that,” Zayn nervously nods as he stares at the hat Louis just handed him. It is Niall’s favorite; he wears it so often, it is weird not seeing the hat on Niall’s head.

“If you get scared, you can call me on your drive there and we can talk it out, okay?” Louis offers.

“Really?” Zayn confirms.

“I’m sorry I’ve been really spotty recently, but I will always be here when you need. Just tell me it’s urgent, and I’ll drop everything,” Louis promises, “Now go.”

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Zayn takes a deep breath as he parks the truck in front of the Malik household. He was kicked out over Summer, and now Winter has set in during the final semester of his senior year. His mother allowed him in once while his father was at work to gather some more clothes and possessions, but besides for few messages from his sisters on social media he has had no contact with his family. It can be easily seen why he has much apprehension about returning.

He swallows nervously as he steps out of the truck. He nearly knocks on the front door when he remembers Romeo and Juliet. Niall was in his backyard that night and climbed through his window. If Niall’s clues had lead Zayn correct so far, that is where Zayn is supposed to go.

He pushes open the back gate, still cautious about running into any family members. But neither Niall nor Louis would lead him wrong. If Niall has this grand scheme, this should be another part.

“My boy,” Patricia gleams at seeing her son, while she stands a few feet from his former bedroom window.

“Mom?” Zayn sighs as he trots to her, “What are you doing here?”

“It’s our home, why wouldn’t I be here?” She answers, “Gosh you look so much older.”

“It’s only been six months mom,” He replies as she cups his cheeks with her hands.

“Oh baby what’s with this? You need to shave,” She laughs as he rubs his facial hair.

“I thought I wasn’t allowed back here,” He says referring back to some painful memories.

“Your father is at work for the time being. Niall made sure to plan this out for you to arrive when he wouldn’t be here,” Patricia replies, “But before we move on to something more important, I must tell you: I am so sorry my dear. I’m sorry I didn’t fight for you to stay. While it does not excuse what happened, I was in shock. But as the dust settled, and I realized how quiet the house was and how I
didn’t have any new drawings to hang on our fridge, it was wrong of me to let you go. You’re my baby boy above everything else.”

“When I was pregnant with you, people would always ask if we wanted a boy or a girl. Your father, being who he is, always said he wanted a son. I would say it didn’t matter to me, as long as you were healthy and happy. If gender did not matter to me then, it should not matter to me now. If it does not matter what gender you are, then there should be no bearing on what gender you happen to fall in love with. Niall even explained to me that you had known you were attracted to men since you were age thirteen. You did not become gay, it was just something you always been. I loved you when you were gay even if I did not know it yet. I only happened to be someone who found out later than everybody else. And while I may not fully understand how you feel and what you do, I know he loves you,” Patricia concludes.

“He? Dad?” Zayn reiterates.

“Well your Dad does love you believe it or not, but I meant Niall,” She explains.

“He does,” Zayn gleams, “But what makes you say that?”

“Because, for being married as long as I have been, I know what love looks like. He took care of you when I couldn’t. And the way he talks about you, it is complete adoration and commitment,” She answers sweetly.

“Talks about me?” Zayn inquires, “When have you talked to Niall about us?”

Instead of answering, a tear runs down her cheek. It is not a tear of sadness, because she smiles as she wipes it from her cheek. She dodges the question, “I have a gift for you.”

“Of course you do,” Zayn chuckles as he rolls his eyes, becoming extremely exhausted of all the secret keeping.

“But there are conditions before you get it,” She begins, “When I give you this, you must promise and swear to not open it until Niall instructs you to. If I learn that you opened this before then…”

“I know, I know I brought you into this world, I can take you right back out,” Zayn replays the threat echoed by his mother throughout his childhood.

“Good boy,” She laughs, “I raised you well. I know the temptation is great, but you’ll be so elated if you wait, so please, don’t ruin this for you or Niall.”

“I get it. Don’t open it,” Zayn confirms, “Can I please have it?”

Patricia takes in a large breath, attempting to hold back more tear, “I just cannot believe you’re becoming a man, and I missed six months of the end of your childhood.”

“I’ve been eighteen for a few months now,” Zayn reminds her.

“This is different,” She states as he reaches into her pants pocket, pulling out a very small box. Zayn looks very peculiarly at it, the outside texture of the box being a dark-colored felt. But it is very small, the only thing it reminds Zayn of is a… jewelry box?

“What’s in here?” he asks as his fingers graze the opening edge of the box.

“Ah, ah, ah,” His mother pulls the cube back from his clutches, “What’s the deal about this? You need to promise you won’t open it before I give it to you.”
“I already did,” Zayn sighs.

“No, you said I get it. Now you must promise, or you’ll never lay your fingers upon it,” Patricia demands.

“You didn’t say I couldn’t ask,” he answers slyly.

“You get your sass from my side of the family so I’ll let that slide,” She chuckles, “Promise now.”

“I promise I will not open the box until Niall tells me too,” Zayn swears.

“It’s my mother’s, so don’t lose it.” Patricia holds up her hand in front of Zayn, to drop the box. He places his hand underneath. She lets go of the box, and it lands in his palm. While the box looks light, for how serious his mother acts about it, it feels as heavy as a ton. His fingers rub over where the box pops open, but he removes his fingers and slips it into his pocket.

Some more tears roll down his mother cheeks, so Zayn wraps her in his arms. But maybe she was right about him looking older, because his height now towers over her.

“Mom, I’m right here. I live in town, you can see me whenever you want. And I may legally be an adult, but I still need you. I miss you every day,” He declares trying to soothe her.

“I know baby,” She pulls away from him, “Oh I have one more thing for you.” As with the last two gifts he received, Patricia tears open an envelope with another instructional poem.

She reads:

*Things do not always go according to plan*

*But the pain makes you strong*

*Your strength makes you beautiful.*

*And that pain led us to each other*

*As if some grand design knew it was meant to be.*

*Even when the people we love tell us we are wrong*

*All I have to do is remember when your hand interlocked with mine*

*That shook my soul for the very first time*

Zayn thinks over the words he just heard. He remembers the first time he and Niall truly held hands. It was the day after Niall’s and his first kiss. Niall had convinced Zayn to attend school, but Zayn’s feet froze before stepping in the door in fear of seeing Liam after the heartbreak. But Niall took his hand and his fear vanished at Niall’s touch, “Back to the high school?”

“He needed to get you out of school for a bit,” She explains, “I’ll see you later tonight darling.”

“You will?” He confirms.

“I believe so,” She answers, “You must leave.”

“I love you,” Zayn says answers warmly.
“I love you more,” Particia responds, “Now go. Niall is not known for his patience.”

As Zayn walks back to Niall’s truck, he rubs over the small box located in his pocket. The temptation is killing him, more than the temptation to have a glass of water on a hot summer day during Ramadan. But his mother told him that if he opened the box, it would not only ruin the surprise for him, but also for Niall. And Zayn cannot ruin this for Niall. Remembering that, he removes his hand from the box. If he cannot be strong for himself, he can for Niall. While he gets back into Niall’s truck, he peers over his shoulder at the home he grew up in. After exchanging such warm affection with his mother, the anger and fear he felt about the house began to dissipate, being replaced with the love and community he used to feel as a child.

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Arriving back at the school, the parking lot is now empty. The closest spot to the school has a sign planted near it. Zayn drives up to it, seeing sketched on the sign: Reserved for the gorgeous Zayn Malik. He blushes, parking in the area that appears to be his.

But as Zayn now approaches his school on foot, it hits him how empty this school is. With all the doors locked, how is he to get inside?

“There you are,” a voice calls out as one of the front door opens, “I was beginning to wonder if Niall had outsmarted you.”

“Liam,” Zayn grins, “I guess it would not be complete if I wouldn’t have seen you during all of this.”

“If it makes you feel any better, I’m the last one,” Liam offers as he steps outside, letting the door shut behind him.

“Wait!” Zayn yells as he attempts to catch the door before it closes, but his reflexes do not move fast enough. The door clicks shut, “How are we to get in!?”

“I have a key for being the editor-in-chief, remember?” Liam reminds him, “One of the reasons why he wanted me here, and if all else fails, Niall’s inside so he could let us in if the worst came to happen,” Liam says.

“So Niall’s in there?” Zayn points, “It’s almost over; I don’t think I can take any more of this.”

“Really?” Liam asks, “For all the work he put into this, it’s so adorable. I’d wish it’d never end.”

“I would probably enjoy it a lot more if I knew what he was doing all this for,” Zayn explains.

“You still really have no idea?” Liam questions in confusion, “You’re dense bro.”

“I’m not a big fan of surprises,” Zayn states.

“I won’t keep you waiting then,” Liam grins, “But first…”

“I’ve had enough gifts,” Zayn whines, “I don’t know if my arms can take anymore.”

“It’s light, I promise,” Liam tells Zayn as he grabs his key opens up the door. Liam reaches inside for the ground, grabbing two items: a rose and an envelope.

“While this is from Niall, this is something I should have given you a long time ago,” Liam extends his arm out to Zayn, for Zayn to grab the rose from him.

“What do you mean?” Zayn takes the flower.
I don’t think I ever told you this, but I’m sorry. I’m sorry I lead you on for years. It is not that I did not realize how adorable, caring, and magnificent you were. I was young. Well I’m still young. I cannot act like I did not know what you wanted. You wanted to be loved, and I knew that. But I really liked having my dick sucked. It was wrong of me to assume you’d always be there waiting for me. To some extent though, I’m happy we happened and ended. I don’t mean for the fact of you hurting. I never wanted that. But you got to experience what love is when inadequate, one sided. And now you know what love is when it’s true. The way he looks at you, you should never question his intentions or desires. If I damaged any of your trust for other people, because you expect them to do what I did to you, that’s the greatest mistake of my life so far. So I hope that rose symbolizes everything that I should have been but wasn’t. And everything that Niall is for you.”

“This day is almost too much for me,” Zayn chuckles, “I accept your apology. I’m very past the stage of being mad about all that went down, but thank you. It means a lot to that kid who was heartbroken.”

“Oh honey,” Liam hugs Zayn, placing a light kiss on his cheek, “You haven’t seen nothing yet. Ready for your last poem?”

Liam reads:

*I never meant to choose this path
But here we are.*

*I never meant to fall in love
But here I am.*

*I never meant to find my soulmate
But here I did.*

*I stand where I realized that no girl could ever compare to you
But now I know no one can compare to you.*

*Now follow, follow the yellow brick road
To where I hope you too know the same thing.*

“Wow,” Zayn smiles, “So he wants me where we sang together…”

“Bingo,” Liam agrees as he places his key in the lock once again, “Good luck. I can’t wait to hear all about it.” Liam opens the door Zayn, holding it for him for Zayn to enter. Zayn nods, trying to hold all of the items he has gained over the day: the key to the truck, Niall’s cap, the small box, the rose, and four poems.

He hears the door shut behind him as he attempts to organize all of his gifts into an easy-to-carry pile. But as he gazes downwards towards his hands, he notices something below his feet. Upon further inspection, he sees a long trail of yellow flower pedals leading to the auditorium. While Zayn follows the intended path for him, his heart begins to pound. He does not know what he fears, because he does not believe what he is leading to is bad news. If Niall was going to break up with him or something similar, he would not have brought in all of their friends and family. It is the mystery that terrifies him.
All Zayn craves is stability. The past year of his life has been racked by the unknown, not knowing what is coming next. He thought he always would have his family, and they removed him for their house. He assumed Louis’s friendship was eternal, and now he will be gone as well. Niall provided a stability that he never felt before: mutual romantic love. But with Niall going MIA recently, even that has not felt unwavering.

Zayn pushes open the auditorium door, to see the trail of pedal leading up to the stage. There upon the stage stands his boyfriend Niall Horan. Niall turns around, his face lighting up upon seeing Zayn. Niall is clothed in suave navy blue suit, with a pink undershirt and blue and pink stripped tie. His hair is spiked up, shining in the limelight coming from above. Niall gestures to the audio and lighting room in the auditorium, and within a few seconds of that Ed Sheeran’s “Photograph” begins playing from the sound system. All the lights darken around the room as more shine upon the stage. Zayn is frozen in awe. His chest becomes tight, feeling impossible to swallow.

Niall extends his hand out to Zayn, lightly waving for Zayn to join him. Zayn’s feet start to move; Niall’s movements calming his apprehension. Zayn gazes around the room, unable to see who is in the audio and lighting room, but the rest of the auditorium is empty. The pedals stop at the edge of the stage. Zayn looks up to see Niall’s arm right in front of him. Niall helps Zayn up, pulling him onto the stage meant only for them.

“You look more beautiful than I could have ever imagined,” Niall grins at his boyfriend.

“Look- Look at you, shit,” Zayn stammers, wishing he could have said something more majestic, feeling horribly inadequate from the events he experienced today due to Niall.

Niall then turns to the audio and lighting room, giving whoever is inside a thumbs up. The music ends, and within a few moments Louis and Harry exit the room.

“You remember how to turn off the lights?” Louis calls out as he and Harry walk down the stairs to the main floor.

“Not my first time here,” Niall chuckles, “Thanks so much guys.” Louis and Harry graciously nod, leaving Niall and Zayn to their lonesome.

“Niall, what’s going on?” Zayn finally asks, “What is all this?”

“First, I’ll take this stuff,” Niall says as he seizes all of the gifts in Zayn’s hands besides for the box, “Except that, you keep that. You haven’t opened that right?”

“For your sake I haven’t,” Zayn answers as Niall sets all of the items on the edge of the stage. He then rejoins Zayn on the center.

“I have a lot to say; I hope you are ready for it all,” Niall tells Zayn.

“Well if I haven’t exploded from anticipation yet, I guess a few more moments won’t fucking kill me,” Zayn swears.

Niall at first laughs, kind of enjoying all the torment he is putting Zayn through, but then returns to a very serious tone, “First of all, I love you. I love you so much; there is so much more love than I know what to do with.”

“I love you too Nialler,” Zayn replies tenderly.

“And every day, you become more beautiful to me. I thought being one of your closest friends, I would have known everything there is to know about you, but now being your boyfriend, I am
learning so much more. I admire all of it, even the ugly parts, because they are another layer of who you are. I cannot wait to keep discovering more and more about you, for the rest of my life,” Niall explains.

“You’re too lovely to me,” Zayn answers, being overwhelmed by the sweetness of Niall.

“I am not too lovely to you, I’m the perfect amount of lovely because you deserve it all. So now let’s start off with how this all began… Less than four months ago, I did something I shouldn’t have: I was ease-dropping on you,” Niall admits.


“At a party you were talking to Liam,” Niall describes. With those clues, Zayn remembers the conversation where Liam made of a move on him.

“Shit, Niall look. I know it must have appeared like a bad situation, but I swear, nothing happened. Yes, he kissed me, but I quickly pushed him off of me and I yelled-“ Zayn replies.

“I know,” Niall acknowledges, “I saw it all. And first, I apologize that I violated your privacy. We’ve dealt with repercussions from Liam multiple times in our relationship, but I guess that time it was me personally having one. You really loved Liam and that made me feel insecure, part of me thinking that you’d always love him. But then I heard what you said to him. You called me your soulmate.”

“Oh Niall, is that what you’ve been freaking out about? It was just a slip of the lips-“

“I thought it was the most perfect thing that has ever came out of your mouth,” Niall interrupts him.

“Huh,” Zayn squeaks.

“Yeah, okay, at first I freaked out. Like seriously freaked out. I fled that party, driving as fast as I could until I reached some random field and started screaming my head off. But then I realized why I was yelling. I wasn’t screaming because I didn’t want it. I thought perhaps it was the age thing, because, fuck, we’re so young. But I was screaming because I knew I was the luckiest man in the world to find my other half so early in life. Then I was nearly mad at myself for not realizing it first. But I guess it’s only fair that I realized I loved you first, and then you realized this first,” Niall rambles.

“The first thing I did was go to my father and tell him that there was something in particular I wanted to buy for you. At the beginning he tried to talk me down from it, but I wouldn’t fold to his pressure. We then made a deal: I would have to work for it till my eighteenth birthday. Not only have a part time job on the weekends, but actually put all my heart and soul and time into this. He said if I did that and didn’t quit anything by my eighteenth birthday, nor my grades suffer, then I would be able to buy what I wanted to offer you.”

“And for that, I owe you another apology. I’m sorry it appeared like I was drifting away from you the past few months. I became so determined on this, and I knew if I tried to explain it to you it would ruin the surprise. My other thought process was I may be giving up a few months of you for this, but in return I may get you for the rest of my life. And for that, a few months seemed worth the sacrifice. But I apologize for leaving you in the dark, and I hope I never have to do that again for the rest of our relationship.”

“But before we arrive at the grand finale, I know there is something else you are wondering about… You should pull out that box your mother gave you now,” Niall instructs.
Zayn snaps out of the trance Niall has put him under and reaches into his pocket for the tiny box. Upon slipping it out, fingers run all over the box as if he believes that feeling it a bit more will reveal its contents. Zayn’s breaths are short, anxiety building from finally being able to pry it open.

“Open it,” Niall orders.

*Two Months Ago*

Niall rings the doorbell next the entrance way of the Malik household. While he awaits an answers, he peers down the street, double checking that Zayn’s father is nowhere near the house. Previously, Niall had been over at Zayn’s house enough to learn the work schedule of Zayn’s parents. As long as their schedules had not changed, Zayn’s mother Patricia should be home alone currently while Zayn’s father Yasser works into the mid-evening. And anyways, the only one Niall seeks to talk with is Patricia.

“Niall?” She questions as she opens the door, “What are you doing here?”

“I’m here…. to discuss something important with you,” Niall replies nervously.


“Zayn is fine, or at least doing the best that he can given the current circumstances, but I do need to talk about something regarding Zayn, can I come in?” Niall requests.

“Sure,” She says as she clears herself from blocking the doorway, “Does he need more of his clothes? He could have came and picked them up himself… It would have been nice to see him.”

“He doesn’t know I’m here actually,” Niall states as him and Patricia take seats upon opposing couches across from one another.

“Then why are you here?” She inquires.

“I’m… I’m going to ask Zayn to marry me,” Niall squeaks out, the room going silent with his admittance.

“What?” She stutters, “You two are so young, and…”

“He called me his soulmate… He doesn’t know I heard him, but I did. And I realized he’s right. While it is really scary, I am more scared of not having him,” Niall admits, “So that’s why I’m here today.”

“What do you want from me?” Patricia asks.

“Look, I’m not old fashion. I don’t believe I need to ask you for permission to marry Zayn… But Zayn does. He needs that blessing. All he has ever wanted throughout his entire life is to be loved and accepted for all that he is. A few months ago, his family kicked him out for being who he is. What I want for Zayn is to feel welcomed and adored, and I’m going to spend the rest of my life trying to give him that. Look… I don’t know what I’m asking for here, or what you are willing and able to do… He desires your love. I know you have it, even if you have not been able to show it due to your husband’s wrath. Please, express it. I don’t need you to bless this engagement, just let him know that you love him above anything else, please,” Niall begs, clasping his hands together in desperation before him.
She glares for a moment, unemotionally observing the boy in front of her. Finally she breaks her quietness, “You come into my house… knowing what previously happened here, to request that? Going around my own son’s back?”

Niall gulps, “Yes.”

“You stay here,” She commands as she leaves the room. Niall stares at the doorway she previously exited through. He is terrified. Is she going to call the police on him? Chase him out of the house? Stall until Yasser arrives at home to properly scold him?

Within a few moment she returns from the upstairs. She appears coated in a light layer of dust, with something hidden in one of her palms. Niall stares at her curiously, while he now does feel safe that she will not doing anything aggressive towards him, he does not what she hides.

“After my grandmother died, I became in possession of her engagement ring. I had always thought I’d give it to Zayn for him to ask… some girl… but I guess things did not go according to plan, and that is okay. I want you to have it,” Patricia proclaims as she hands Niall the ring.

“Really?” Niall says in disbelief.

“It’s the least I can do,” She replies honestly.

“I actually already have a ring picked out for him,” Niall states, “But I’m kinda developing a plan on how to ask him, and I think this could be a part of it. It would mean a lot more to him if you gave it to him yourself. So how about you hold on to that for me, and when the time is right, you’ll give it to him.”

“Oh my gosh, my baby’s getting hitched.” His mother softly gasps as she falls back into the couch with this realization, “If you don’t mind me asking how did this all begin? I feel so in the dark.”

“When did what begin?” Niall questions.

“Zayn… this whole thing,” She explains, “It hurts that he did not feel comfortable enough to tell me his feelings… but I guess with how we acted, he was right to be cautious and secretive…”

“I guess it all really started back in middle school, when Zayn met Liam…”

Zayn’s eyes rests on the now opened box resting in his right hand. There inside of it lies a beautiful diamond ring that he recognizes from his family. His mother has shown it off to him so many times, how could he not recognize it? It shines and gleams from the lights above.

“Niall, how did you…” Zayn slowly whispers. As he moves the opened box away from the center of his direct line of sight, he sees Niall kneeling below him on one knee, holding another ring. Niall’s grin gleams sunnier than the ring in his hand, happiness over running his senses. Zayn cannot decided which glows brighter: Niall’s face or the ring.

“Zayn Malik, I am so in love with you that I don’t know what to do with myself. I know there are a lot of things to fear in life, but I want to make a promise to you that you will not be scared of one thing in particular: me leaving. So this is me swearing to always be by your side no matter what life throws at you and me. You will never have to worry about being alone,” Niall proclaims.

“Zayn Malik,” Niall begins again.
“Niall, what are you doing?” Zayn squawks.

“Will-“

“Oh my God,” Zayn yelps.

“You-“

“Niall, stop!” Zayn orders.

“Marry-“

“Please,” Zayn pleads.

“Me?”

Stillness echoes through the auditorium while both boys forget to breathe. They stare at one another, attempting to read each other’s face. The heat of the lights above beats down on them, at least giving them an excuse to why they are sweating under the tension.

“Will you marry me?” Niall repeats, hoping that Zayn had only misunderstood him.

“What are you doing?...” Zayn whines sadly.

“Must I be any more obvious?” Niall questions.

“Niall… we’re so young,” Zayn solemnly whimpers.

“Don’t tell me to act my age,” Niall commands. “There’s no law of the land that says there is a minimum age requirement to meet the person you want to spend the rest of your life with. And we’re both eighteen now. Legally we can do whatever we want.”

“Just because we can get hitched does not mean we are ready for it,” Zayn explains.

“Look, I’m not say I want to get married today, tomorrow, next month, next year, or even the next few years. I’m only trying to show that I don’t want anyone else for the rest of my life,” Niall describes as he stands on his feet to be on the same level as his boyfriend, “Where ever we go in life, whether it be states or mountains or oceans away, I want there to be a commitment that you’ll be standing next to me, like how we are now. I want a guarantee that our family will be together.”

“Where do you see us? What do you mean our family?” Zayn stutters.

“So I had this idea…” Niall cannot help to hide his smile even if his life depended on it in this moment, “Louis is going to be a mess after graduation. Like look at him now, I cannot imagine the state he’ll be in when he actually leaves Harry, leaves all of this for somewhere new… I was thinking you and me could chase Louis around the world for the rest of our lives. Well I don’t mean the rest of our lives, hopefully Louis will find himself someday, and I’d like to settle down with a house eventually… But until then, we can keep our family together. You, me, and Louis.”

“Our family?” Zayn repeats.

“While things may be starting to clear up with your mom, I want to provide you with assurance that there is another kind of family: not the family you are born into, but the family you choose. And I choose you, and I hope you choose me too,” Niall replies.

“But what about Harry and Liam?” Zayn questions, “Our plan was to wait until they graduated, then
“You know I love Harry and Liam to death… but it’s always been you, me, and Louis; that’s our core. Would it really be fair for Harry to get all of us, and then Louis move off alone? At least Harry will have Liam, and Louis will have me and you. And I want you to be mine as we do it,” Niall sincerely explains, “I wish we could all stay together, but that’s not in the cards right now, so we have to adapt the best we can. The perfect life is not about naturally being perfect, it’s making the best of you got. And luckily I already have the best, I have you.”

“I had no idea…” Zayn says blankly to this entire situation. Overwhelmed would not even begin to explain how Zayn feels right now: engagement, wedding, leaving Harry and Liam, traveling after Louis. He has so much to process, yet he has no time to.

“Okay, my bad. Perhaps we should have discussed more thoroughly about what we wanted from our future. I’m throwing a lot at you. Okay, let’s simplify things. Let’s say I make this ring into a promise ring: that I promise someday to ask you to marry me, and all you have to say yes to me right now is about chasing Louis by my side. What do you say?” Niall changes his question.

“But you know what you want,” Zayn argues, “It would not be right of me to make you change what you want.”

“Honey, don’t you understand?” Niall chuckles, “I want you. I don’t care how you are mine, I don’t care where we are; if we are rich or poor. I don’t care. You’re the best thing that has ever happened to me, and I never want to let you go.”

“How do you know this? It’s one thing to be dating right now, but to put that ring on my finger, forever? How are you sure?” Zayn tries to figure out.

“After my breakup with Katie, I quit believing in happy endings. I still don’t, and that was one of the wisest revelations I ever made, because they don’t exist. Life keeps on moving after that last page or after the credits roll. There are still adventures, and quests, and challenges that will try your soul for the rest of your life. But Zayn, you make me question that belief. You are the closest thing to a happy ending I know I’m ever going to find. And if there is someone I want to be going on those adventures, quests, and challenges with, I want it to be you. I don’t want us to have two stories. I was us to be one book, one movie, together,” Niall explains simply, “You my prince, and me your knight.”

Zayn stares, physically feeling Niall’s words flow through his body. As if his blood is changing due to Niall’s angelic voice.

"I don't need saving Niall," Zayn replies, and while his comment could sound rather cold, Zayn's tone is sweet and reflective. Taking Niall's left hand with his right, Zayn lifts both their hands up to about chest level. Appearing as if there is a thin glass wall with both of them touching it on opposite sides, Zayn's palm lays flat against Niall's.

"This is not a story where the knight saves the prince from his own unhappiness, because I don't need saving. The only person who is saving me, is me," Zayn describes as he tentatively watches their touching palms, "You and me are two autonomous people, who while they love the other around, they do not need each other to breathe. Our story, Niall, is that you are the Sun and I am the Moon. And while we are both two celestial bodies that exist independently from one another... Baby, I can't shine without you."

"Ask me again,” Zayn requests softly.
“What?” Niall squeaks.

“Get down on one knee and ask me again,” Zayn commands a little more sternly.

Niall rapidly nods, believing he now understands what Zayn wants from him. He pops back open his own box with his ring inside, “Zayn Malik, I am so in love with you I don’t know what to do with—”

“Oh my fucking gawd Niall if you don’t put that bloody ring on my finger, I’m going to steal it from you,” Zayn jokingly yells, though the tears of happiness rolling down his cheeks show the seriousness in his desire for the ring.

Before Zayn can execute his threat, Niall takes Zayn’s left hand, “Will you marry me?”

“I do,” Zayn squeals as Niall slides the ring down the ring finger of Zayn’s hand. And it looks so perfect there, as if Zayn’s finger was made to have that ring upon it.

Zayn brings his right hand over his mouth to cover his smile as his left hand raises itself into the limelight. He has never seen anything more beautiful, until he sees the way Niall is looking at him. Tears are also streaming down his own cheeks, because Zayn has never looked more content and it is all Niall’s doing.

“Niall, I love you so much,” Zayn finally breathes.

“I love you more,” Niall pushes away Zayn’s hand and kisses his lips deeply.

“Oh yeah!” Zayn exclaims while cheerfully crying, “Your ring!” Zayn reaches back down into his pocket for the box his mother gave him. He pulls out the ring and throws the box to ground.

“After all the beautiful things you just said, it is truly a tough act to follow. I don’t feel like anything I can say could compare. While it is difficult to see that far into the future, all I know is, I want you in it. I never want to let you go. Niall Horan, will you do me the honors of being my fiancé? Will you marry me?” Zayn finally asks.

“I will,” Niall gleams while rubbing a tear off of his own cheek. Zayn grabs Niall’s left hand and attempts to force the ring down his ring finger, but the ring will not budge.

“Shit, this better not be an omen,” Zayn nervously chuckles.

“No dear, my hand just happens to be a bit larger than your grandmother’s,” Niall replies.

“Pinky! Give me your pinky!” Zayn joyfully demands. Niall then extends his pinky finger for Zayn, allowing Zayn to easily slide the ring onto his hand. A perfect fit.

“Oh my gawd,” Zayn cries, “You’re my fiancé.”

“And you’re mine,” Niall agrees, grabbing Zayn by the chin to pull him into a deep kiss. Tongues clash, and both of their hands run through each other’s hair to keep the other in place. Their bodies slowly align, each putting their weight on the other.

Niall feels so relieved to get this off his chest. No more secret keeping from Zayn. Now they can go back to the way they always should have been: no secrets that create walls between one another.

Their movements slowly become more sexual. Zayn’s hands slide down Niall’s back where they firmly land on Niall’s bum, while Niall grinds his groin against Zayn’s.

“Want to have some engagement sex, fiancé?” Zayn groans into Niall’s ear.
“I think there’s a spare couch in the props room…” Niall hints at.

“Nope, I want it right here,” Zayn darkly admits.

“On the stage?!” Niall coughs.

“Why not? We’re here alone, I want our first time as an engaged couple to be memorable,” Zayn cheekily requests.

“I don’t think there are any security cameras in here…” Niall contemplates Zayn’s desire.

“I wanna ride you,” Zayn licks Niall’s right ear.

Niall’s eyes grow wide, “You’ve never done that before.”

“Memorable, as I said,” Zayn chuckles, “If that dick is gonna be mine for the rest of my life, I better learn how to properly use it.” Zayn quickly shoves his tongue into Niall’s mouth as he loosens the tie upon Niall, “Please baby please.”

In a final act of desperation, Zayn drops to his knees as he unbuttons Niall’s shirt, revealing much of Niall’s chest for the empty auditorium to see. Zayn rubs his face against Niall’s hardening member within his trousers, “I can feel that you want it, come on baby give it to me. Show me the man I’m going to marry.”

Before Zayn realizes it, he and his fiancé are naked upon the ground of the stage. Niall lays their clothing underneath them to use as padding and warmth on top of the cold, hard floor of the platform.

“So how exactly do you want to do this?” Niall asks while on top, sensually grinding his dick into Zayn’s.

“Loosen me up,” Zayn commands as Niall drags himself down Zayn’s body, now sitting comfortable between his legs.

“Lube me up,” Niall retorts as he sticks out his hand towards Zayn. Zayn leans up in response, sucking on Niall’s fingers to coat them in saliva while he sinfully gazes at his lover without blinking. Niall finally recoils his fingers, causing a small pop from Zayn’s lips. Niall wishes Zayn could have sucked on his fingers for days.

“You ready?” Niall asks with a light couple stroke upon Zayn’s dick.

“Yeah, ready,” Zayn lies back into his clothing, bracing himself for the soft sting of pain from Niall entering him.

But Niall is sweet and gentle as he always is with Zayn. One finger easily slips in with little resistance.

“More,” Zayn rapidly demands. The second finger also goes in smoothly. The third finger is the real stretch begins. Sweat gathers upon Zayn’s forehead due to the heat of the lights above and the pleasure Niall gives him. Niall even squeezes in a fourth, causing swear words to flee Zayn in ecstasy.

“Okay, okay,” Zayn heaves as moves his body away from Niall’s fingers, “Let’s do this.”

Niall crawls over to his pants to search for a condom, but his pockets come up empty. He turns back
around to face Zayn, whose legs are wide open in anticipation. His hole looks so wrecked and so inviting already. Zayn flexes his muscles and cock with that devious smile upon his face, luring Niall in for more.

“Do you have a condom, I’m fresh out,” Niall sighs in disappointment.

“Doesn’t matter. First of all, we both know we are clean, we’ve been tested. Second, you’re the only guy I’m going to be with from here on out. And lastly, I cannot get pregnant. So do we really need them anymore?” Zayn moans as he gently pumps his cock.

“I guess we don’t…” Niall replies, biting his lip as he drops his pants and crawls his way back over to Zayn, “How do you want to do this?”

“You lay where I’m at; I’ll get on top,” Zayn explains while he and Niall switch positions. During the transition, Zayn quickly laps at Niall’s dick like a thirst dog, coating Niall’s member with enough saliva to easily slide into him. Zayn now straddles Niall by the waist, his knees resting on the ground beside Niall’s hip bones.

Zayn reaches behind him and grabs ahold of Niall’s cock, to guide it where he wants. Niall groans in anticipation.

“No moving until I say so, kay?” Zayn pleads with his eyes closed as he rubs the head of Niall’s cock against his opening.

“Sure babe,” Niall whines, having a hard time controlling his motions due to how stimulating his fiance looks in the moment.

Zayn slowly lowers his body weigh on to Niall. Niall’s head goes in, causing a low moan from both partners.

“Oh baby wow,” Niall’s eyes are clinched shut, “This feels so much better without a condom.”

Zayn furiously nods as his only response while he pushes himself deep into ecstasy. Inch by inch, he takes all of Niall’s cock until Zayn feels his bum sitting upon Niall’s groin. It feels so different to be in control of the situation. Normally, Niall is on top of Zayn, but this time Zayn has complete access to how much pleasure he receives and how much he can give to Niall. The stretch eventually cools; the sting of pain transforms into a comfortable sense of pleasure. Niall’s member then throbs, lightly tapping against Zayn’s prostate. A whine of joy escapes Zayn’s lips as precum squirts onto Niall’s abdomen.

“Okay, okay,” Zayn breaths, “Here we go.” Zayn pushes himself up once, then back down with a large smack against Niall’s groin. Once again Niall’s prick hits Zayn’s sweet spot, causing another moan. Wanting a repeat of that feeling, he moves himself up and down the entirety of Niall’s member, groaning every time it hits his prostate.

“Fuck babe,” Niall rolls his head back in pleasure while he lets Zayn have complete control of the situation, which is really nice for Niall given all the planning he had to exert to make this day possible all together. It is a relief to let someone take charge of something.

Zayn’s hard cock rhythmically bounces against Niall’s abs with every one of Zayn’s movements. He throws his head up towards to ceiling as he rides, his eyes closed shut as desire overruns his body. Niall’s hands are braised to the ground to hold him against Zayn’s movement. He tries to lay gentle kisses upon Zayn’s abdomen, but the swift rocking of Zayn’s body only leads to Niall forcefully bumping his nose against his Zayn. After a few failed attempts at kissing, Niall finally gives in to
only resting his head against Zayn as a sign of support and intimacy, with one arm wrapped around Zayn’s torso.

Zayn’s rhythm changes among feeling Niall’s sweetness. The pace of his hips slows down as Niall begins to rock along with him. This allows Niall to press kisses across Zayn’s chest as he whispers sweet praises into him.

“Shit babe, I missed you. I missed you so much. I’ll never leave again,” Niall kisses all over Zayn.

“It’s okay baby,” Zayn plants a peck on Niall’s head.

“I became so focused on trying to make you mine forever, maybe I got a little carried away,” Niall continues.

“Fuck,” Zayn swears as he quits moving, “This is a lot more tiring than I thought. How close are you?”

“Uh… Kinda close but not there exactly,” Niall replies as he pulls back to talk to Zayn, “You’re doing amazing at it though.”

“Do you think you can finish up for me?” Zayn breaths in deeply.

“You want me to get on top?” Niall attempts to confirm.

“Nope, just like this. But you need to do the work for it,” Zayn explains.

Niall then understands what Zayn is hinting at, “Oh… no mercy babe?”

“No mercy,” Zayn repeats as he braces himself for Niall.

Niall forcefully grabs Zayn by the waist, his fingers digging into Zayn’s skin leaving dark marks for bruises. His hold on Zayn makes Zayn unable to move, as he pushes his hips up hard as he can. Zayn screams out. And then again, Niall rapidly pelvic thrusts up into Zayn. Comparable to a jackhammer, Niall pounds into Zayn, the sound of skin slapping together echoing through the auditorium.

“Fuck fuck fuck fuck,” Zayn yells with his eyes squeezed shut and his hands attempting to grasp Niall’s chest for any support through the thrashing.

“You like that baby?” Niall grunts cockily, his balls smacking right below Zayn’s arse hole. Zayn’s hole is so warm and so tight, Niall does not know how he has not came yet. He can feel Zayn entirely at his mercy.

“You have no idea,” Zayn replies.

“I’m close. Want me to pull out?” Niall gasps in between thrusts.

“Don’t care, in me,” Zayn whines.

“Whatever you want,” Niall declares as he grabs ahold of Zayn’s painfully hard prick.

“Here I-“ Zayn hollers as his loads shoots all over Niall, streaks of cum hitting Niall in the neck and chest. Zayn clinches his asshole tight as he orgasms, causing Niall to erupt quickly afterwards.

“Fuck me,” Niall groans as his load quickly fills Zayn; Zayn rocks his body on top of Niall till he cannot move anymore. He collapses onto of his fiancé, Zayn’s sticky mess plastering them together.
Zayn tucks his head under Niall’s chin with Niall’s arms wrapping around Zayn. Their breathing patterns are in sync as they come down from their orgasm high. Niall’s cock slips out of Zayn.

“That was a great riding future Mr. Horan,” Niall chuckles to Zayn.

Zayn pushes himself up to look into Niall’s eyes. That is right, Zayn is now future Mr. Horan, and he has never been more thrilled, “Anytime, future Mr. Malik.”

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“Wait there’s more?!” Zayn exclaims as Niall and he park in front of Niall’s house, the street appearing full of vehicles, “Niall, you’ve done more than enough for this.”

“This is the last thing, I promise,” Niall laughs.

“But I can barely walk,” Zayn points out, “I wouldn't have rode you if I woulda known I had to move around other people as if my ass had not just gotten the fuck of its life.”

“I’ll keep your bum safe,” Niall swears as he hops out of his truck and runs over to the other side to open the door for his fiancé.

“Is the whole town here?” Zayn asks as they walk arm and arm up to the Horan household.

“Only the important people,” Niall replies as he opens to unlocked door.

Upon entering the house, they see streamers, balloons, and other his and his decorations all over the walls. The house is filled with friends and family, excluding Zayn’s father, talking and snacking on food. But as the couple enters, the room goes silent in anticipation.

“So, did you…” Louis finally squeaks out after a long period of stillness. Niall then grabs Zayn’s left hand and hoists it up into the sky for everyone to see: a bright diamond ring.

Everybody screams and claps after the announcement, to the delightful smiles of Niall and Zayn. Bobby and Patricia attempt to swarm their children in a hug, but Louis quickly shoves them out of the way and hops on Niall and Zayn.

“Oh my gawd, oh my gawd, oh my gawd!” Louis screams in a jumping hug with his friends, “I can’t believe it!”

“You better believe it! You’re going to be my best man,” Niall matches Louis’s excitement.

“Whoa, he’s your best man?” Zayn jokingly argues, “I think he’d be mine.”

“This thing could be years in the future,” Niall laughs as Louis pulls away, ”Who knows! Maybe they’ll have cloning by then.”

“Acceptable use of cloning,” Louis agrees, “Let me see the ring!”

Zayn holds up his finger for Louis to see as Bobby and Niall’s brother, and Patricia and three of Zayn’s sisters approach the scene.

“Where’s my grandmother’s ring?” Patricia asks while she also admires the ring Niall gave her son.

“Oh here,” Niall holds up his left hand and sticks out his pinky, “I guess my ring finger was too big, but it still works!”
“I’m sure we can get it resized,” Patricia gleams as she touches the ring upon Niall’s hand. Bobby then hugs Niall and Patricia hugs Zayn, both parents tearing up from their boys’ engagement.

“Of all the people I thought of my son getting married to, I never would have guessed it would be you all those years ago... But now that it’s happened I couldn’t have imagined it better,” Bobby declares to Zayn as he pulls him in for a hug as well.

Niall and Patricia cautiously stare at one another for a moment, Niall remembering that some conservative Muslims do not allow the touching of males and females that are not family members. But Patricia breaks the tension, “Oh, you’re going to be my son, come here.” Patricia and Niall embrace each other.

“I didn’t tell you this before because I wanted to see how your night went,” Patricia explains to Zayn, “But me and your father have recently started going to marriage counseling. And one of the main reasons is because of you. My top demand to fix our marriage is to let you come home, so I’m fighting for you baby, you’ll be home soon, I promise.”

Zayn could never have imagined a more perfect day.

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Louis stands on the back porch of the Horan home finishing the third beer he stole from the engagement party. He feels like the biggest dip shit. He should be more than happy for his two friends on this night. And he is, don’t get him wrong. But it hurts. It hurts seeing people receive their happy ending when he stands on this porch alone, occasionally peeking his head around to see Niall and Zayn doing something cute or noticing Harry and Kendall standing unbearably close to one another. So he takes another drink hoping that blackout drunkenness will kick in soon so he will not be able to remember anything he feels by tomorrow morning. Though he knows he would have to drink a lot more than three beers to get anywhere close to that.

“Hey babe,” Niall says as he and Zayn walk out onto the porch, “What you doing out here alone?”

“Uh, social anxiety and what not,” Louis half lies as he takes another sip.

“You know I couldn’t have done this without you,” Niall replies with a squeeze of Louis’s shoulder.

“I was just a piece in the puzzle,” Louis states, “Something I was more than glad to be a part of.”

“No you don’t understand,” Zayn declares, “Do you want to know how he got me to say yes?”

“How?” Louis questions curiously.

“You,” Zayn smiles.

“Me?” Louis repeats.

“Yeah, you,” Zayn reiterates, “Louis, where ever you go, we are going to go with you. We’re going to stay together.”

“Wait, what?” Louis coughs.

“That’s how he sealed my yes,” Zayn plants a kiss on Niall’s cheek, “Where ever you decide to go, we will be right behind you, following you wherever you want.”

“You don’t have to do this,” Louis defends, “I can take care of myself.”
“We know you can,” Niall answers, “But you shouldn’t have to be on your own.”

“You’d really do that for me?” Louis does not believe what he hears. For the past couple months he’s repeatedly destroyed himself over and over again. The idea that two people could love him enough to do something like this...

“We’re doing it for all of us,” Zayn confirms before Louis jumps on them and causes another three person hug.

“Thank you,” Louis accepts gratefully.

“And one more thing,” Niall awkwardly chuckles.

“Holy fucking shit Niall!” Zayn hollers, obviously exhausted from all the surprises from the day.

“You two remember how my uncle died a couple years ago?” Niall asks.

“Of course dear,” Zayn calmly rubs Niall’s hand as a sign of sympathy, even if the death was more than a year ago.

“Well… there’s a specific reason why my father wanted me to wait for my eighteenth birthday to buy the ring…” Niall starts.

“Why’s that?” Zayn inquires.

“Um… Let’s just say in his will he left me some money… okay, a lot money, and when I turned eighteen I was legally allowed to use,” Niall explains, “So what I’m saying is…”

“Nialler,” Zayn demands, seriously staring into Niall’s eyes.

“We can literally go anywhere,” Niall grins.

“Why didn’t you tell me sooner?!” Zayn playfully slaps Niall on the shoulder.

“I don’t know…” Niall whines, “My father suggested I not tell anyone till after the engagement so it wouldn’t affect anything. I know you wouldn’t marry me for that reason babe, but I listened to his advice since he’s helped me with so much during this process.”

“Well Louis,” Zayn redirects his attention, “I guess really, wherever in world you want to go, we can do it.”

“Harry and Liam,” Louis finally remembers.

“They’ll be okay,” Niall replies solemnly.

Louis sadly sighs, because Niall is right. Liam has always been relatively independent. And Harry… Harry has a Kendall now. He does not need them anymore.

“Louis,” Zayn breaks Louis’s depressing concentration, “When my heart broke, I found my Niall where I never expected I would find him. Maybe through your heartbreak, you will find one too.”

“Hey ya’ll,” Liam enters through the glass door on the porch.

“What’s going on my man?” Niall calls out.

“Some people inside are demanding a first dance for the couple,” Liam gleams.
“For fuck’s sakes it’s not our wedding,” Zayn rolls his eyes.

“Come on dear, we have a crowd to please,” Niall pulls on Zayn’s hand, “You coming in Lou?”

“Oh, not yet, in a little bit I promise,” Louis fakely smiles.

“Oh okay bud,” Niall nods as he and Zayn disappear into the house. Louis then crumples up his now empty beer can and throws it into the darkness of the yard.

“Wanna split my drink with me?” Liam suggests as he stands next to Louis.

“What’s in it?” Louis quickly asks back.

“I think some vodka and—” Liam is cut off before he can finish his sentence.

“Give it here,” Louis orders as he snatches the drink out of Liam’s hands.

“All of this is kind of weird, isn’t it?” Liam mumbles cautiously.

“I was thinking the same thing,” Louis replies.

“Like I know me and Zayn were never really a couple, and it was so long ago, but it feels strange seeing someone you used to have now being engaged,” Liam explains honestly, trying best to articulate his confusing emotions.

“Well, this permanently makes me the third wheel. No matter how much I know they love me, it’s always going to be those two, and me,” Louis sighs as he takes another drink and then hands the cup back to Liam.

“Hey, I love you too, you know?” Liam attempts to comfort his friend, sensing they are both feeling negative emotions about the engagement.

“I know… but um,” Louis then peers over his shoulder through the glass door into the party. There he sees Zayn and Niall joyfully dancing around the room. After a few moment, more couples join into the dance, including Harry and Kendall. They spin and spin, and eventually Louis cannot look a moment further.

“Fuck, double whammy, huh?” Liam rhetorically questions.

“Why does everybody get to be happily in love but me? Well, I am in love, but not happily,” Louis groans.

“Wouldn’t it be kind of boring if everyone found their true love before they graduated?” Liam inquires, “Like I know heartbreak hurts, I went through it a few months ago, but I learned a lot about myself through the experience. And I’ve met people and done things I never would have if I was still with her. And just like me, you are going to do things you never would have dreamed of if this would not have happened.” Liam then hugs Louis sensing he does need the physical support right now, “And you know there is no guarantee that she is Harry’s soulmate.”

“I’ve done so many things in the past few months I never thought I’d do… and I don’t think I’m proud that I did them. Everybody keeps telling me to keep my head up, but what if there is nothing better to see no matter what direction I look?” Louis whispers as he lays his head on Liam’s chest. God why am I so small Louis wonders.

“I know this town is tiny, but keep looking, maybe something will jump out that was only waiting
for the right moment to reveal itself to you,” Liam suggests. Louis lifts his chin up to give Liam a proper thank you, but he then feels Liam’s warm breath spread across his face. It smells like alcohol, just like Louis’s.

_Burp_ Louis exhales, accidentally rocking himself a little closer. Louis can sense Liam’s heart pounding through his tight shirt.

“Louis,” Liam breathes.

“Hi Liam,” Louis hums, not stepping back from their physical contact.

“I’m a little more drunk that I thought I was,” Liam admits as he rubs his nose against Louis's cheek.

“I think we are the perfect amount of drunk for this moment,” Louis’s face brushes against Liam’s.

“What are we doing?” Liam grinds his waist against Louis as the tension mounts.

“Something stupid,” Louis replies nonchalantly with a pucker of his lips, “Something we never would have done if it was not for our common broken hearts.”

_Kiss._

Chapter End Notes

I’ll get the next chapter out ASAP :) leaving comments always mean a lot to me, so if you have any comments, questions, or advice you’d like to tell me I'd greatly appreciate it.
Chapter 20: You Ruin Me

Chapter Summary

Louis gets a little ahead of himself after his hookup with Liam, but fate appears to be pushing him in a direction he never expected. Or, fate is telling Louis that he has more control over his life than he wants to admit.

Chapter Notes

Sorry this is late... as usual. I think we'll be seeing a lot of character development as this story approaches this end.

Song of the Chapter: You Ruin Me by The Veronicas

The bright rays of the sun stretch through the window blinds. Louis groans once the heat beats down on his face, throwing the blanket wrapped around his body over his head. His stomach spins, and he is extremely light sensitive due to all the alcohol from the night before.

He tries to relax underneath the covers, but the bed reeks of ass, alcohol, and sweat. Before he can take a minute more of it, he convinces himself that light must not be as bad as the smell. He peeks his head back out, leaning on his side facing the window. After adjusting to the lighting in the room, he agrees with the assumption. He breathes in the fresh air, and he rubs his face against the familiar smelling comforter.

Peeking over the edge of the bed, he sees a mess of clothing intertwined on the floor. I'm naked? Louis thinks as he sees his little boxer shorts on top of a pair of jeans.

Wait... this isn't my bedroom Louis realizes when he notices the jeans his underwear is on are not his. This room is also way too tidy to be his. But he recognizes this room... the scent is known.

Louis hears a masculine grunt as an arm is thrown around his waist, snuggling Louis closer to the body behind him. He is half panicked yet half comfortable. A cuddle is always nice, especially while recovering from a hangover, but it is hard to relax when you do not know the identity behind you.

He touches the arm draped over him, hoping that feeling its grooves will reveal the secret identity. Louis traces down the man’s veins and glides his fingertips over the arm hair. This man is pretty hairy, and Louis cannot deny he enjoys that.

The mystery person skootches in closer, accidentally smacking his groin against Louis’s bum. “Ouch,” Louis hisses as he nearly smacks the individual. Wait he’s naked too Louis thinks And why is my butt sore? ... Oh shit.

That is when the memories of the night before rush back into Louis’s mind. Not the complete story, but flashes that include most of the important moments:
“What are we doing?”

“Something stupid.”

Our tongues wrestled sloppily as my hands linked up behind his neck, his tall height lifting me into the air. The combination of vodka and beer mixing in our saliva tasted horribly sweet in this chaos.

“We should go somewhere.”

“I don’t think it’d be polite for us to use Niall’s bed for that.”

“Then let’s get out of here Boy Scout.”

“My family is out of town.”

“I’ll call us a taxi.”

We calmly made our way out of the party, standing close to one another as physically allowed without all the guests being able to guess why we were leaving.

The cab arrived in no time. We tried to play it cool, holding each other’s hand in the darkness of the seat. Eventually we could not contain it. We started making out in the backseat once again. The only light available being the occasional street light that would briefly cause us to glow and then escape once again. That poor taxi driver. We tipped him extra for tolerating us using his backseat as a bedroom.

The next thing I knew, Liam slammed me into the wall of the bedroom. Yeah it kinda hurt, but fuck did it turn me on. Liam then pins me to his wall, one of his thick arms holding up both of my hands above my head. I have no choice but to wrap my legs around his waist for support. He yanks my shirt off and bites my right collar bone, causing a loud howl to fly from my mouth. My chest is blotched with purple marks left by his teeth.

Then we are naked on his bed, him on top of me with my legs spread wide with him in between, both of us sinking into his fluffy sheets.

“You have any condoms?”

“Yeah, have some and lube in my dresser.”

“Grab them Liam.”

And then I received the thrashing of my life.

Oh fuck.

“Wait… who’s in my bed?” Louis hears Liam moan.

“Um… me?” Louis squeaks out.

Liam slowly recoils his arm away from Louis and Louis rotates his body to face Liam. Then eye contact.

“Ahhhh!” They both scream as they jump to the far edges of the bed.

“What have we done?!” Liam yells.
“Well from how sore my ass is, I think it,” Louis replies.

“You were consenting, right? Please tell you were!” Liam pleads, “We both had a lot to drink.”

“Yes, yes, we both were. Don’t worry about that,” Louis answers.

“Oh shit,” Liam swears, “So was that your first…”

“Yup, way to take my v-card Payno,” Louis sighs, “You?”

“My first time having official sex with a guy, so kind of,” Liam admits.

“Shit, I slept with my best friend’s ex thing,” Louis leans back into the pillows, referencing Zayn.

“I did too…” Lean agrees, referencing Harry.

“But they’re both seeing other people right now, so does that really make this wrong?” Louis attempts to argue.

“This is wrong on so many more levels than only that,” Liam says honestly.

“How so? We were both consenting; it was fucking fantastic, at least on my end,” Louis explains.

“Okay, I agree with you there,” Liam confirms.

“Both of them appear to have moved on from us. I don’t see where the drawback is,” Louis finishes.

“I just don’t want to hurt you,” Liam states.

“You already have buddy,” Louis chuckles.

“How?!” Liam exclaims.

“Dude, you’re fucking massive. Like I don’t see myself as much of a size queen, but damn it’s almost intimidating,” Louis laughs, “I don’t know how the fuck I took it. Your cock was really fun to play with though. A two-hander, very nice.”

“Look who’s talking,” Liam points out, “I knew you had a voluptuous ass, shit though, didn’t know it’d feel that good.”

“So we both enjoyed it,” Louis clarifies.

“Yes, it appears we did,” Liam agrees.

Then a long silence takes hold between the two boys, both of them suggestively eyeing one another. Louis cannot help but stare at Liam’s pec muscles that are covered in large swatches of hair. Liam runs his eyes up and down his friend’s body, focusing on his wide hips.

“Wanna have round two?” Louis finally asks.

“Fuck yeah,” Liam hops on top of Louis.

Lips clashes once again.

“I think I better go,” Louis yells to Liam as slips on his shirt over his wet hair.
“But you just got here,” Liam jokes as he walks out of his bathroom with only a towel hanging around his waist.

“It’s nearly three o’clock in the afternoon, I think I’ve been here long enough,” Louis chuckles, “I didn’t even tell my mom I was staying here last night, she’s gonna be furious.”

“Three o’clock, really? It can’t possibly be that late,” Liam declares.

“Time fly when you’re having fun,” Louis reminds him.

“You mean when you’re having sex,” Liam jokes.

“Well isn’t having sex with me fun?” Louis quips.

“I guess you’re right there,” Liam rests both of his hands on Louis’s hips, “That was a fantastic blowjob in the shower by the way.”

“It’s my specialty,” Louis says as he rubs his chin, “My jaws a bit sore though, totally worth it.”

Neither man can deny they had a wonderful day with one another. After the second round of fucking, they just laid together in bed all day: ordering in a pizza, watching Netflix, and random wrestling and make out sessions. Finally they realized they reeked, and as they hopped in the shower Louis got distracted by Liam’s dick again.

Liam places another kiss upon Louis’s lips, “You could stay…”

“I’ve stayed long enough,” Louis admits, “Though, as good as this towel looks on you, I think it’d look better on the floor, if you catch my drift.”

“Louis, I literally couldn’t cum again even if I wanted too,” Liam laughs, “If we tried, it’d be like a cartoon where the gun goes off but the only thing that comes out of the barrel is a flag that says Bang!”

“Very graphic,” Louis rolls his eyes as he steps away, “Well if you have nothing else to offer, I gotta go.”

“Wait…” Liam grabs ahold of Louis’s wrist before he is out of walking distance from him, “What if… we grab dinner tonight?”

“What?” Louis coughs.

“I… I had a really good time today, with you. And this felt really fun and easy, I think we should go out and talk about this some more,” Liam says sweetly.

“Liam, you don’t owe me anything,” Louis replies, “I don’t expect anything from you. It’s okay if this meant nothing to you, just don’t lie to me or lead me on.”

“I’m not, I’m not I swear,” Liam says nervously, “I mean. Let’s meet at that Mad Greek restaurant downtown and talk this out.”

Louis stares at him in confusion for a moment. Normally boys are not this straight forward about their intentions. But Liam is not like most boys.

“What time?” Louis finally inquires.

“Uh, my parents get home around 8. I can barrow their car, I’ll meet you there, and then we can
come back here for Netflix and chill,” Liam winks, “If you can be quiet.”

“That… that sounds really nice Liam,” Louis says honestly.

“I’ll see you around nine?” Liam asks.

“Perfect,” Louis agrees

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Louis creeps into his room, having a much more difficult time walking than he thought he would. He shuts his bedroom door with his back to his bed.

“Hey where you been?” Zayn asks, startling Louis.

“Shit! What are you doing here!” Louis yelps now seeing Zayn and Niall in his bedroom.

“Your room is ours now,” Niall jokes.

“We’ve been looking all over for you,” Zayn restates.

“Oh, I um…” Louis does not know how much he should tell about him and Liam since he does not even know what is or was, “I passed out at Liam’s last night and nursed my hangover all day.”

“Oh,” Zayn replies, “Have you picked out where we are going to go yet?”

“Where are we going?” Louis questions in confusion.

“After high school remember?” Niall reminds him.

“Guys it’s been like twenty-four hours,” Louis points out, “I had no idea where I was even planning on going alone yet.”

“Sorry if we’re sounding pushy,” Zayn scratches the back of his head, “We’re just trying to plan a trip to celebrate our engagement, and I thought we’d do it around the time we leave here.”

“Oh,” Louis sighs, this further reminding him of how he still feels on the outside of Zayn and Niall, “I’ll start thinking about this more seriously and get you an answer ASAP.”

“There’s our Lou,” Niall chuckles, “What are you doing tonight?”

_Fuck they know_ Louis thinks how to respond their question, “Why do you ask?”

“Defensive are we?” Zayn smirks, “Got a hot date?”

“No of course not!” Louis squeaks, “Um, Liam asked if we could grab a bite to eat, that’s all.”

“Well that’s all you had to say,” Zayn laughs, “Jeeze, not like you’re on a date with Liam or anything.”

“Yeah, totally,” Louis bites his lip.

“Anyways,” Niall interrupts, “Paul’s Café is having a karaoke night/poetry slam after Niall’s shift, and I think you and Liam should come.”

“I don’t know…” Louis really preferring Liam’s idea for _Netflix and Chill_ over singing. Though Louis would probably be doing a certain type of singing alone with Liam later in the night that
would not be appropriate with an audience.

“I’ll be singing again,” Zayn grins.

“You haven’t sang since that talent show more than a year ago,” Louis remembers.

“Exactly why you should come, to see my grand debut, again,” Zayn states.

Fuck Zayn looks so fucking proud of himself Louis think, Louis would be a total asshole if he missed this.

“I’ll, uh, see what I can do, no promises,” Louis sighs.

“There’s my mate,” Zayn slaps Louis on the bum.

“Ow!” Louis hops away, lighting rubbing his butt.

“Either I’m really strong, or you got a sensitive ass,” Zayn looks at his hand with an over-confident smile.

“Yeah… you’re the strongest…” Louis rolls his eyes.

Surprisingly, Louis arrives at the Mad Greek before Liam. Which is odd in itself since Liam is well known for his promptness, and Louis tried on five different outfits before leaving his house. But he settles on black skinny jeans and a tight black button-up short-sleeved shirt that both bring attention to the curves Liam appeared to appreciate so much.

It is a little ridiculous but he cannot help but raise his hopes for this. Memories from the past twenty-four hours keep replaying in his head: Zayn saying In the chaos of my heartbreak, I found my Niall. Maybe you will find yours too. Could Liam possibly be Louis’s Niall. A boy that appears out of the blue to be exactly what you are looking for?

Louis orders some wine with his fake I.D. and watches other couples interacting. They feed each other, kiss, laugh, etc. He wants that. He wants it so bad. To feel complete and whole and with purpose. Love is like a drug. Once a person has it, they can never have enough. What started out as fun becomes a need. Louis is hooked.

He then notice Liam is more than half an hour later after his observations. So he shoots the boy a text, making sure Liam is not in harm’s way, and goes back to daydreaming.

He daydreams of Liam showing up, flowers in hand, claiming to have been late due to buying him the gift. He visions Liam taking him out dancing, Harry watching only to realize he could have had it all. He pictures walking down the hallway of the school hand in hand, everyone envious of the couple.

Then another half an hour passes, and then another. Various people enter and leave the diner while Louis awaits for his date. He receives pitiful stares as his waitress repeatedly refills his drink. His confidence is collapsing. Did Liam really stand him up? After the amazing night and day they had together? What did he do wrong?

“Louis,” Liam breaths as he trots to the table, the sunlight now gone from the sky which was alit when Louis arrived.
“Liam!” Louis yelps as he straightens up his postures, “Where you been?”

“Well…” Liam sighs, his hair is ruffled up, his shirt tucked out of place, “No alarm, but I was kind of in a car accident on my way here.”

“Shit!” Louis exhaled, feeling bad for thinking such negative thoughts about Liam for not showing up. “But you’re not hurt?”

“No. Fender bender on both ends. Me and her are fine,” Liam smiles.

“Are you still in the mood to eat?” Louis asks sincerely.


“Or we could just head back to your place if you’re feeling kind of shaken up,” Louis offers.

“I’m sorry,” Liam sighs.

“Sorry for what? It’s not your fault you were in accident… well unless you hit her on purpose,” Louis rambles.

“This… this wouldn’t work out,” Liam reveals.

“What do you mean?” Louis questions.

“I wasn’t late because of the accident. She ran into me next to a coffee shop, and as we exchanged insurance information there, we started talking, and talking, and talking, and we didn’t stop till I realized the sun had gone down, and that I was late for you,” Liam explains.

Louis sits there in defeat, staring angrily at Liam, “What’s her name?”

“Sophia,” Liam answers, “Louis, look. Last night was amazing, and it did mean something. But the fact still doesn’t change that while I am physically attracted to guys, I’m still not emotionally.”

Louis looks down at his lap realizing this is pointless. Nothing he can say can make Liam fall for him, just as it was with Harry. He empties the glass of wine into his mouth, and then refolds his napkins from his lap back onto the table.

“Louis, I’m sor-“ Liam starts.

“Don’t.” Louis commands as he stands up from his seat.

“I never wanted to hurt-“ Liam declares.

“Don’t.” Louis orders, staring at him in the eyes, “I’ll see you around Liam.” Louis storms out of the restaurant, leaving a trail of emotional wreckage behind him. Liam cannot help but watch Louis leave. He always does this. Why does he always do the wrong thing and hurt the people he most cares about? Is there something inherently broken inside of him?

“I assume you’re paying for his check, sir?” The waitress asks as she stands next to Liam holding the receipt with all the wines Louis drunk through the night.

“Fucking Louis…” Liam swears under his breath, though he truly believes he deserves this for what he just did to his friend.

------------------------------------------------------------------------
Louis walks alone down the sidewalk of the downtown district that belongs to his little town. It is at that time of year between winter and spring. So the air would feel nice, but the wind nips at his ears and exposed skin. A few leftover leaves roll down the street as whatever snow remains from the season has been tainted by the dirt on the road.

Gawd, I am so fucking dumb Louis thinks to himself as he keeps his eyes glued to the ground below him. To think that he finally found love. To believe that an eighteen hour period of hooking up meant something. Liam now adds himself to the list of guys that will not date Louis Tomlinson. Is there something so determinately wrong with him that make every person he fall for do the exact opposite? Louis knows that he should not be putting so much of his self-worth on the need of others, but it is hard not to seeing all of his best friends appearing to find love so easily. Is it too much to ask for a little bit of love to be thrown his way? I'm pathetic.

“Louis?” A voice calls out, causing Louis to look up from his feet.

“Stan?” Louis squeaks to the person now standing next to him.

“What are you doing down here?” Stan asks sincerely.

“That’s a very good question,” Louis sighs, “What about you?”

“I work at Lux’s Bookbarn,” Stan explains, first point to the name tag on his shirt and then to the large sign of the store behind him.

“I should really start using context clues,” Louis chuckles, “How you’ve been?”

“Aight, the light of at the end of the tunnel feeling is starting to hit me,” Stan references graduation, “Me and Josh broke up awhile back so that was very tough, but the University of Kansas recently accepted me to start my college career there so I’m hella excited for that.”

“Holy shit man that’s great,” Louis replies honestly, “That really sucks about you and Josh though.”

“Yeah it did,” Stan admits, “But then I realized something. If I was still seriously dating Josh, I would not have been looking at schools so far away from here. Love is beautiful but it can hold you back from other things. Maybe I was a little naïve while he was my boyfriend, thinking that a person had to be a happy ending. But a place, or an idea, or a school can be a happy ending in itself. Does that make sense? Who says happiness is dependent upon other person?”

“I guess I never thought of it like that,” Louis breaths.

“You look kind of lost,” Stan observes.

“I’ve been lost for months to be honest,” Louis admits.

“Follow me,” Stan waves his hand as he turns to the store, “We might have something that can help you.”

Louis trails behind Stan as they trek through Lux's Bookbarn. The building is full of narrow isles with bookshelves lining each of the isles; the shelves reaching all the way to ceiling. They take various twists and turns, with subheadings above the shelves saying History or Teen Romance. Towards the back of the store, Stan leads to a shelf titled Self Help.

“These all aren’t Ten Steps to a Better You kind of books. Some of these are instructional like how to efficiently search out colleges or how to safely travel across the world. You should take a glance at ‘em. You might find something to properly find your way… I’ll ring you up at the counter,” Stan
explains as he leaves Louis to look for himself.

Louis does not have much faith in what Stan wants him to find. Louis has not had much faith in anything these days. But he wants Stan to at least feel like he did something for him. So Louis traces his fingers against highest shelf he can reach, gazing at the titles. The brush of Louis’s fingers is a little stronger than he believes. A loose book from the top shelf tumbles down onto the floor, causing a small sound of a crash.

The book lays with its pages parted against the floor. Louis reaches down to simply return the novel to the shelf, but as he flip it over, a picture on the page captures his eyes.

As he inspects the page, words jump to his eyes. His heart begins to pound: the same kind of pounding he remembers from the moment when he first saw Harry. He flips through the pages, each one capturing more and more of his soul. He wishes he could reach through the pages and touch the pictures himself. This is it. Louis then sprints for the checkout counter.

“Whoa slow down there,” Stan warns, “If you knock over a shelf, this room will turn into a large domino game.”

“Can you point me in the direction of Paul’s Café from here?” Louis demands impatiently.

“Two block to your left, and then take a right and walk three more blocks. It should be on the corner from there,” Stan looks out of the window, pointing in the directions Louis needs to go.

“Thank Stan, keep the change!” Louis commands as he slams a twenty dollar bill on the counter. Louis then runs out of Lux’s Bookbarn.

“I want to thank you all for coming to Paul’s Café’s first Karaoke night/Poetry Slam. Seems like we got a full house in here, and remember everyone who performs will receive one free drink on the house,” Niall proclaims to the crowd, from which the crowd howls in support of a free beverage, “And above all, this show would not have been possible without Paul, our other sponsors, and a special thanks to my baby boy Zayn, who helped design all of the advertisements. And who I will reveal to you all, for the first time, as my fiancé. Zayn, please stand up and show off that pretty face of yours!”

Zayn’s face turns bright red as the crowd cheers after Niall’s declaration. He awkwardly stands up, his back still hunched over. Zayn gives a small wave to the room, causing another roar from the crowd.

“Now let’s get this night started!” Niall hollers, “At first act tonight is a friend of mine, Ed Sheeran!”

Louis slams open the front door. Though he has never been known for his running skills, the adrenaline flowing through his veins prevents him from becoming out of breath. Niall smiles seeing his friend’s entrance. Louis quickly waves Niall for him to join him, while signaling for Niall to grab Zayn as well. As Ed begins his song, Niall and Zayn snake their way through the crowd to stand next to Louis in the back of the room.

“Really happy you could make it buddy!” Niall gleams, proud of himself, “Gosh, it’s a packed house. This is so much better than anything I could have imagined.”

“I don’t know why I’m more nervous to sing in front of this crowd later than I was at that talent show,” Zayn states.
“I know where I want to go,” Louis says disregarding both comments, “Here.” Louis hands Niall and Zayn his recently purchased book.

Niall and Zayn gaze at the front cover and skim the first couple of pages, their smiles growing larger the deeper they read into the book.

“Europe?” Zayn tries to confirm.

“Like everyone should back pack across Europe at some point during their life, right?” Louis attempts to convince them, “And this book instructs how we can do this super cheap and safely.”

“You don’t need to persuade us babe,” Zayn replies, “We’re already on board.”

“We’re going to Europe?” Louis reiterates.

“We’re going to Europe!” Niall repeats. The three boys hug, excited about their now defined future plans.

“Oh my gawd! If we plan this out right, in about six months we’re going to be across the lake,” Louis nearly screams.

“Yeah We will be,” Zayn smiles. That is when they notice Ed’s song coming to an end in the café. The crowd claps as that gives Niall the cue to return to the stage to usher on the next performer.

“Maybe I’m not made for a happy ending with a special someone,” Louis says to Zayn nonchalantly as they watch Niall, “Maybe something like you and Niall is not meant for me.”

“You think Niall is my happy ending?” Zayn questions.

“Well yeah, isn’t he?” Louis inquires.

“No,” Zayn chuckles.

“Then why are you marrying him?” Louis asks, not understanding Zayn.

“I’m my own happy ending, Louis,” Zayn states firmly.

“I don’t comprehend,” Louis restates.

“When I was younger, you know I was pretty insecure. Now I am confident in who I am, my looks, who I love, and what I like to do. It was really trying time for myself when I lost my family and I thought I was losing you and Niall as well, but I figured out who I was without anybody with me. You know you will always have me, Niall, Liam, and your family, but at the end of the day the only person you permanently can depend on is yourself. Only you will always have your own back no matter what, but that is not possible if you are constantly tearing yourself apart from the inside out. While I do not believe that you must love yourself before you can love someone else argument, I do believe you need to support yourself. You can love someone else without loving yourself, but if you are using someone as a means to fill some hole within yourself, that is not fair to the other person. It is not sustainable, because they are their own person and their purpose is not complete you.

“Yes, Niall, like you, is a part of my happy ending, but only a part of it. Not the entirety of it. My happy ending is finding my place in the world. And even if it’s on the road, that is still where I belong. Louis, there is a lot to love about yourself, but I don’t think you believe in it,” Zayn explains, “If you are dependent upon someone else for your happiness, you will never eternally have it because people can come and go. But you... you are forever.”
“Selena, Selena Gomez?” Niall repeats over the sound system, “Are you here?”

Silence echoes through the room.

“Well it appears we have an empty slot, would anyone care to preform something?” Niall asks the room. Wanting to remove himself from the conversation with Zayn, Louis raises his hand.

“Ah! One of my best friends Louis Tomlinson, come on up here. What song will you be singing?” Niall grins, “Will you need us to pull up the lyrics to play on the Karaoke machine?”

“No I have it memorized, just play the song without any vocals. You Ruin Me by The Veronicas,” Louis answers as he strides to the stage. Niall nods and removes himself from the platform to make room for Louis. Louis then stands behind the mic, lowering it to his height, as the room stares at him.

“Job well done… standing ovation. Yeah you got what you wanted, guess you won,” Louis starts, as his voice grows louder.

He sang this song for many reasons: for Harry, for his various hookups, and now Liam is added to the list. Ever since Harry had chosen that girl over Louis, Louis’s life has been a walking disaster. He leaves a trail of destruction, booze, and sexual exploits where ever he goes. Louis thought Harry was in love with him, to turn out to be wrong. And Liam has now copied the same pattern.

“Cause you, played like a symphony; played me till my fingers bleed. I’m your greatest masterpiece. You ruin me. Later when the curtains drawn, and no one is there for you back home. Don’t cry to me you played me wrong. You ruin me,” Louis sings.

But as his voice echoes through the room, he realizes the words from the song and his life do not match up.

Harry did not lead him on or purposefully do him wrong. Damn, Harry does not even know that Louis is hurting in the first place. Harry gave no indication that he wanted Louis. Harry wanted Kendall, and in retrospect, it was so obvious. Harry did not let Louis down, Louis let himself down because he put so much of his self-worth into Harry’s affection.

And Liam did not lead him on. Perhaps Liam should not have asked him to dinner, but Liam never made any promises to Louis either. He never told Louis that Louis would be his. He simply asked him to dinner, and Louis convinced himself that Liam wanted more. Liam is great, but Louis had no inkling of feelings before last night. Louis did not want Liam. Louis wanted to be in love. He is in love with being in love.

As he looks out into the crowd, his eyes immediately go to his two oldest friends. Their eyes hold pain, and more sadly they contain disappointment. The look they are giving him is not new. It is the same look all of his friends and family have been giving him since Harry. Their facial expressions are worse than pity. They acknowledge his repeated self-destruction.

Nobody destroyed Louis. Louis destroyed Louis. Louis repeatedly tore himself apart, throwing himself the most dramatic and destructive pity party in history. And now that he realizes it, he does not know how his friends put up with it: all of his crying spells, ditching them, drunken-induced messes, and selfish nature that prevented him from enjoying things such as their engagement. They must really love him because Louis cannot even put up with himself anymore.

Perhaps one reason Louis became drunk and high whenever he could was because he no longer likes this current version of himself. And is it any surprise that no guy does not either? Because this Louis has become needy, desperate, and self-centered. There are plenty of people, such as his friends and
family, who have always loved Louis for who he was. And while it may not be the type of love he desires, love is love. And love is rare.

If people can still love Louis through all the darkness that has recently enveloped him, then those who love him, such as the boys and Jay, deserve a better Louis than the one they currently have. Niall and Zayn deserve a healthier traveling buddy than this, as they sacrifice the plans they have already made to follow him wherever he pleases. And more than anything, Louis deserves a better version of himself, for himself.

As the song ends, Louis thinks to himself that this will be known as the day he finally realized he has the power to be his own knight in shining armor. Today is the day Louis begins the battle to take his life back.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks to my vacation over the past week, I was able to get a couple chapters ahead of myself, so Friday I will definitely be posting a new chapter, and I may start posting twice a week as I finish this up. My goal is to have this story finished by the time I leave for England on September 11th for study abroad. The next chapter is going to be setting the stage for the upcoming climax, while also resolving some loose ends. I just started on the chapter I consider to be the climax so I hope you are all ready for some drama and angst :)


Chapter 21: Over the Rainbow

Chapter Summary

Niall proves his worth to the Malik family by "accident." Zayn realizes there is no place like home, and decides he must do something to prevent the group from falling to pieces.

Chapter Notes

We're getting close to the end ya'll. It's really intimidating to write, because I’ve thought about the climax and falling action so much, now that I see much of it on paper it does not feel like it lives up to the expectation. So please send me some positive vibes to keep me optimistic and updating.

Song of the chapter: Over the Rainbow by Judy Garland

“That performance was the best Safaa. Literally music to my ears,” Niall comments as he leaves the local middle school after an orchestra performance with the Malik Family. It has been nearly a couple months since Niall proposed to Zayn. Yasser still pushes back against their relationship and his son’s sexuality, but during marriage counseling Patricia demanded that Zayn, and Niall if Zayn requested, be allowed to attend family events. Yasser conceded, but still refuses to let Zayn move back home.

“You maybe even better at the arts than your brother,” Niall compliments as he looks at his fiancé.

“Hey, watch your mouth,” Zayn playfully threatens.

“I say it like it is,” Niall replies devilishly.

“Could you all walk any slower?” Waliyha complains to her parents , “I cannot believe you made me leave my phone in the car for this.”

“You’re addicted to that thing,” Zayn remarks, “You should see yourself as lucky. I wasn’t allowed to have one when I was at your young age.”

“Well things change,” Yasser states coldly, hearing Zayn’s comment as disrespectful.

Throughout their forced interactions, Yasser will say the bare minimum to his son while ignoring Niall’s existence all together. To be honest, Niall and Zayn could barely care. They have become accustomed to Yasser’s behavior. The sun is shining, spring has sprung, and Zayn is with all of his family, which now includes Niall as an addition with the ring. If this is the best it ever gets for Zayn, he would honestly be perfectly content.

“Change can be good. Perhaps Waliyha is a little safer with it,” Niall argues to Zayn.

“Oh just give me the keys,” She orders in the midst of her teenage angst. Before her mother can
retract her hand, Waliyha seizes the key ring from Patricia. She sprints for the family van despite her parents’ demands for her to stop.

As Waliyha runs, a car attempts to floor it out of the parking lot, not expecting a teenage girl to run out in front of the accelerating vehicle.

“Waliyha!” Patricia screams in horror. Waliyha freezes in fear of the incoming impact, unable to move. The lights of the car brighten her up as it approaches.

_Smack!_ A body rolls down the pavement as the car screeches to a halt.

“Oh shit oh shit oh shit!” A teenage boy jumps out of the vehicle. He looks to the upper left of his car to see a teenage girl pushing herself off of the ground, but in front of his vehicle lies a blonde hair boy face down on the cement.

“Niall!” Zayn shrieks as he runs to the limp body. He hops down on the pavement and attempts to carefully roll Niall onto his back. The rest of the Malik family trots to check on Waliyha.

“Is he okay?” the teenager hollers at Zayn, realizing that the blonde haired boy is the one of in danger because he was the one hit, not Waliyha.

“Does he look okay to you?!” Zayn yells in anger. Now on his back, Zayn sets Niall’s head upon his lap, believing it to be better than leaving his injured skull upon the hard concrete, “Come on baby come on, wake up.” But Niall still does not respond to Zayn’s pleas.

“I’m sorry, I was texting and…” The teenager trails off.

“Waliyha,” Patricia helps her to her feet, “Are you hurt?”

“Just cut my skin against the pavement,” She replies while she attempts to wipe the dust off of the broken skin upon her knees.

Niall’s eyes flutter open, his head spinning from being knocked unconscious, “Zaynie?”

“Niall, Niall, Niall,” Zayn sighs, “Where are you injured?”

“Our sister isn’t hurt… is she?” The only thing Niall can think about.

_Our sister?_ Zayn think as his thumb lightly runs over Niall’s forehead, “That’s your first concern?” A tear runs down his cheek after realizing where Niall’s priorities are at.

“I would nod, but it hurts to move my head,” Niall whines as he squeezes his eyes closed in pain.

Zayn begins to sob in hysteria. Niall could be dying right now, but the only thing on his mind is protecting others. And the way he said _our sister_, it pierced Zayn’s heart. That seals fate. Niall is Zayn’s soulmate. No doubt in Zayn’s mind.

“I’ll call 911,” The teenager states pulling out his phone anxiously.

“Thank you, thank you, thank you,” Patricia repeats over and over again as the family surrounds the two on the ground, “You saved my baby.”

“You pushed her out of the way,” Yasser says breaking the scene between Niall and Zayn, both of them looking up him, “Why would you do that?” Yasser cannot comprehend the sacrifice Niall nearly committed.
“Because,” Niall replies weakly, “Whether you acknowledge it or not, your family is becoming part of my family. With these rings, Zayn’s family is mine, and mine is his. So of course, I would never let anything happen to my family... And nevermind that, I like to think of myself as a fucking decent person, and if anybody was in harm’s way I wouldn’t just let somebody get hurt.” Niall attempts to push himself up during his declaration, but this causes his head to spin again and he swiftly falls back down into Zayn.

“Baby, baby, please stop,” Zayn pleads as he looks down at the growing red stain on his own pants from his fiance’s head, “You’re bleeding.” More tears stream out of his eyes, as it becomes clear that the damage Niall took from the accident maybe more severe than initially thought.

“Hey, I’m right here,” Niall reaches up and wipes a tear off of Zayn’s face, “Don’t cry please.”

“I just love you so much,” Zayn admits, “If anything ever happened to you...”

“I love you too,” Niall answers softly, “As long as I have you I’ll be okay. Just stay with me, please.” Niall lightly pushes his head up. Zayn realizes what Niall wants. Normally Zayn keeps the public displays of affection to a minimum in front of his father, but he does not even think to stop. Zayn kisses Niall ever so sweetly.

“See, I’m okay now,” Niall tries to make Zayn smile, even the mess of this.

Yasser’s brain is going into overdrive right now. This does not make sense. Love is not supposed to look like this. He has been told all his life that the love between a man and a woman was incomparable to anything else. But now seeing this, he does not even know if he would have pushed someone out of the way if it was not someone in his bloodline. But the way Niall dove in front of danger, not even for Zayn, but for Zayn’s family, must be an act of some kind of true love.

The ambulance can be heard zooming down the street towards the scene as fast as it can, but Niall finds it increasingly difficult to stay conscious. Zayn begs for him to remain awake, knowing the danger if Niall falls asleep after possibly receiving a concussion. Zayn attempts to tell Niall stories to keep him awake, but soon realizes that his voice nearly soothes Niall like a lullaby.

“Tell me something you never told me before,” Zayn requests of Niall.

“I tell you everything babe,” Niall proclaims with a yawn.

“Our future,” Zayn demands, “Tell us how you see our future.”

“Hm… Is it weird that I can see us both as teachers? I mean, after traveling for a long time, we’ll go to college, whenever Louis settles down. Of course we’ll preform our arts for some years, but eventually we’ll buy a nice house with a big back yard. And we’ll take the master bedroom on the main floor, but our kids will have the bedrooms upstairs, that way we will be able to hear if they’re causing any trouble during the middle of the night…” Niall describes in oddly specific details, though his voice grows increasingly weak.

“Children?” Zayn repeats, “You see that?”

“Why wouldn’t I?” Niall asks.

“I don’t think I ever wants any kids,” Zayn admits.

Niall does not answer for a moment, thinking over what Zayn just revealed, “Well, we have a Louis, right?”
“And how about instead of having a couple kids, we have like ten dogs and a Louis?” Zayn offers kindly.

“I do really like dogs,” Niall lightly chuckles, “And I really like you.”

The ambulance and a cop car pull up next to the location of the incident and swiftly swarm the area. Zayn is forced away from Niall as they load him on the carrier, but Niall’s eyes quickly close as soon as he is on the more comfortable stretcher.

“Niall? Niall!” Zayn calls out hoping to wake him up, but Niall does not respond as they load him into the ambulance. Zayn attempts to crawl in with him, but one of the paramedics pulls him back.

“Are you a family member?” The medic questions.

“I’m his fiancé,” Zayn declares as he once again attempts to step in.

“You can only ride with him if you are legally or biologically a family member. But we’ll be arriving at the hospital really soon. You can meet us there,” The medic states firmly.

“But he asked me to stay with him. I told him I would,” Zayn argues.

“I’m sorry,” The medic concludes as he and another paramedic get into the ambulance. The sirens turn on as it drives out of the parking lot. Zayn watches in defeat as his Niall disappears into the distance.

“Come on son,” Yasser states as the cop their interviews the teenage driver, “We have to get to the hospital.”

Zayn and his family take a seat in the emergency waiting room for news from Niall. Zayn sits on the edge of his chair, hunched over with his hands clasped together and his elbows resting on his knees. His eyes remain glued to the ER entrance awaiting any movement. He remains distant from his family, all of his thoughts focused on what could be behind the door.

Everything about this room frustrates Zayn. It is way too orderly: with its perfectly white walls and all the chairs in straight rows and even the room’s magazines are stacked directly on top of one another. This is a hospital, a place where people die on regular basis. It should not be this methodical. This building should feel as Zayn feels now: chaotic.

“Finally,” Louis sighs as he enters the waiting room. He is covered in sweat, pushing his shortened hair out of his face, “I ran here as fast as I could; I guess my lungs still haven’t fully recovered from me giving up the cigarettes.”

Zayn looks over to Louis briefly, nods, and then looks back at the ER door.

“I called Harry, Liam, and Bobby. The hospital had already called Bobby by the time I reached him, so he should be here any minute. Liam’s on his way, and Anne has Harry and Kendall,” Louis explains as he approaches Zayn, “How are you doing?”

“I have no idea how Niall is; all they have told me is that he’s got a concussion,” Zayn replies quickly.

“I didn’t ask about Niall. I asked about you,” Louis clarifies as he stands directly in front of Zayn.
Zayn breaks his gaze at the door and peers up at Louis. Louis can see the uncertainty in Zayn’s facial expression, how he is trying to remain strong for Niall even though Niall is not even in the room.

Louis’s maternal stare snaps Zayn out of his act, wrapping his arms around Louis’s waist and buries his face into Louis’s stomach, “Thank God you’re here.”

“Don’t say anything about it. If you need me, I’ll always find a way there. Paul understood, he told me I could make up my hours later,” Louis explains as he hugs Zayn back, placing a light kiss on the top of his head.

Yasser watches the interaction between the two boys at disdain. Zayn does not appear this close to his own family anymore. He sat as far away as he possibly could, but the second Louis arrives, Zayn expresses intimacy that he did not show to the rest of them. That is when Yasser realizes not only did he drive Zayn away from him, but he also created a wall between Zayn and the rest of his family. And now he acts closer to Louis than he does his own blood. What have I done Yasser thinks.

“Family of Niall Horan?” A nurse asks as he enters the room.

“Yes!” Zayn shoots to his feet and trots to the nurse, “How is he?”

“He’s in stable condition. After diagnosing the concussion, we did a CT scan and saw he had swelling and internal bleeding underneath his skull. We have since drained some of the fluid. There is a small crack in his skull so he does have some stitches. He also has a fractured rib and wrist, but those should heal relatively smoothly. While he is doing better now, we want to keep him through the next day to watch the swelling and internal bleeding to make sure it does not rapidly increase overnight. As long as his condition remains the same as it is now, he will be allowed to leave tomorrow,” The nurse explains.

“Am I allowed to see him yet?” Zayn requests.

“Are you legally a family member?” The nurse questions.

“I’m his fiancé- husband! I’m his husband,” Zayn lies, believing that may get him into the ER.

“Well first of all, the boy wouldn’t shut up about his fiancé, so I know you aren’t married,” The nurse chuckles, “But even if you were married, even though I am okay with it, this state does not recognize same-sex marriages, so we couldn’t let you back their anyways.”

“So even though they’re in love, and if they were legally married somewhere else, you still wouldn’t let my son back there?” Yasser snaps, surprising everyone there.

“I would if I could,” The nurse gives in.

That is when Bobby enters the room, also out of breath, “Where’s my boy?”

“Are you his father?” The nurse asks.

“Yes,” Bobby replies as he joins the group around the nurse.

“You can come on back,” The nurse accepts.

“Can, um, my son’s husband join me?” Bobby also tries to sneak Zayn to see Niall, grabbing on Zayn’s arm to pull him with.

“We already tried that,” Zayn sighs, “Please push for him to get into a normal room as soon as
possible?"

"Will do," Bobby somberly states as he follows the nurse out of the lobby. Zayn looks down at his feet in self-defeat, letting out a heavy sigh from his lips.

"At least we know he’s okay," Patricia says as she rubs his shoulders.

"I’ll believe it when I see it," Zayn groans.

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"He’s settled, you can come in now," A different nurse tells the group of people huddled outside of a new hospital room, “Remember that he does have a concussion so quiet on sound and…”

"Finally," Zayn surges into the room before the nurse finishes her sentence.

"Perhaps we should give them a moment," Patricia suggests to the same group, now including Harry, Liam, Kendall, and Anne.

"At least we know he’s out of the woods," Liam says to Louis as they lean against a wall towards the back end of the group.

"Shit," Louis exhales, “I haven’t been this stressed in months. I can hear my last hidden cigarette calling my name.”

"You’ve been strong for nearly two months," Liam reassures him, “And this day will pass just like the others.”

"No one asked for you to be the angel on my shoulder," Louis hisses, “It sickens me.”

"I saw a spare room being unused down the hall. I got something else you can stick in your mouth if it’d make you feel better," Liam whispers sexually into Louis’s ear; Louis becomes extremely alert to Liam next to him, “Would an angel say that?”

"You and Sophia are still nonexclusive?" Louis clarifies, knowing that talk about Sophia tends to turn Liam off if he is not really in the mood for Louis.

"Nope… not yet," Liam sighs.

"In fifteen minutes, say you have to go to the bathroom. I’ll then tell them I’m going to buy a snack a few minutes after you leave. Then we’ll meet there," Louis smirks as he steps away from Liam, to which Liam cannot help but grin at how flustered Louis became at his suggestion.

Zayn enters seeing Bobby standing by the bed talking with his son. Niall laughs at a joke his father tells, but the second he sees Zayn enter the room, his face immediately softens.

"Could you leave the room for a moment please?" Zayn requests. Bobby looks to his son first, to which Niall nods in agreement. Bobby exits to room as Zayn walks past him.

"Which side is your rib fractured on?" Zayn asks gently.

"Wrist and rib are on the left side," Niall comments as he lifts the wrapping around his left wrist a proof.

Zayn then climbs in on right side of the bed, his head resting lightly on Niall chest, “Please don’t ever do anything like that ever again.”
“I’m not not going to save someone if they’re in immediate danger, especially someone who is a member of our family,” Niall replies tenderly.

“I know, I know,” Zayn closes his eyes, “I know you. This is you. This is why I love you. But I can’t go through this again. My heart won’t be able to take it.”

“You’re heart is a lot stronger than you give it credit for,” Niall places a kiss atop Zayn’s head.

“No, I mean the whole me not being able to get in the ambulance with you or visit you in critical care,” Zayn explains, pushing himself to look at Niall.

“I wish I could change the hospital’s policies darling,” Niall states.

“I’m not talking about only here,” Zayn describes, “This is who you are: Heroically stupid. If it’s not this, you’ll be saving Louis from looking the wrong direction before he crosses a street in Europe, or you’ll be trying to jump between the roofs of houses divided by thin alleys like in all the action movies.”

“That does sound like me,” Niall chuckles, “But what do you want to do about that?”

“Many countries in Europe recognize same sex unions, so we would have same rights there as anyone else,” Zayn elucidates.

“What are you saying?” Niall attempts to clarify.

“What if on our way out of the states, we fly into Atlantic City or Las Vegas for a day or two, and we elope,” Zayn makes clears, “Louis being our witness. That way if anything ever happens while we travel, we won’t have to worry about this.”

“I thought you wanted to be engaged for a long time before we tie the knot?” Niall points out, “And your mother would kill us if she missed your wedding.”

“The experiences in our lives change our perceptions of things. We could still have another ceremony and reception when we return with all of our friends and family. But just for safety, I think we should elope,” Zayn says.

“You’ve had a pretty traumatic day babe. I don’t want to have you to make any dramatic decisions you could regret later. Are you sure you want to do this?” Niall questions.

“You promised me you would be my husband with this ring. I am cashing in on that promise. Can you stick to your word?” Zayn pressures Niall.

“I can,” Niall agrees.

“Niall Horan,” Zayn breaths in deeply, “Will you elope with me?”

“I do,” Niall gleams, to which Zayn deeply kisses Niall on the lips.

At the same time, Yasser peers into the room to see the interaction taking place between Niall and his son. He sees both of them smile so warmly at each other, the most secure Zayn has ever looked in his life. And Niall stares at Zayn like he is the moon and all the stars. Then they kiss. It was not casual or sexual. It looks like Niall’s lips are Zayn’s safe place; as if that kiss is a secret language that only they speak. They both pull away at the same time and lean their foreheads against the other. Another moment of complete bliss. This unravels Yasser’s mind because this should not make sense, but it does. Here, he is watching love in its purest form.
“The others are dying to see you,” Zayn finally sighs.

“I guess the polite thing to do would be to let them in,” Niall states.

“I just don’t want to let you go,” Zayn admits, "You know I'm not good at sharing."

“You don’t have too,” Niall smiles, “We’ll have some more alone time soon babe.”

“I’ll be right back,” Zayn plants another brief kiss on Niall before he hops away. Yasser steps out of the door before his son notices his presence.

“Ya’ll can come in,” Zayn announces the group of people gathered outside the room. All file in one by one.

“Here Zayn, Louis told me to bring you another pair of jeans since it looks like it's your time of the month,” Anne laughs as she hands Zayn his clothing.

“Oh gawd I totally forgot,” Zayn quickly laughs as he seizes the pants and covers up his crotch with them, “Niall’s blood I swear.”

“That doesn’t make the situation any better sweetie. Go change,” Anne gleams as Zayn disappears and reappears from the bathroom with the new jeans.

“You doing alright champ?” Bobby says while giving a side hug to Zayn.

“A lot better now,” Zayn sighs.

“My son is the boy almighty. Not even a car could slow him down,” Bobby declares.

“Technically, it did stop once it hit me,” Niall laughs.

Yasser watches the interaction between Bobby, Anne, and Zayn. He knew there would be a void created in the absence of his and his wife’s parenting, but he did not expect for people to fill in the spaces left from their disappearance. Now he sees Bobby and Anne treating Zayn as more of a son than Yasser has, and that creates a world of hurt he did not expect.

Zayn retakes his place sitting on the right of Niall as ever person takes their turn talking to the injured and his fiancé. Yasser feels completely out of place. He used to know all these people so well, but now he feels like a complete stranger who does not belong. He must say something to make things right.

“Zayn… Niall,” He says weakly as the room goes silent, unsure what to expect from the father.

“I, um, like to think of myself as a man of honor, and today you prevented my family from being torn apart. You saved my daughter’s life and you could have lost yours in the process, but that never seemed like a concern to you. So I think to make it fair, I owe you a favor. I can assume what you want from it, a blessing on your engagement, so if that is something you desire…” Yasser declares unsure of himself. He knows this is the only way he can accept their marriage while also saving face when he makes a complete 180 degree turn on his stance to their relationship.

“I don’t need that,” Niall interrupts, causing a confused look from Yasser, “Sir, what I mean is, that is not what I want from you.”

“What is it?” Yasser coughs.

“When I asked Patricia for her blessing, I told her that I didn’t believe I needed it, but Zayn did. I also
asked that of her because I knew that was the most she could give at that time. Zayn is, of course, my first concern. But your blessing on the marriage is not the most important thing Zayn needs. Zayn needs to be allowed to come back home, you accepting him and accepting of everything that he is. And if you cannot do that today, I understands things such as that take time, but I will reserve that favor until you can. Let Zayn come home, please. That is what I desire from you,” Niall explains, the whole room touched by Niall’s request.

Yasser looks dumbfounded. Niall’s declaration was the last thing he expected. After a long period of contemplation, “Zayn, you can come back home. You too Niall. And actually any of you boys. The house has been way too quiet. I’ll also accept your marriage as well, just give me a little time, this is all a lot to process… We should be getting home. Are you coming Zayn?”

“I think I’m staying here tonight, but I’ll come by at some point tomorrow,” Zayn replies in relief.

“Okay, we’ll see you then. Come on girls,” Yasser says as he begins his exit.

But before he leaves the room, he turns to Bobby and Anne while the rest of his family gives personal goodbyes to everyone in the room. “I’d like to thank you two for being Zayn’s parents when I couldn’t. I can never repay you for that.” Bobby and Anne nod in agreeance.

“And I’m sorry, I don’t believe I’ve met you before,” Yasser turns to Kendall and Harry.

“I’m Kendall, Harry’s girlfriend,” Kendall grins.

“Each other’s one and only since the autumn formal,” Harry’s arms tightens around her hips.

Zayn’s ears perk up at that comment.

“Really?” Yasser states surprising as his eyes briefly travel to Louis, “Never imagined you’d date someone like… her.”

Patricia walks out of the room with the largest smile on her face. She won. She has her boy back. Her family in one piece again.

“Anne?” Zayn asks softly after his family leaves.

“Yes dear?” Anne questions.

“You don’t mind if I… stay at your house semi-frequently still? It kind of feels more like home than my actual place,” Zayn admits.

“Whenever you want,” Anne offers lovingly.

The rest of the group stays talking late into the evening, until Anne announce she is going to head home. Bobby also asks Niall if it would be okay for him to go back to the house as well since he has work in the morning, but with the rest of the boys appearing set to stay the rest of the night with Niall, Bobby does not have guilt about leaving.

“I think I’m going to jet too Harry,” Kendall says sweetly as she kisses Harry on the lips, “You sure you don’t need a ride home?”

“Nah, I’m going to stay as well, just in case Niall needs anything,” Harry explains to her.

“Well he has a total of five nurses now. I’m sure he will be more than fine,” She giggles, “I’ll see you tomorrow?”
“Yes, see you then,” Harry replies as she exits the room.

The boys settle in, chit chatting throughout the night till they all fall asleep in various positions around the room.

Zayn wakes up with his chair pulled against the right side of Niall’s bed. Even though he is sitting in the seat, his upper body leans over the bed, his head resting next to Niall’s thighs without a pillow beneath it. One of his hands still intertwines itself with Niall’s.

Peering around the room, he has never seen a more calming sight. Niall was lucky enough to receive a room to himself, when most rooms hold two patients at once. In the spare bed on the other side of Niall lays Liam, curled in a ball leaning on the edge closest to his injured friend. At the foot of Niall’s bed is another chair Harry and Louis sleep in, snuggled up against each other when the furniture is most obviously made for one person, not two.

It is very odd. Zayn only received back what he wanted a few hours ago: being able to be a part of the Malik Family once again. But when he looks around the room, he sees the people that had chosen to be his family through thick and thin. That accepted him for his entirety and all without asking. When Niall asked him for the engagement, Niall mentioned the importance of not the family you are born in to, but the one you choose to be a member of.

In that moment, Zayn feels as if he has just traveled through the land of Oz. The family he has always desired surrounded him the entire time. They are his ruby red slippers. Home is not a place. It is a feeling. Home is love. Zayn feels this hospital room is home because this is where his boys are at. He never lost his family. Zayn had it the entire time.

“What are you doing up babe?” Niall asks weakly, feeling Zayn’s movements against the bed.

“I’m home,” Zayn replies sweetly, though Niall does not understand Zayn’s statement.

“Have you been taking any of my morphine?” Niall chuckles with a squeeze of Zayn’s hand.

“You boys are my family: You, Louis, Harry and Liam. I don’t want to lose any of you,” Zayn explains his realization.

“But we’re leaving with Louis,” Niall responds quietly.

“No, we’re not. Now that I have you all, I’m not just going to let us go. I don’t want us all going to different places, I want us to go in one direction,” Zayn argues, “This isn’t happening without a fight.”

“I’d like that too, but I don’t think that’s going to happen while Louis is in love with Harry and Harry remains with Kendall,” Niall whispers, careful not awaken anyone they talk about.

“My thoughts exactly,” Zayn smirks, “But let’s say I knew something that could change that.”

“I thought we didn’t keep secrets from one another?!” Niall yelps.

“Sh… I didn’t know it was a secret until tonight,” Zayn reveals.

“Well what is it?” Niall demands impatiently.

Zayn stands up and presses his lips against Niall’s ear, during which he reveals what he knows to Niall. Niall’s eyes grow wide as he stares with dread at the chair Louis and Harry rest in.
“Bloody hell,” Niall whispers as Zayn now look at Harry and Louis as well, “How in the hell did you not tell anyone about that?”

“Operation Breaking Hendall is now in effect,” Zayn declares suavely, proud of his currently developing plan to save his family.

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter is already complete so it will be up next Friday :) it's the last chapter before the climax, though there is a bit of falling action so we still have a few more chapters to go. If you have any thoughts, comments, or questions feel free to comment!
Chapter 22: Everybody Talk

Chapter Summary

The group dives into drama as Zayn makes his move to break up Harry and Kendall and Liam learns of Louis's plan for going to Europe.

Chapter Notes

This is the last chapter before the climax everyone :) can't believe this is almost over.

Song of the chapter: Everybody Talks by Neon Trees

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Okay, explain this again to me, because your story does not sound completely solid,” Niall demands from Zayn. The hospital allowed Niall to return home the following day, so Zayn went with him to take care of his fiancé while Bobby works at the office.

“It seems pretty solid to me,” Zayn sighs as he fluffs the pillow behind Niall’s head, “At one of the parties I attended while you were working late to save up for this gorgeous ring, I was coming around a corner when I heard Kendall’s voice talking sweet to whom I assumed was Harry. I thought it was cute what she was saying to him, but also kinda disgusting since I knew she was referencing her vagina a lot. Then all of a sudden I heard a guy say, ‘What about you and that Harry guy?’ And I thought oh shit but then she replied with ‘We have an open relationship, so don’t you worry about him for a second honey.’ The guy seemed okay with it and they disappeared into a bedroom. I didn’t think Harry would be okay with a non-exclusive relationship, but I did not want judge whatever her and Harry had agreed upon. But then last night when Harry said to my Dad ‘We’ve been each other’s one and only since the autumn homecoming’ I knew either one of them was lying, and most likely it’s Kendall.”

“Don’t you think it’s possible they did have an open relationship, and it has since transitioned into a closed one?” Niall suggests, “It’s been a few months since that even happened.”

“But don’t you think Harry would have mentioned to us at some point if they were ever in an open thing?” Zayn points out, “Or if there was a change to closed?”

“Maybe,” Niall gives in, “But Zayn if you go ahead and tell Harry this and you’re wrong, it could really damage your relationship with him. Kendall could think you are trying to destroy their relationship as well. You don’t want to turn a friend’s girlfriend against you.”

“But if I know this and I don’t tell him, there is an equally possible chance I could have repercussions for holding something like this away from him,” Zayn argues, “Girlfriends or boyfriends may lie, but friends don’t.”

“You’re risking a lot,” Niall states, “And let’s say by an off chance this goes according to plan, and Harry and Kendall break up, that’s not going to make Harry realize he has feelings for Louis. Do
you have a plan for that?"

"Uh…” Zayn mumbles, “Not yet. But we have time to plan that!”

"We?!" Niall yelps, “This is your plan, not mine!”

“But you’re my fiancé,” Zayn grins, “My missions are now our missions.” Niall rolls his eyes knowing Zayn is right.

“What have I got to lose? If things do not go the way I hope, then we will leave with Louis for Europe as originally planned. See, nothing to lose. We will still lose Liam and Harry the same as if we had done nothing, if this goes awry,” Zayn attempts to convince Niall.

“I’ll support you through this,” Niall gives in, “But you’re telling Harry on your own. I was not there so I cannot back your story with proof. This is your secret, not mine. But aside from that, I’ll offer all the help I can.”

“Thanks, love,” Zayn kisses Niall on the cheek.

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“Fucking shit!” Liam moans, digging his fingertips into Louis’s exposed waist line.

“Don’t you dare cum yet Payno.” Louis barks as grinds Liam’s dick in his ass, “I’m almost there.” Louis aggressive jerks his cock with his right hand trying to fasten his orgasm, though if he tugs any harder he may break skin.

“You’re the one riding me cowboy style,” Liam whines, “I don’t have much control here.”

“This will be the last time you get this ass if you cum before I tell you to,” Louis threatens as he drags his free hand’s fingernails down Liam’s chest, hoping a sting of pain will distract Liam from cumming for a few moments.

“What the fuck!?” Liam howls as four red lines now stretch from his right pectoral muscle to his abs. In retaliation for the move, Liam jabs his hips up, hitting Louis in the that sweet spot that causes him to lose control.

“Fuck!” Louis yells as he unexpectedly shoots his load all over Liam’s chest.

“Gawd damnit Lou!” Liam shouts as Louis tightens his asshole in a physical response to his orgasm, causing Liam to erupt white hot inside of his friend as well.

“What have I told you about unloading your spunk on my chest?” Liam frowns, “It takes forever to get out of the hair, hurts like fuck.”

“Quit your bitching,” Louis demands as he hops off of his friend’s cock, “It’s your own fault for hitting my prostate like that.”

“I’m half tempted to pull this condom off and fling it into your hair, just so you understand what I’m talking about,” Liam hisses.

“You do that and the next time your cock’s in my mouth, I’m biting off part of it to take home as a souvenir,” Louis quips, “Go clean yourself off, you’re a mess.”

Liam sighs as he rolls out of his bed. He puts up with a lot from Louis just for some ass. But it’s a great ass Liam reminds himself as he pulls the condom off while he enters the bathroom.
Louis whips out his phone as he listens to the shower turn on. Liam and Louis tried to play it cool after they hooked up the first time after Niall and Zayn’s engagement, but things did not progress between Liam and Sophia as fast as he had hoped they would. He only hit her in the accident because she was traveling through town. She lives in the next city over, and she is very apprehensive to forming a long distance relationship, something Liam is also nervous about. But they cannot deny there is dramatic chemistry between the two. They will travel to each other’s town every other weekend for a date night, and then text all week long when they cannot see the other. This leads to their developing relationship moving very slowly, sexually.

At a random party, this leads a sexual repressed Liam and a constantly horned-up Louis to another hook up. Afterwards they talked things out more thoroughly, agreeing the two did not have romantic feelings for the other, but they felt safer hooking up with each other than anyone else. Thus here they are.

“Louis!” Liam yells from the bathroom, “Look what you did!” He walks out of the bathroom, naked and still dripping wet, to expose the still apparent claw marks exactly where Louis scratched him at.

“Holy shit,” Louis laughs, impressed by his marksmanship.

“What are we going to do?!” Liam yelps helplessly.

“This looks like more of a you problem than a we problem,” Louis points out.

“What am I going to tell Sophia?” Liam questions as he returns to the bathroom for a towel.

“Well aren’t you two non-exclusive?” Louis reminds him.

“Just because we are not in a monogamous relationship doesn’t mean she wants to see me with somebody else’s markings,” Liam argues.

“Uh… just don’t take your shirt off next time you see her?” Louis offers.

“She told me that’s her favorite part of me,” Liam says as he returns to the room, now drying his body off.

“Don’t know what to tell you buddy,” Louis finally admits.

“You need this?” Liam asks, regarding the towel, as he hops back in bed with his friend.

“Sure,” Louis takes the towel to wipe the sweat off his body.

“Can I ask something? Like a question with an observation?” Liam inquires nervously.

“Go ahead,” Louis throws the towel back to Liam.

“I’ve kind of noticed you haven’t been hooking up with other people, and the last time I really remember when you did was before we got together the first time… So I just wanted to make sure there weren’t more emotions behind that,” Liam explains.

“You thinking I caught the feelings for Liam Payne?” Louis scoffs.

“I don’t know… You know I really care for you and if there is anyway I could hurt you or lead you on, I want to prevent it. This arrangement only works out if we’re honest with each other, so I’m asking,” Liam describes. Liam does not really believe Louis secretly loves him, but he can sense something is off.
Also, ever since Louis and Liam developed this *bros helping bros* agreement, their friendship has definitely strengthened. Like they are complete assholes to one another, but Liam can sense it is not how they really feel about the other. It is more that they are so comfortable with one another now, bullying the other is a way to show their intimacy, while also having fun with it. Liam can tell he has struck a nerve accusing Louis of liking him, so he decides roll with it.

“I do have more going on in my life than just letting you fuck me,” Louis rolls his eyes.

“You have more than one man in your life?” Liam chuckles, “Oh my heart. Who is he?”

“What makes you think it’s a man?” Louis says sarcastically.

“There’s a greater chance of you being in love with a fruit bat than a female,” Liam states.

“Yup you caught. Met a fruit bat named Kevin and he’s the one,” Louis lies.

“But really who is it? You and Harry having an affair?” Liam jokes.

“No Li,” Louis sighs.

“Zayn?”

“What the fuck?”

“Niall?”

“Stop.”

“So it is me. I knew it. This dick is magic what can I say.”

“Liam.”

“Louis and me, sitting in a tree. L-O-V-I-N-“

“Liam, I’m moving!” Louis finally shouts.

“What?” Liam squeaks.

“Shit,” Louis jumps out of bed, not expecting that secret to come from his lips, “I gotta go.”

“Oh no you don’t,” Liam attempts to grab Louis by the wrist, but Louis hops out of the Liam’s grasp before Liam takes hold.

“It’s nothing,” Louis pulls up his underwear, “I lied.”

“No,” Liam pushes himself up, “You wouldn’t be acting this way if that were so.”

“Don’t worry about it. It’s nothing,” Louis slips on his shirt, “When I said ‘Liam I’m moving’ I meant like right now.”

“What the fuck is happening,” Liam attempts to block the door way, “You aren’t going anywhere until you tell me.”

“I’ll scream,” Louis warns as he zips the fly on his jeans.

“You’ve been screaming all afternoon and no cops came then,” Liam points out, his muscular arms crossed above the exit, “My family won’t be home for hours. You can leave, as soon as you tell me
what you meant.”

Louis tries to squeeze between the small opening between Liam and the door frame, but to no avail does he escape. Knowing there is no way out unless he breaks Liam’s window and jumps to the ground from the second story room, Louis sighs in defeat.

“After graduation, I’m going to Europe,” Louis finally reveals.

“No, you told me and Harry that you’d wait with Zayn and Niall for us till our graduate. And then we’d leave for wherever together,” Liam reminds him.

“Sometimes things don’t go according to plan...” Louis apologizes weakly.

“Zayn!” Liam squawks, “I’ll tell Zayn! He won’t let you leave. Neither will Niall.”

“They’re coming with me,” Louis breaks the news.

“What?” Liam appears heartbroken, “I’ll go too!”

“No, you can’t,” Louis argues, “What are you going to do? Drop out of high school to travel around Europe with money you don’t have?”

“You can’t do this,” Liam commands in denial. He collapses on to the ground, sitting criss-cross applesauce style from elementary school. Louis could easily step over Liam and leave the room now, but he cannot do that to his brokenhearted friend.

Louis sits on the ground next to him, trying to calm him down, “Liam I’m so sorry. But do you get how in love with Harry I am? I’m so fucking miserable all the time. Yeah, I finally pulled myself out of my self-destructive streak, but that does not mean I’m any happier. You know why I sleep with you? Yeah, you’re really attractive and good at what you do, but what you and me do is the closest thing to getting what I want from Harry. You’re one of my best friends and I am completely comfortable around you, but this feels like what me and Harry used to do before I realized I loved him. And for brief moment, I can close my eyes and imagine you’re him, but since I know you are using me too, I don’t feel guilty about it. That’s why I don’t sleep with anyone else. Because you are the closest I will get to Harry.”

“Does Harry know about this?” Liam asks.

“No,” Louis replies, “That’s another reason why I want you to stay here, so even when the three of us are gone, at least he will have you. And I would really appreciate it if you wouldn’t tell him. I’ll tell him eventually... I just don’t know how, so I haven’t gotten to it yet.”

“It’s not fair of you to put all of that expectation on me,” Liam declares emotionlessly.

“I’m sorry. I know it’s a lot,” Louis admits as he rubs Liam’s shoulders.

“You know I love you,” Liam begs with tears in his eyes.

“I love you too, but it’s not enough,” Louis presses a kiss into Liam’s temple, “Do you want me to stay and talk this out some more?”

“I think I need some alone time...” Liam’s lower lip quivers.

“Call me if you need anything,” Louis offers as he stands up and leaves the room.

Liam crawls to his bathroom, grabbing a pair of gym shorts in the process. Liam is not good at
showing his emotions, and in this moment he wishes he was more clearly able to. He really loves his boys. Liam has done some pretty shitty things to them throughout his time with the group. He ditched them all for the chance to join the popular crowd in middle school, and they let him back in without a fight when he came begging. He shattered Zayn’s heart and they still accepted him because they cared for Liam enough. And while the rest of the group does not know, he hurt Louis as well after their first hookup.

The boys love him despite all his wrongdoings, even when he feels he is internally flawed to always do the wrong thing in a critical moment. That is not something only friends do, but that is what family does.

Liam looks into the mirror, angry tears streaming out of his eyes. He has worked too hard to lose it all and not do a thing about.

“No, this isn’t over,” Liam confirms to his reflection in the mirror, “Not by a long shot.”

“No…” Harry whimpers, taking a seat on his bed with Zayn standing in front.

“Look, I’m just telling you what I heard,” Zayn breathes, “I wish what happened didn’t happen, but it did. And you had the right to know.”

“I thought we were exclusive since we started…” Harry admits brokenly.

“Just go talk to her mate,” Zayn suggests, “I hope that I’m wrong.”

“When did this exactly happen?” Harry asks.

“I don’t know the exact date…” Zayn answers.

“So it could have been before I asked her out,” Harry states hopefully.

“No, I definitely know it was after the winter formal,” Zayn argues.

“You’re wrong!” Harry yells.

“Harry, I know what I heard!” Zayn defends, “Just ask her. If I’m wrong, I’m wrong. Just ask.”

“I welcomed you into my house. I let you live here when no one else would take you in. And this is how you repay me?!” Harry accuses Zayn.

“Why would I make this up?” Zayn points out, “What do I have to gain from this? You think I want you hurting?”

“I love her,” Harry glares at Zayn, “And she loves me.”

“I didn’t say she didn’t,” Zayn replies sternly.

"Were you high when you heard this?" Harry questions.

"Like, I was a little buzzed, but I was definitely coherent as she was," Zayn replies.

"How do you know!?" Harry charges, "You could have imagined the whole thing."

"I know what I heard," Zayn states clearly.
“Fuck off Zayn,” Harry curses as he storms out of the room.

“Shit,” Zayn sighs, running his fingers through his hair, unsure what to do next.

He may have just broken one of his best friend’s heart, and while he does believe it is for the greater good, is what he just committed inherently selfish? He is trying to save his family. But did Harry have to lose what he loved for Zayn to keep what he loved? And Niall had a point, Zayn has no plan yet to physically keep Louis here or for Harry to fall for Louis. Now what.

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Liam pounds upon the front door of Niall’s home. He does not know if Zayn would be back at his childhood home yet, but he does know Niall will be home for sure. And where Niall is, there is high probability a Zayn will follow.

“Hold your gawd damn bloody horses,” Niall shouts from within his house. It takes him a few moments to reach his door due to his injuries, but finally the entrance opens.

“You,” Liam aggressively points at him, though he is cautious not to press his finger against Niall’s fractured rib.

“Oh shit you know,” Niall steps back as Liam enters the home, recognizing the cat is out of the bag about the plans for Europe.

“You were going to leave me here?!” Liam hollers, “How could you!?”

“Dude, please don’t shout, I can’t handle loud noises. Doctor’s orders,” Niall sits back against his couch, though he fully expects himself to let Liam scream this out.

“You weren’t even going to tell me!” Liam says in a slightly lower volume but not by a lot.

“We’re only doing what Louis instructed us too,” Niall explains.

“His heart is broken. He’s not in the state of mind to be making such decisions,” Liam argues.

“Louis is more put together than you give him credit for. And even if he is not in the place to decide such things, Louis already made these plans before me and Zayn hopped on board. We did not want him to go alone so we chose to follow him. This is out of our control just as it is for you,” Niall tells Liam.

“No, I know Louis better than you. He’s a mess,” Liam declares.

“How do you know him better than me? Me and him have been friends since first grade,” Niall reminds Liam.

“Because we’re fucking!” Liam let’s slip.

“What?” Niall and Zayn say at the same time. Both Niall and Liam turn around to see Zayn standing in the doorway.

“Babe?” Niall asks.

“You’re fucking Louis?!” Zayn slams the door behind him. “You’re telling us he is not in the right state to be making decisions, and yet you’re the one taking advantage of him to get your dick sucked?! So fucking me up was not good enough, so you’re making your way through the group and now you could ruin Louis as well?”
“Oh look who’s talking about hopping their way around the group when you made a move on Niall the day after I ended things with you!” Liam reminds them.

“Uh it was two days,” Niall points out, trying to break the tension.

“Yeah?!” Zayn agrees in confusion, though he is not sure why it makes the situation any better.

“I think we’re getting way off track and bringing up that don’t really matter anymore,” Niall says attempting to calm the room, “Liam, why are you here?”

“To tell you: your plan is not going to work. I’m not going to let this happen; no one is going anywhere. I’m not losing anyone. I am keeping you, and you, and Harry, and Louis. I don’t know how but I will stop this,” Liam issues a large declaration.

“Wait,” Zayn breaths, feeling hope for the first time today, “You want to stop this?”

“Of course I do!” Liam states matter-of-factly, “I love you guys. You all are my brothers. Oddly a couple of brothers that I have fooled around with… but brothers nonetheless.”

“I think I just broke up Harry and Kendall,” Zayn admits.

“Why?” Liam questions not understanding the situation.

“Because I don’t want to lose any of you either,” Zayn reveals.

“Wait, we’re on the same team?” Liam clarifies.

“Yes,” Niall agrees, “But breaking them up won’t solve our problem, only-“

“Harry realizing his feelings for Louis will,” Liam interrupts.

“Exactly,” Zayn agrees, “So even while Operation Breaking Hendall may be successful, the next part won’t be as easy.”

“And Liam,” Niall states, “If our joint efforts fail, we cannot allow Louis to go on his own. He already told him we’d go with him and have our trip planned out. We will be leaving with him, no matter how much we do not want to leave you or Harry as well.”

“Okay, I understand,” Liam nods.

“What are we going to call the next phase?” Zayn asks, feeling excited for what is next.

“Operation Saving Private Stylinson,” Liam declares confidently.

“Hey mom, I’m home,” Louis enters his household.

“Lou!” Pheobe runs to the door to greet him, “Someone is waiting for you in your room.”

“Oh really?” Louis bends down to pick up his sister, “Could it be your twin?”

“Nope, not this time,” She kisses him on the cheek, “He didn’t look to well. He might be sick.”

“Well you better stay downstairs then, I don’t want my princess catching a cold with this beautiful spring weather,” He sets her down in front of the staircase.
“Go make me feel better Dr. Tomlinson,” Pheobe runs into the kitchen as Louis trots upstairs.

Louis steps into his room to see his blankets bundled on top of his bed in a pile, which was previously neatly made when he left in the morning. But the various sheets cannot contain the lanky body which is underneath it. Pointy elbows, bent knees, and long curly hair peak out.

“Fee-fi-fo-fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman, Be he alive, or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to make my bread,” Louis sings ironically.

“It’s me Lou,” Harry replies sadly.

“What’s the matter bestie?” Louis sits on his bed and pats the head of his friend through the blanket covering it, “Ate too much and got a belly ache?”

“Kendall broke up with me,” Harry regretfully admits.

“What?” Louis questions.

“Zayn told me that he thinks he saw her cheat on me a few months ago… when I confronted her about what he said, she at first denied it. When I started repeating specific details he told, she flipped it around me, accusing me of cheating on her with no proof, but she wouldn’t deny what he said. Finally she ended it and told me she never wanted to talk to me again… Oh Lou!” Harry describes, but at the end of his story he jumps out of his blanket fortress. He buries his face in Louis’s stomach and begins to sob.

“Hazza… it’s going to be okay,” Louis promises as he runs his fingers through Harry’s hair.

“It does not feel like it…” Harry whines into Louis’s abdomen.

“You helped me through my heartbreak with Nick,” Louis reminds Harry, “And I will be here with you through yours.”

“I know you didn’t like her,” Harry says, “I should have followed your intuition.”

“But I wanted you to be happy above all that,” Louis tells him, “I never wanted this.”

“Me neither,” Harry replies.

And while Louis would hate to admit it, he has Harry in his arms. His best friend is destroyed, but Louis feels serenity. Harry has returned to where he belongs: with Louis. It will not be easy, and it is it not in the way Louis wants it, but he has Harry, even if it is for a few months. At least he will be able to put Harry back together before Louis has to leave.

If this is the closest thing he will ever get to receiving what he truly wants, maybe Louis believes he is the villain in this story: Harry heartbroken for Louis to feel bliss. That is exactly why he still must leave, because Harry deserves better than an unhappy happy ending.

Chapter End Notes

So I'm thinking we only have three chapters left. One of them is the climax of the story which is the next chapter to be published, and then two more chapters of falling action. So hope you all are prepared:)
Chapter 23: Tear in My Heart

Chapter Summary

Niall and Zayn take another step on their future together. Harry seduces Louis, but little does Harry know, he is the tear in Louis's heart. This leads to Louis unraveling his long held secret to his best friend. (Last smut of the story)

Chapter Notes

Sorry this is a day late, with me preparing to leave for England next week my time is really stretched. But this chapter is kind of done. A little messy but done. I hope you all like it. Not too much left!

This is a pretty long chapter, but it's the climax so that's why.

Song of the chapter: Tear in My Heart by Twenty-One Pilot

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“You know, we may not even have to worry about this in a couple months,” Zayn reminds Niall as they travel down a gravel road in Niall’s truck. Another car follows close behind them, the realtor Niall requested travel with them.

“I know you’re hoping for the best,” Niall replies as dust flies around the vehicles, “But there is no guarantee our plan with be successful. We have to go along with our lives for what is certain: Louis expecting to leave for Europe in a few months. If things do change, then good for us, but until they do, this is safer.”

“But I know you really loved this place,” Zayn points out.

“I do,” Niall agrees, “But there’s no point of letting it collect dust when perhaps a new family could make happy memories in it. Plus, we could use some extra money for when we backpack across the continent or where ever we choose to settle down someday, with our five dogs and all.”


“And a couple cats,” Zayn slips in, to which Niall rolls his eyes.

“There it is,” Niall points to his upper right.

On the right of the road sets a large, sky blue house on top of a hill. It is magnificent in Zayn’s opinion. The two story house obviously has many rooms. Tall yellow prairie grass surrounds the property. A long porch wraps around the entirety of the house, with a shading covering all the chairs that set outside the home. A dust path leads from the gravel road to the front of the house for the vehicles to park. A grand red barn rests next to the house, though it can be seen by the chipped paint
that it is falling into disrepair.

“I used to come for a couple weeks every summer and stay here with my uncle,” Niall explains to Zayn.

“Damn, I would have gone with you if I woulda known it was this beautiful,” Zayn states while Niall parks the truck, “How’d he get it?”

“Well after becoming bored in Ireland, he found this place in America. It was dwindling to pieces which is how he came in possession of it for so cheap. He added on two rooms to the side of the house as you can see the different colored paneling, along with the wrap-around porch. If it was not for my uncle convincing my father to move to the States after the divorce, we wouldn’t be together,” Niall describes as him and Zayn step out of the truck. The realtor parks her car right beside them.

“Did he live here alone?” Zayn questions.

“Most of the time yes. Occasional girlfriends would move in and sometimes other friends would stay for extended visits, but he was very independent. Very admirable,” Niall comments.

“You want to give the tour?” the realtor questions, dressed in a violet business dress that looks way out of the place for the location. Spring is in full bloom, everything being brought back to life. But today the weather is even warmer than usual, with bugs and birds flying around in various directions as if they own the property more than Niall does.

“We’ll go through the barn first,” Niall orders to the realtor, and then turns to Zayn, “Here babe, take the key. Do you mind going inside and making sure there isn’t any trash or dead bugs about? There shouldn’t be much, it was pretty picked up last time I was here.”

“Of course,” Zayn takes the key as Niall leads the woman into the barn. Zayn walks the opposite direction towards what Zayn would describe as a mansion. At first the bugs buzz upon the intruder approaching, but then they quiet while he walks by, as if they are telling this is his home too.

Once upon the porch, from the new height he can see the entire prairie. It appears to stretch forever, until it hits the skyline. He takes in a deep breath of the natural air. It smells so clean.

Zayn turns and unlocks the door, stepping inside into dead quiet house. Niall may have told him to do a quick cleanup, but Zayn cannot help but explore first. All the rooms on the first floor are connected to one another, so he can easily walks through rooms in one motion. Boxes line the walls, but furniture remains intact and pictures of family still hang. Zayn arrives back at the front door before he knows it. Directly across from front door is staircase that leads to the upper floor, but Zayn must remind himself he does have a task to complete. He remembers seeing a stray broom lying in the kitchen and then returns there.

The entire first floor has wooden floors rather than carpet, making the cleanup process on sweeping up dust and bugs relatively fast and stress-free. He smacks off any cobwebs, causing the house look alive again. Zayn cannot help but admire the various pictures of Niall throughout the house. It can easily be seen that Niall’s uncle loved him very much. Most of the picture of Niall were taken on the premises. Much like school pictures, Zayn can see Niall age summer to summer. And then it stops before Niall dyed his hair blond for the first time, before his uncle died.

“Do you want to see where that picture was taken?” Niall startles Zayn, whom was so immersed in watching how cute Niall was to how ruggedly attractive he has become. Niall’s arms wrap around Zayn’s waist as he rests his head upon Zayn’s shoulder.
“Which one?” Zayn squeaks.

“The one with me and my brother in swimming trunks,” Niall answers, “Follow me.”

Niall leads Zayn to the sliding glass door that exits to the backyard from the kitchen. Niall rests one hand on Zayn’s shoulder as his other points outside with the other hand, “If you take a sharp right behind those trees, there is a path that leads to an old watering hole.”

“That looks amusing,” Zayn points to a jungle gym halfway between the trees and the house.

“My uncle built that for me and my brother when we were younger. We played on that so much, probably more than we should have when we got older. My brother broke the swing once and my uncle fixed it up like it was nothing. He used to tell us that he wanted to see the day when his grand nieces and nephews would play on it… Too bad, heh?” Niall describes, “Want to walk out there and see it?”

“Of course,” Zayn gleams, really enjoying seeing a part of Niall’s youth he did not experience with Niall himself.

“Mr. Horan!” The realtor calls from upstairs, “There is a room up here which won’t open. I think something fell over and is blocking it from the inside. Can you help me get in please?”

“Be right there!” Niall calls out and he pulls away from Zayn, “Stay right here.” Niall disappears as Zayn keeps staring out the glass door.

Zayn has a very strange emotion regarding this house. Something about it seems familiar. He really wishes he could have traveled here with Niall and enjoyed it when he was younger, but Zayn thinks there is still much to enjoy no matter what age someone is. There is so much to explore and discover. It saddens him to know he will not know this place. While Zayn did not know Niall’s Uncle well, he feels guilty that Niall’s children will never play here or grow up here in general.

Wait... Zayn has never wanted kids. He told Niall this and Niall accepted it. But the way Zayn felt guilt about Niall’s kids not being here... as if it was inevitable that Niall would have kids. But any kids Niall would have, they would also be Zayn’s. And for the first time in Zayn’s life, that thought does not terrify, which is terrifying in itself.

He looks up at the jungle gym again, but this time he envisions something. He sees something he knows is not there. Their faces are not defined but he can see two children playing outside. One of the children is male and appears to be age eleven. His hair is long and sandy brown, white skin that is tanned by the sun, wearing a white t-shirt and light blue jeans. He chases a little girl who looks about nine years old. She has dark black hair with a pink shirt on and black tights. Zayn can hear the laughter of their innocent voices through his ears. Looking a little to the left, he sees an older version of Niall and himself sitting on the porch swing, Niall’s arm draped around Zayn’s shoulder, watching their children’s enchantment.

“Daddy! Daddy! Come play!” The little girl orders as she gazes at her parents. The older Niall and Zayn smile at one another and stand with a nod.

“You better run!” the older Niall yelps as he charges for his children, both of the kids screaming in delight.

“Babe your knee!” the older Zayn hollers with laughter, trying to keep up with his husband.

A tear of joy runs down Zayn’s cheek. He cannot help it. What he dreamed is so pure and true. He never imagined wanting what he just saw with his mind’s eye. But he does. He wants that so bad.
How could any other future dream compare?

“How are you, babe?” Niall returns to Zayn’s side, “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing is wrong,” Zayn wipes the tear away, “I’m perfect actually.”

“Then why are you crying?” Niall asks.

“Nothing, I just saw something silly,” Zayn answers.

“What did you see? Not much going on out here,” Niall states.

“I saw two children playing on the swingset out there,” Zayn reveals with a smile.

“Holy shit did you see a ghost? Fuck, we’re out of here. They can take this house free for all I care,” Niall says in a panic.

“That’s not what I mean,” Zayn chuckles, “I saw a little boy who looks like you, and a little girl that looked like me. And we were watching them chase each other.”

“Looked like you and me?” Niall clarifies, “Like our children?”

“You could assume that,” Zayn agrees.

“I thought you said you didn’t want any kids,” Niall brings up.

“I don’t want just any kids,” Zayn retells, “I want our kids. I guess this place made me realize it.”

“This place? You want to raise a family here?” Niall inquires.

“I may have seen it here for the first time, but that does not mean it has to be here,” Zayn argues.

“Answer this question: Could you see it happening here? Would that make you happy?” Niall prods directly.

“Yes, but—“ Zayn replies.

“Charlotte!” Niall yells to the house. The sound heels clicking echoes through the building until the agent appears in front of the boys.

“Yes Mr. Horan?” She asks.

“We won’t be needing your services,” Niall smiles hugely.

“Niall!” Zayn squeals.

“Unless you also happen to advertise house rentals,” Niall adds.

“I do not, but I do have an associate who does,” She responds.

“Could you please give he or she or them our contact information,” Niall requests, “I’m sorry for wasting your time today.”

“It comes with the business,” She sighs as she leaves, “There will still be a charge for the day though.”

“Of course,” Niall yells as she exits the house, “Have a lovely afternoon!”
“Niall!” Zayn hollers, “What the fuck was that?!”

“What you saw, that’s what I want,” Niall comments sweetly.

“But we’re not having kids today,” Zayn tells him, “What will we do with the house till then?”

“We can rent it until we are ready to settle down,” Niall explains simply.

“This is something we should have talked about more as a couple before you making such a decision alone,” Zayn charges.

“We didn’t have time,” Niall points out, “She wanted to put the house on the market as soon as possible.”

“I want to raise our kids here,” Niall steps close to Zayn, pressing his thumbs lightly against Zayn’s temples as he rubs the skin into his hair line, “And you want to raise our kids here. This is what you want and that scares you. And now you have it. That’s why you’re mad.”

Zayn calms down, closing his eyes and resting his forehead against Niall’s, “I’m very scared.”

“We have years to prepare,” Niall reminds him, “We just picked a map. It does not mean we started down the path.”

“We’re going to have kids someday,” Zayn reiterates with a chuckle.

“We have a house,” Niall laughs, “Are we fucking insane?!”

“If love makes people crazy, yes,” Zayn kisses Niall.

“So crazy,” Niall kisses back.

“Gawd, it’s a good thing you can’t put a baby in me right now,” Zayn moans into Niall’s mouth, “Just might let you.”

“Oh really?” Niall says in between aggressive tonguings, “I could put a baby in you.”

“You man enough?” Zayn challenges him.

“I’ll show you what a man is,” Niall growls as he picks up Zayn, carries him into the kitchen, then drops him on the kitchen counter. With Zayn’s legs hanging off the counter, Niall rips them apart and stands between them. Pulling Zayn by the shirt, he sits Zayn up so he can properly kiss Niall. Their tongues clash as they tear each other’s clothing off their bodies.

“If it’s our house now, we better use it,” Zayn groans as Niall bites his neck.

“Let’s destroy this counter top,” Niall hisses.

“You gonna fill me up?” Zayn whines. The baby-making joke starts off as sexy word play, but after a while it loses its kindhearted nature and turns to actual serious commands, “Make that baby in me?!”

By this point in their relationship, they know exact what buttons to press to make the sounds they want to hear. Niall flips Zayn over, his bare chest pressed against the cold counter top. His hips hang over the edge, the tips of his toes grazing the floor. Niall quickly loosens Zayn up with a couple fingers and a wiggle of his tongue.

“Hurry, hurry,” Zayn pants, him unable to hold his head up above the counter.
“Needy little cunt, aren’t ya,” Niall says with a final kiss on his fiancé’s arse hole.

“For you,” Zayn whispers.

Niall licks his hand and then lathers his cock with his own saliva for lubrication. He places one hand on his boyfriend’s back for balancing purposes, and then his other hand aligns his member with Zayn’s ass, “You ready baby?”

“Fuck yes,” Zayn sighs, “Put that thick prick of yours in me.”

“Here comes,” Niall warns as he shoves his entire member into Zayn.

“Aye, Daddy!” Zayn screams suddenly. The room goes noiseless, Niall balls deep in Zayn. That is a word they have never used before.

Shit Zayn thinks embarrassingly.

“What’d you call me?” Niall asks, not moving his hips to allow Zayn adjust to his size.

“Fuck, I didn’t mean to, if you don’t like it...” Zayn rambles pathetically.

Before Zayn finishes his thought, Niall grabs Zayn by his hair and pull his head back towards Niall’s face. With Zayn’s ear is only a few centimeters from Niall’s lips, Niall orders, “I asked what did you call me?”

“Daddy?” Zayn grunts.

“That’s right,” Niall growls, “And when we do have a kid, don’t you dare call me that again.”

“Deal,” Zayn agrees, “Daddy.” To which Niall responds by slamming his face back against the counter top. Niall then proceeds pound Zayn as hard as he can.

“Fuck,” Zayn moans, “We gotta have baby making sex more often. It’s the best.” Niall spills his load into Zayn, agreeing with the notion.

“Now come on, there’s a lovely looking couch I saw in the other room I want to ruin your asshole on,” Zayn commands to a fuck-exhausted Niall, “Make me a Daddy.”

“Anything for you baby,” Niall replies as Zayn leads him out of the room, fearing if Zayn gives him even half the thrashing he just gave him.

Things between Harry and Louis do not progress as easily or quickly as Zayn, Niall, or Liam hoped they would. They wished that once Kendall proved to be a fraud, Harry would simply fall into Louis’s arms seeing he has been true their entire friendship. But Harry really loved her, and he wants to believe in something like destiny or a plan with her. Harry is a hopeless romantic and in this instance it bites him in the ass.

Though the boys are elated to see Harry and Louis’s closeness return. Not the physical sexual aspect, but Louis is there to help Harry through this difficult period in his life. Harry still says he loves Kendall, and he hopes there is a day where they are back together.

After a period of avoiding each other, the former couple begins to talk again. It is very touch and go, and it kills Louis. Harry is so worthy of so much more than this girl can give him. Perhaps Louis? Maybe. But definitely better than a girl who cheated on Harry.
Their friends notice a rapid improvement in Louis’s condition with Harry’s return, though that makes Louis sick to his stomach. He should not be his relieved from his friend’s pain.

Liam tries to convince Louis to not go to Europe during a conversation, but Louis reminds him that Harry still does not love him. And if it is not Kendall today, it will then be someone else eventually. He still has to escape this cycle from Harry. He feels severe guilt that he will leave Harry eventually, but he hopes Harry will be fixed up enough to stand on his own by the time he disappears with Zayn and Niall. Harry is also have Liam, Louis reminds himself. And if Louis is not Harry’s top concern now, he will not then either.

Though it should not be underscored how much Harry appreciates everything Louis is. Harry knows he became a little spotty with their friendship during his relationship, but the way Louis takes care of things without a second thought, it really shows Louis’s character. Harry really does love Louis, a lot.

“You know I must really love you if you got me watching this shitty movie,” Louis whines into the back of Harry’s head, his face buried in Harry’s curls.

This is not a good idea Louis thinks to himself as he breaths Harry in. But fuck, he is so in love with Harry it is pathetic. Even if it is not the exact way he wants it, Louis is able to touch Harry and smell his scent for a few minutes. They lie under a cool blanket on the couch of Harry’s basement. Louis spoons Harry from behind, something Harry requested after a stressful day at school. Well any day is stressful for Harry when he has to interact with Kendall, or more accurately it stresses Harry with the lack of interaction between him and Kendall. While the former couple do speak over text, she gazes right through him in public to save face from their break up.

This is not healthy for Louis, holding Harry like this, but he cannot simply deny Harry’s demand. Even while being in love with his best friend, he still has that same carrying instinct he had for Harry since they met. If Louis was not currently in love with Harry, he would have done what Harry wanted without a thought. But his love makes him stall and question everything. But with that sad face that reminds Louis of Pepe the Frog, he must do all he can that frown disappear, even if it is temporary.

But this reminds Louis when they were young. When Louis did not have to overthink every decision he makes in his life. Back when he was taller than Harry and curling around him was so easy and second nature. Now he has to work at, feeling more like a backpack on this large boy than a proper spoon.

Harry does not complain. In fact, Harry loves the fact that things have never really changed for them. Feeling Louis’s hot breath behind him, it reminds him how Louis is the only constant thing in is life since they met. When things become scary and uncertain, he can always assume Louis will right beside him or behind him. That is the one thing Harry never has to worry about it.

“It’s a classic. Sharknado changed the game of cinema,” Harry replies leaning further back into Louis, “Can you even see it behind my hair?”

“Sure…” Louis smiles through his lie. Or he is smiling because the smell of Harry is making him feel high? And Harry’s touch makes him feel drunk?

“Lou…” Harry whines, “I don’t want to watch it if you won’t.”

“Why do you torture me?” Louis groans, though he is more referring to how physically close they are right now than the actual movie.
“It’s how I show affection,” Harry quips as he rolls over to face Louis, “Now we both can’t watch it.”

“I’m sure I’ll be able to guess what’s happening by the blood-hurdling screams and shark growls… or whatever sound they make,” Louis assumes.

“Yeah the movie is pretty self-explanatory,” Harry admits while he tries to rest his head below Louis’s chin.

“Uh oh I can see the movie now,” Louis chuckles, hoping that would cause Harry to recoil just enough so he will not feel Louis’s semi tenting in his pants.

“Why are you so sweet to me?” Harry asks in a relaxed but serious tone, feeling at complete ease in Louis’s arms.

“Because I’m Louis Tomlinson, and you’re Harry Styles,” Louis replies, “It’s what I’m supposed to do.” His statement is not a lie, but he does not tell all of the truth. He just happened to leave out the part about I may have been in love with you since the moment I laid my eyes on you, and I have no idea what to do with myself the second you walk into the room.

“I wish I could find a relationship as easy as us,” Harry casually reveals with a sigh. Louis smiles in response, because the statement is very sweet, that Harry does appreciate their special connection, but it also stings because Harry could have it. Harry could have it literally five seconds from now if he only asked for it. But Harry will not, and Louis knows it.

“It’s a big world Harold,” Louis comments somberly, “And you’ve barely seen any of it.”

“I guess I have a hard time imagining anything as simple as this,” Harry explains, “When I was Kendall’s boyfriend, I couldn’t wait for us to reach intimacy on this level: where I do not fear anything while I’m in her arms. I thought I was so close, you know?”

“You feel that way with me?” The only thing Louis pulls out of Harry’s conversation.

“Yeah,” Harry nods into Louis, “I know I kinda pulled away from you on that level while trying to find that with her. But with her now gone, it feels lovely to have this without a second thought again. Until the next time, right?”

“Until next time…” Louis exhales. All of this appears as such a farce to Louis. How can this feel so real but be so fake? He should tell Harry he deserves better than this, because he does, he finally believes he does. At the same time, Louis knows he is leaving in a few months, so he might as well suck up all the Harry that he can. If only he could literally suck him up.

“I think I’m going to get a drink,” Harry interrupts Louis’s thoughts, “Want me to get you some tea while I’m up?”

“Do you even have to ask?” Louis quips.

“Silly me,” Harry gleams as he pushes his upper body off of the couch. He spins his body around so his feet land on the ground and his upper back lean against the couch, Louis’s legs run underneath Harry while brushing against his lower back. Harry then extends his arms up above his head and stretches. As he does so, Harry’s shirt is pulled up his body, revealing the skins of his lower stomach up to his belly button.

Louis cannot help but admire how close to a model Harry appears right now. He finds it funny how he has seen Harry’s body naked, probably hundreds of times, and it still creates a sense of arousal.
Harry’s teeny-tiny happy trail looks so adorable, since Harry has very little body hair surprisingly, but then it creates an arrow for Louis’s eyes to travel down to where he really wants to see.

But Louis does not even want to do anything sexual with Harry right now. He just has the strangest urge to bite Harry’s tummy. Not aggressively but to nibble with a brush of his lips, as he stares up with Harry with endearing eyes. Harry would not be able to do anything but laugh since his stomach is extremely ticklish. So he would giggle and try to fight Louis off of him, but Louis would only push his lips deeper into Harry’s skin.

“Ya’ll right there Lou?” Harry snaps Louis out of his focused stare at Harry’s happy trail.

“Oh yeah, just a little sleepy. Go make my tea,” Louis orders Harry.

“Aye, aye, captain,” Harry chuckles as he stands up, not fully believing Louis’s lie.

“Thank fucking gawd,” Louis sighs to himself as he readjusts his boner once Harry is out of eyesight of the room.

Harry watches the pot for it to boil. He knows he should not, but what else as he got to do? It does not take too much time for Harry to fill his glass with water. He could think about Kendall, but that only tends to cause him sadness. And Louis worked so hard to lift him out of the Kendall funk. Maybe Harry should think about Louis? Louis always does the impossible to make sure Harry is in tip-top shape, just as Harry does for Louis in his time of need.

Speaking of need, Harry can tell when Louis fibs by now. Harry knows why Louis appeared lost in thought when Harry stretched. He does not know why such things as desperate stares turn him on. Perhaps the idea that he makes anyone horny with desire on is a confidence booster. All their jerk off sessions during which Louis focused most of his attention on Harry instead of the porn playing rush back to his mind, causing a tingle of pleasure to spread through his groin.

Screech! The tea kettle blows steam, alerting Harry to its arrival at the perfect temperature for Louis’s tea.

*I haven’t gotten off in so long* Harry thinks to himself as he pours the scolding water into a cup *We used to do it all the time anyways*… While he awaits for Kendall to return to him, there is nobody else he would prefer to fool around with. This way it would also be a secret since Louis or Harry never told people about their exploits in the first place.

*It’s just sex* Harry reminds himself as he sets a teabag in the water *It doesn’t have to mean anything*...

“Here you go babe,” Harry says as he hands the cup to his best friend.

“You’re right,” Louis comments as he takes a small sip, “This movie is horribly wonderful.”

“Oh yeah this is on,” Harry literally forgot about the movie due to his thoughts about a naked Louis.

“Oh!” Louis yelps as he nearly spills his tea, “That fucking burnt my tongue!”

“Aw!” Harry cries as he snatches the tea from Louis’s grip, “Need me to kiss it to make it feel better?”

Louis’s cheeks turn bright pink at Harry’s suggestion, “I’m probably fine…”

*I got him right where I want him* Harry thinks smugly as a familiar scene appears to be taking place.
“Do you, uh, want to watch some porn or something?” Harry offers to Louis.

“That’s more straight forward than Netflix and chill,” Louis chuckles awkwardly, while not really answering the question, because Louis does not know what he wants. Of course he wants Harry nude more than anything. Well one thing tops that: actually having Harry be his boyfriend. But Louis also knows that is currently unobtainable.

Harry stares at Louis awaiting a response. Did he just push things too far? Why was Louis being so apprehensive this, when normally he was the one initiating it in the past? But then Harry has a terribly brilliant idea: A fool proof plan for Louis to be on board with this.

“Well I’m really horned up. I’m going to put on some porn and jerk off, you can join me if you’d like,” Harry states as he lifts his laptop off the floor and sets it in between the two friends. As he pulls open a website, Harry shoves his hand down his pants, attempting to spark some arousal within Louis.

Harry cannot describe to look upon Louis’s face. Yes, there is definitely some need in his eyes, but there is also a hint of fear. Harry cannot figure out why. Maybe because it has been so long since they have fooled around last? When Harry shut it down for his relationship with Kendall. But Harry is single now, and Louis and him have always done this. This is natural, second-hand nature to them. Louis should be grabbing at Harry’s body just the way he likes it, not acting afraid of seeing Harry’s cock.

But Louis has much to fear about this. He has made such progress in the past few months. Not getting over Harry, but bettering himself and making himself independent and stable. This could knock him off his horse. But fuck the way Harry grinds himself against his hand, biting his lip and seductively gawking Louis in the eye. This boy could break Louis. Harry is seducing Louis. And Louis knows he does not stand a chance.

Harry opens up a video with two guys and one girl, thinking since it has more of what Louis wants in it, maybe he will be more inclined to join Harry. He then unzips his pants and pull them down to his knees, his boner tenting in his underwear with precum darkening the boxers where Harry’s cockhead is at. Harry aggressively feels himself up, attempting to show off to Louis. His dick shakes forcefully against the fabric.

“Fine,” Harry gives in, pulling his underwear down, exposing his hard dick to Louis. Louis has imagined Harry’s penis so many times since they ended their physical arrangement, but it looks so much better than Louis remembered. The head is just so fucking big and veins wrap around it like jungle vines around a tree. Harry runs his right hand up and down the entire length of it, attempting entice Louis with his size.

Fuck I’m drooling Louis thinks as he wipes a little saliva off of the edge of his mouth.

I almost have him Harry thinks cockily. He knows Louis’s weakness.

“Little warm in here, innit?” Harry sighs ironically as he peels off his shirt, followed by removing his pants underwear, and socks. He then stretches his legs wide apart, his left knee bumping into Louis’s right, while his free hand calmly plays with his balls, “Much better.”

Fuck it Louis finally gives in. He should not be taking off his shirt right now, he should keep on his pants, but Harry won. As he usually does with Louis, because Harry plays Louis like an instrument without thinking of the possible repercussions.

“Do you mind closing the window behind us?” Harry asks, “I would, but with me already being
stark naked, I don’t want to give the neighborhood a show.”

“Or you’re just fucking lazy,” Louis rolls his eyes, “Since when has people possibly seeing you nude ever stopped you before?” Louis stands up on the couch, now only in his little tight underwear that are black and white stripped which remind Harry of the t-shirts referees wear in sporting events. He pulls the cord on the blinds, lowering them as low as they can go, but that is not where Harry’s concern is at. His eyes are glued to the arse of Louis. How in the hell are those skimpy things holding in Louis’s ass Harry wonders. Louis’s bum tempts Harry into a grab, but harry is not sure how physical things will in the coming moments. Harry honestly expects only masturbating together or maybe some mutual handjobs.

“Shit!” Louis yelps as his bare feet try and fail to balance against the slick fabric of the couch. He tumbles onto the couch, handing on top of Harry as well.

“Ouch!” Harry also exclaims immediately after, his reflexes cause his arms smash Louis in the back of the head.

“Fuck, Haz, you alright?” Louis questions as he peels his face off of Harry’s thigh. But when Louis opens his eyes, he notices Harry’s cock is only a few inches from his face. When he looks up at Harry, Harry’s face does not appear angry or in pain, but desperate for something. Anything.

“Harry?” Louis asks unknowingly. His warm breath spreads over Harry’s member. Louis waits for any sign that Harry wants Louis to get off of him, but nothing ever signals that. This is not what Harry intended, but Louis’s cock sucking skills are unmatched. Even with all the love he has for Kendall, nothing can compare to a Louis blowjob.

Louis innocently bats his eyelashes up at Harry. Finally Harry’s cock throbs, pushing itself closer to Louis’s mouth. Instinctively, Louis puckers up his lips, placing a single kiss on the head of Harry, and then runs tongue all the way down to the base and then back up to the head. Harry groans miserably. It is go time.

Louis swirls his tongue around Harry’s cockhead. Gawd, Louis missed its taste. Louis has licked many dicks in his day, but Harry’s will always hold a special place in his mouth. His tongue traces the veins that run down his shaft, lathering the entire shaft in his spit. Harry’s fingers bury themselves into Louis’s hair, keeping his face hovering right above Harry’s groin. Harry begins thrusting his hips into Louis’s lips. Louis’s jaw goes limp as he gives into Harry’s mouth fucking. Saliva and semen leak out onto the cheeks of Louis.

“Whoa, I don’t want to cum yet,” Harry groans as he pulls Louis off of his cock by the hair on the back of Louis’s head.

“What do you wanna do?” Louis ask weakly, his voice already wrecked from the throat-fucking, his lips bright red from being swollen and cheeks flushed.

“My room,” Harry orders as he stands up. As Louis pushes himself off from the couch, Harry grabs Louis by the under arms and presses Louis into his body. With Louis now on his feet, Harry’s fingers dig into Louis’s ass. Louis squeaks upon the contact, but surprisingly Harry’s lips land upon Louis’s to quiet him down. Harry’s tongue shoves itself into Louis. Damn Louis missed those lovely lips. He missed how calm the world felt in the midst of chaos when their lips clashed.

Harry grabs a handful of ass and Louis wraps his legs around his waist. They continue to aggressively kiss as Harry carries Louis to his bedroom. Harry kick his bedroom door shut with the back of his foot. Louis’s fingers intertwine in Harry’s hair as a way to support himself while he is being carried. Harry soothingly sets Louis down on his bed, looking down at the disastrous
masterpiece that Louis is.

Louis is desperate for being touched. To appear less needy, Louis rolls onto his stomach just so he can casually hump Harry’s bed as a way for self-relief. His legs are spread wide apart, also hanging off the edge of the bed, as his hips roll. But Harry’s eyes immediately go to Louis’s arse. His cheeks spread apart as Louis grinds against the bed, his pink hole clearly showing. Harry still does not know how an butthole can look so pretty and inviting, but Louis’s does. Harry craves it.

“Are you clean?” Harry asks as he gets down on his knees.

“Like I shower everyday…” Louis moans.

“I want to eat you out,” Harry clarifies, “Are you clean down there?”

“Yes, clean down there everyday too,” Louis answers nervously.

“Thank fucking gawd,” Harry sighs as he buries his face in Louis’s ass.

“Holy fuck,” Louis groans into the pillow. Harry has never given a rimjob before, but he believes it must be relatively simple. If not, Louis would correct him. After initially going in for the kill, Harry pulls back and leaves a trail of kisses on the back of his thigh. Occasional he digs his teeth into the skin as well, causing Louis squeak in pleasure every so often.

Harry gradually moves his lips back to Louis’s hole, expecting Louis to eventually beg for it. But Louis is too lost in the moment to ask for anything. All the words leaving his lips are complete gibberish. Louis knows: Harry won.

“Going back in, you ready?” Harry inquires.

“Whatever you want,” Louis replies, honestly getting off to just the foreplay of Harry’s kisses.

Harry spreads Louis’s cheeks apart and runs his tongue starting at Louis’s balls and traveling up to the top of his crack. Sure it feels great, but there is a specific place Louis wants Harry’s tongue and it’s not there at the moment. Finally, Harry returns to Louis’s hole. His tongue worms its way inside of Louis. Damn Louis always knew Harry had a long tongue. He remembers how long it could hang down when he dressed up as Miley Cyrus for Halloween one year. Not to mention the numerous times Harry’s tongue ran down his body. This is completely different.

Boys have eaten Louis out before. Boys that are definitely more experienced at it that Harry. But no boys has a Harry Style’s tongue but Harry.

“You’re going to ruin me,” Louis moans into the pillow in front of his face. Either emotionally or physically, Louis knows that statement is true.

“You taste oddly… sweet,” Harry comments as he briefly raises his head up to address Louis, and then back down.

“I’m made of sugar baby,” Louis replies, though he is so caught in euphoria he knows his comment will not make sense.

“Let’s make you melt,” Harry sighs, his tongue is becoming tired. The way he eats Louis out, Harry wants more. He attempts to extend his tongue as deep into Louis as possible, Louis squeezing and contracting in pleasure, but Harry’s tongue can only go so far. Harry had made out for extended periods of time, even eaten out Kendall a time or two, but Louis has no shame in expressing what he wants, thus making Harry want to give it to him even more. Harry swears he can feel Louis’s glute
muscles flexing in an attempt for Harry’s face to become stuck in Louis’s ass.

“Fuck me…” Louis whimpers in ecstasy, not actually thinking about sex but enjoying the moment.

“What?” Harry pulls his face out.

“That feels so fucking good,” Louis reiterates.

“Do you want to fuck?” Harry attempts to clarify.

Louis raises his head off of his pillow and looks back at Harry. Louis should say no. He should say no right now. But Louis needs more than just a tongue inside him. This goes against all logic and reason, but Louis feels like he is going into heat. His eyes immediately travel to Harry’s hardened cock hanging between his legs. *Harry needs it too* Louis thinks irresponsibly.

“Do you have protection?” Louis first asks.

“Yeah, I do,” Harry nods.

“Then I don’t see why not,” Louis lies as he pushes his ass higher into the air. Harry scampers to his feet and quickly arrives at his dresser. He grabs a condom and a small bottle of lube. He stares at them for a few second, realizing that he and Louis are about to actually have sex. But they’ve been doing stuff like this for years, so it is only the natural progression he believes. It is not that different than anything else in the scope of their history. It will not have any more meaning than the other things they have done.

“Harry, hurry up,” Louis commands softly.

“Sorry, coming dear,” Harry snaps back into reality. Returning to Louis, he pushes his best friend’s body up the bed so Harry will have room in between Louis’s legs.

Harry gets on his knees behind Louis as he softly strokes himself, “Stretch yourself for me as I prep.” Louis quickly obeys the command as he sticks his index finger inside himself. As Harry rolls on the condom, a second finger happens to slip in. While Harry applies the latex-safe lube, Louis applies a third finger, though Louis knows no matter how many fingers he adds, it will not compare to Harry. Luckily, the saliva left over from the rimjob made Louis’s finger slip in without much pain.

“Good, now pull out,” Harry orders darkly. Louis complies and takes a deep breath in anticipation. He is a little scared, he will not deny that, but he has dreamed about this moment for so long. It may not be happening the way he intended it to, but at least it is happening.

“Tell me if anything does not feel right,” Harry offers, to which all Louis does is nod, “Here I come.”

Harry drags his tip along the crack. He lightly pushes against the hole but pulls away, attempting to tease Louis.

“Put it in,” Louis whines as he attempts to thrust his hole on Harry.

“As you wish princess,” Harry grins, pushing his head past Louis’s opening.

“Oh…” Louis breathes, “Right there. Keep going.” Inch by inch Harry impulses inside of Louis. Harry can feel Louis’s apprehension. Yes, Louis wants it, but something does not feel right about this.

“You alright?” Harry asks, giving time for Louis to adjust.
“Yeah,” Louis answers emptily. But this is not how Louis and Harry do things. This is not like them. So Harry thinks he knows how to fix this.

Harry pulls out quickly and flips Louis onto his back.

“What are you doing?” Louis questions nervously.

As a response, Harry pushes Louis’s legs up until his quadriceps muscles are pressed against his chest, his ass sticking up in the air. And then there are Harry’s lips. Harry presses his lips against Louis ever so tenderly as he realigns his member with Louis’s ass.

“Kiss me through the stretch, okay?” Harry offers to Louis, “Like we always do. It will be alright.”

“Okay,” Louis confirms as Harry kisses him again. Harry enters Louis for the second time, but for both it feels a lot different. Louis’s mouth arches open while Harry pushes in, to which Harry kisses his lips shut. Louis hums while he adjusts to Harry’s size.

“Much better,” Louis agrees. Harry cannot deny it either. Harry remembers Louis being tight whenever he would finger him, but feeling Louis totally wrapped around him is completely different. Harry does not even know how he got inside in the first place. It kills Harry not to thrust his hips, but he tries to give Louis a chance to move when he is ready. Gradually, Louis’s muscles loosen as he breathes in deeply.

“Fuck me,” Louis orders.

“Whatever you want,” Harry smirks as he begins to thrust his hips. While the sex is great, all Louis can think about is Harry. Louis has Harry inside him. He can feel Harry pulsing through his veins. Louis is full. Not by the physical feeling (though Harry does for some reason fit like a puzzle piece in Louis) but emotionally. This feels like what Louis and Harry are meant to do. Normally Louis and Harry have a lot to say to each other, but they do not need to for this. Their actions say it all. At least on Louis’s side.

Harry’s groin smacks into Louis, the physical sound of them colliding echoes through the room. They desperately try to kiss the other, but it is messy and wet. Tongues largely miss their intended goals. Eventually Harry settles for burying his face into Louis's neck, licking away at the veins that drive Louis wild.

Harry’s demanding fingers dig into Louis’s abdomen as a way to keep Louis from being moved across the bed due to Harry’s aggressive thrusts.

All of this has so much meaning and it appears like this is where Louis and Harry are supposed to be. Louis could feel like something was missing and he never wanted to admit it to himself, but this is it. What him and Harry are doing: making love. This is their secret way of communication, and Louis does not want anybody else to learn this language. Harry’s large hands hold Louis’s together. Harry’s kisses eases the pain. Harry’s cock knows exactly what to do.

“You’re too much,” Harry moans into Louis’s neck.

“This can’t possibly feel as good for you as it does for me,” Louis compliments as he feels the stickiness of sweat cling their bodies together. Louis feels Harry’s muscle flex with every movement of his hips, grinding deeper and deeper into Louis’s tightness.

“I don’t think I can hold off much longer,” Harry grunts.

“Please I don’t want this to end,” Louis begs.
“I can’t fuck you forever,” Harry admits.

“That doesn’t mean you can’t try,” Louis points out ironically.

“Oh I wish I could,” Harry lightly kisses him, “How do you want this to end?”

“No,” Louis whines childishly as he clinches his muscles of tight, jokingly attempting to not let Harry pull out.

“Lou,” Harry whimpers.


Harry rolls off the condom and wraps his hand around himself. Both him and Louis tug themselves off as fast as they can.

“What are you looking at?” Harry asks with a cocky smile.

“You just look so beautiful,” Louis admits, unable to pull his eyes off of his torso.

“You don’t look half bad yourself,” Harry chuckles, “But I must say, you feel better than you look.”

“My ass must feel like a God then,” Louis sighs approaching his orgasm.

“You ready?” Harry question as he fucks his fist.

“Lay it on me,” Louis orders as his cock throbs.

“Shit!” Harry hollers as his spunk flies across Louis, the first couple drops hitting Louis in the face. The rest splatter all over Louis’s chest. Louis quickly orgasms after, further whitening his chest.

Harry collapse onto of Louis, his face once again buried in the crook of Louis’s neck. Louis’s arms automatically wrap back around Harry, because this is what they always do. Harry breaths in deep for doing most of the effort during their fuck. So Louis rubs relaxing circles into his back, tracing over Harry’s bones and muscles. And Harry smells kind of sweaty for what they just did, and for most people it would disgust them but for Louis it smells familiar, it smells like home. Louis never wants to let him go because he finally has Harry right where he wants him and right where Harry belongs.

“I love you,” Louis exhales every so lightly. The volume of his voice is so low though, he does not know if Harry even heard him. Even if Harry did, he does not react to it.

Harry simply rolls off of Louis and onto his back, now lying on Louis’s right side, “Do you need a towel?”

That is when Louis realizes him and Harry committed two very different acts. Louis may have made love to Harry, but Harry just had sex with Louis. Louis feels his chest tighten up in anxiety and self-disgust. He must leave immediately.

“I gotta go!” Louis exclaims as he rolls out as he searches for a dirty towel to clean himself off with.

“What?” Harry barks, “I thought we were going to be hanging out all evening?” Sure, Louis or Harry never confirmed that plan before, but it is an unspoken assumption for how much time they spend together.

“I forgot I have an assignment due tomorrow,” Louis lies as he wipes off his and Harry’s cum off of
his stomach.

“What class?” Harry asks, not believing Louis’s tale.

“Uh, Algebra III?” Louis squeaks as he grabs his underwear from the ground.

“We have that class together and I know we don’t,” Harry points out.

“Oh, it’s in history, silly me, I misspoke,” Louis fibs again as he pulls up his shorts.

“What the fuck is going on?” Harry inquires as he watches Louis in frantic motions.

“I just got shit to do,” Louis answers.

“You’re a shit liar,” Harry accuses as he leans up.

“Don’t worry about it,” Louis replies as he leaves the room, all while still putting on his pants.

“Did I do something wrong?” Harry follows Louis after he pulls up his own underwear.

“You didn’t do anything wrong...” Louis hints as he searches for his backpack in the front room of Harry’s basement, “I did.”

“You didn’t do anything wrong!” Harry declares, “You were quite superb in the sac! I would highly recommend you to a friend!”

“Harry staaahhpp,” Louis whines as he packs up his bag.

“Is it because this is the first time we had actual sex?” Harry asks sincerely.

“Kind of... yes,” Louis gives in.

“Louis, it’s just sex!” Harry states.

“Just sex?” Louis throws down the bag in his hand, “Just sex?! Is that all I am to you?!”

“Whoa! What’s with all these accusations?” Harry deflects, “This is what we do; what we’ve always done. How is this any different than anything else we did? It doesn't have to mean anything. Like it doesn’t for-”

“Because I’m in love with you!” Louis screams, followed by a long period of silence.

And that sets off the largest fight of their friendship.

“You what?” Harry whispers.

“You fucking heard me! Don’t act like you didn't,” Louis orders.

“You aren’t in love with me,” Harry chuckles to break the tension, only increasing Louis’s fury.

“Wait, was this your first time?”

“Holy fuck,” Louis swears, “You’re my fucking best friend! You should know that.”

“It’s not my fault you’ve closed off to me since...” Harry trails off, now noticing a sharp change in Louis's behavior since Kendall arrived into their lives. Rather than feel guilt from that, Harry then changes the direction of the conversation, “You’re confusing actions with feelings.”
“Don’t tell me what I feel!” Louis hollers, “You think I want to feel this way?”

“You didn’t even think this until—”

“It’s been months Harry,” Louis admits, "Holy hell, probably years even."

Harry stares Louis deep in the eyes, attempting to read if Louis really means what he says. Harry and Louis have always been able to do that: a look without having to say a word. Louis is not lying.

“And you’re just now telling me this! We’re fucking best friends, as you said. If we really are, why did you not say something sooner?!”

“Don’t you dare turn this around on me!” Louis wags his finger in Harry’s face.

“How long has it been?” Harry states pronouncing every syllable dramatically.

“I think I felt this way for a long time, longer than I wanted to admit to myself… but I finally realized it the night you asked out Kendall,” Louis sighs.

“So you got jealous? That’s not love. Damn, I felt that way anytime you dated anyone else,” Harry explains.

“No, you don’t understand. It’s deeper than that,” Louis defends against the accusation.

“I understand perfectly,” Harry rolls his eyes.

“No!” Louis yells, “You were mine. You were always mine. Damn, that night you asked out her, I thought you were going to ask out me. And then you didn’t. You were gone. I noticed how integral you were to my life as I watched you dance with her. I don’t want you dancing with anybody, or kiss any one, or anything. I love you. I love you from the top of that curly head all the way down to your freakishly long toes. I love you from your right hand to your left when you spread your arms wide before you hug me. I love the secrets you spill when you talk in your sleep. I love the way you make me tea when I’m sad without having to ask. Even when you’re grumpy in the morning before school or when you get mad when I won’t stop picking on you, I love you even then.”

A small part of Louis hopes that these words will break the lock upon Harry’s heart. That the wall will shatter that prevents Harry from expressing these same words to him. He hopes. Louis expresses his inner most, darkest secrets. He is at his most vulnerable. Will Harry come through? He hopes.

“You should have told me sooner,” Harry says calmly, “I never would have done this if I would have known all of this.”

“You… you regret me?” Louis asks weakly.

“Not you! This! The sex. Fuck, Louis. I don’t ever want to lead you on or hurt you, but fuck, you made me do this to you,” Harry explains.

“Are you accusing me of taking advantage of you?!” Louis inquires spitefully.

“You lied to me! This worked because we were honest with one another. You promised me years ago you would tell if you ever developed feelings. And you lied to me,” Harry describes.

“How dare you!” Louis screams, “I used you?! How fucking dense are you? You had no idea I liked you? Our long, meaningful stares? Intimate cuddles? Do you even see the way I look at you? Are you blind?”
Their fight explodes from there. Every little disagreement or disliking of each other that they have ever felt in the years they knew each other comes to light. Seasons pass outside. Generations grow and die. Okay, perhaps not that long, but they lose track of time in their disagreement. Louis is too angry to cry. Harry will not back down. It continually returns to Louis you lied and Harry I know you’re not stupid.

“I never would have you used if I knew I was! Because I never wanted to break your heart, and now I have too,” Harry finally issues.

“You what?” Louis is losing.

“What do you want me to say?” Harry questions rhetorically.

I love you too Louis mouths, too weak to say it.

“I… I can’t Louis, I’m sorry,” Harry replies heavy in guilt, “I don’t love you the way you want me too.”

Fuck he said it. He actually said. Louis always had a little hope, the dark hope inside that if Harry actually heard the words, he would know he felt it too. But the words he just said kill whatever irrational goal Louis possessed. That destroys Louis.

“I think… I think I have to go Harry,” Louis replies, but Louis does not even look like Louis anymore. All color and emotion is drained from his face. He says his response so emotionlessly, it might as well come from a computer program.

“You don’t have to go anywhere,” Harry stares to his feet.

“Yes, yes I do,” Louis nods as he picks his backpack off the ground. He does not realizing he is moving until Harry’s voice breaks his depressed focus.

“Lou…” Harry whines, looking up at Louis whom is already near the top of the stairs.

“Yes?” Louis turns around, the tears finally building in his eyes.

“I’m sorry,” is all Harry can say.

“I’ll see you around Harry,” Louis swallows back a cry as he rotates back to face the top of the stairwell. He tries to memorize the way Harry looks standing in his underwear on the basement floor, because honestly he does not know if he will ever see Harry again. Not like this at least. His mind takes pictures of the way Harry’s house appears. Will he be back? He does not know.

But then his feet start to move faster. This house now feels claustrophobic. This place is his second home. Now it haunts Louis of all the happy memories that took place here. He passes through the same kitchen Harry taught him to cook in… He cooked chicken, stuffed with mozzarella cheese, wrapped in parma ham, with some homemade mashed potatoes. Louis may have also given Harry a blowjob on those same counter tops. Louis must escape. His hand grabs the front door.

“Louis?” Anne asks concerningly as she enters her home, “Are you okay?” Louis cannot answer her. He know if his mouth opens, he will not be able to hold back the tears already leaking out. Keeping his head down, he pushes passed her and runs down the street, until he turns a corner from which he know she will not be able to see him. He is free. But to what? Freedom from Harry?

Anne calmly sets her purse and a grocery bag on to her kitchen table. She takes a deep breath knowing the day has finally come. Her high heels click as she walks through the kitchen and down
the stairs to her son.

There Harry sits on his couch, still only in his underwear, deep in thought. He is hunched over, his hands holding up his head from falling. He does not even notice his mother’s presence.

“Harry?” His mother starts.

“Mom,” Harry peeks up at her coldly.

“Why did Louis leave here crying? Normally it’s the other way around, he comes here a mess and then you fix him up. Why did it happen the opposite this time?” Anne question.

“Um, well…” Harry mumbles.

“What have you done?” She indict him.

Chapter End Notes

As this wraps up, im going to be bringing back lots of details and themes from the entire story. So if there was a random fact or detail that seemed out of place or unnecessary, there is a reason why I included it so watch out for that:)

Depends how much time I have this week to write. But I'll have lots of time to write next weekend while on the plane. Can't wait:) If you have any thoughts or questions, feel free to comment!

Hey ya'll, my grandpa died over the past week. It's been really emotionally draining, and with my temporary move to England coming up, i dont know how much time i will have to write. I'm not saying this is going on hiatus, but i dont know when i'll be posting next. I'd suggest you just subscribe and see when it comes. I feel super bad about this but patience please. Thanks for the support, the fact i have active readers means so much to me, you have no idea. Anywas i'll update as soon as i can thanms xx much love
Chapter 24: Voices in the Halls

Chapter Summary

Harry's emotional well-being spirals as more of Louis's secrets spill into his life after confrontations with Zayn and Liam.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys I'm sorry this took so long to be updated. I would say this is a really emotional chapter, as Harry now how to handle his own feelings while also dealing with Louis's. The jealous Harry that was much more active in the early chapters will be back.

The death of my grandpa was extremely emotionally draining, along moving to another country as I adjust to a new culture and try to make new friends. But here is the latest chapter. Thank you so much for waiting and for your patience. It means a lot when a couple readers asked when the next chapter would be posted. Thank you for the encouragement. It really motivated me to get this done.

Song of the chapter: "Voices in the Halls" by the Neon Trees

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Zayn drives down this rustic suburban street in Niall’s truck. Well technically it is his and Niall’s truck now, as said so by Niall. Though Zayn does hope to someday obtain one to officially call his own, the sentiment by which Niall’s intentions are give the truck a lot more meaning. It is the first thing that is theirs.

Pounding out the rhythm to Foster the People’s Helena Beat on Niall’s steering wheel, Zayn adventures aimlessly, for what is there else to do in his tiny town?

His eyes wander around the street looking for anything to seize his bored attention. That when he notices a teenager from behind walking down the sidewalk with his head bent down and his shoulder hunched over in defeat. He has a natural inclination to drive by the kid to ask if he needs a ride anywhere. As he pulls over next to the guy, Zayn realizes why he has a magnetic tug towards him: it is Louis.

“Babe?” Zayn prods as he rolls down the window. At first, Louis refuses to lift his head towards his friend ashamed of what Zayn is about to see. Because Louis knows Zayn will sense his aurora without Zayn having to witness it. Louis raises his head just enough for Zayn to see the tear-stained trails running down his face.

“Shit… Lou, get in the car,” Zayn commands. All Louis can physically do is nod as a response. He somberly gets into the truck, but still neglecting to gaze at Zayn’s face.

“What happened?” Zayn questions.
“I… um…” Louis stammers, “I told Harry I loved him.”

“Oh fuck,” Zayn replies as he uses his right arm to pull Louis over, so Louis’s head can rest on Zayn’s shoulder.

“Can you please take me home?” Louis whimpers.

“Anywhere you want,” Zayn comments as he moves the stick shift and the vehicle begins driving once again.

“--------------------------------------

“What did you do?” Anne repeats to Harry in their basement’s living room.

“Nothing Mom,” Harry lies in frustration.

“Do you think I’m stupid?” She asks rhetorically.

“Did I say that?” He sasses back.

“Well you sitting here in your underwear and Louis crying while he leaves does not paint a favorable picture for you,” Anne points out. Harry know she is right. He quickly tries to make up an alibi for this situation.

“Well Louis tripped, and fell on top of me, and…” Harry mumbles.

“Honey, cut the crap. I know about you and Louis,” Anne calmly reveals as she sits herself on the couch next to her son.

“You know what?!?” Harry exclaims.

“Well as I said, I’m not stupid and you are not known for your subtly. You and Louis are dating. It’s okay, I love you no matter what,” Anne motherly rubs Harry’s knee, “I don’t know why you were hiding it for so long.”

“Why do you think that?” Harry inquires, burrowing his eyebrows in confusion.

“Well… I guessed it for a while, mother’s intuition and what not, but it was confirmed when Louis returned from his trip to Nicaragua and we invited him to go to on that vacation with us. You two stayed in the room all day while Gemma and I visited family… We may have acted like we had just returned when you two were finished picking up, but we actually arrived earlier while you two were in the shower giggling away. The bed was messy, dirty tissues and towels everywhere that Gemma and I were way too scared to pick up, clothes sprung across the room, and the empty bottle of lotion. So we backed out of the area, waited half an hour, and returned after you two were finished tidying up,” She explains in embarrassingly accurate detail.

“Oh,” Harry concedes. He has no way to turn that tale around and make it not look like what it definitely was.

“So what happened exactly? Did you two break up?” Anne prods.

“No… we weren’t exactly together,” Harry elaborates.

“Then what were you two?” She asks.

“More like… friends with benefits,” He answers truthfully.
“Ohhhhh… that explains a few things, and who Kendall was,” She sighs.

“Yeah… We quit doing what we do when me and her started dating… Then we haven’t since we broke up… until today,” Harry finally discloses.

“But why would he leave for that? Are you that bad at it dear?” Anne laughs, though Harry hates her horrid attempt at a joke.

“After… he told me he loved me,” He finishes.

“And you don’t?” She pries for details.

“I don’t know… No, no I don’t,” Harry answers, though his mother stares at him in disbelief.

“Okay, so you don’t feel the same way. What are you going to do now?” Anne questions.

“I don’t know! Like what the fu- heck has our friendship been if he has felt this way about me?! Are we even best friends or was just trying to get me?” He wonders.

“Harry!” She snaps, “How dare you talk about Louis that way! He has been your best friends for years, are you really that stuck up to think he spent years with you just to get in your pants?”

“Well no…” Harry sighs, now feeling guilty of thinking so lowly of Louis.

“Darling, no matter what I decide to do about this, what I want you to remember is that Louis is still the same person he has always been in your life. He’s still the boy who helped you on your first day of school. He’s still the boy who goes to every one of your auditions to be your good luck charm. He’s still the boy that sneaks over at night when your anxiety over takes. Yes sweetie I even know about that. And do you want to know the one think Louis loves more than how he loves you,” Anne describes to her son.

“What’s that?” Harry questions.

“He loves being your friend, which is why he waited so long to tell you because he did not want to damage your two’s friendship like this did. So keep that in mind, above everything else, Louis is still the boy who’s been your best friend and fiercest support for the past five years,” Anne plants a light kiss on her son’s cheek as she stands up, “I’ll leave you some time to your thoughts. Though, I’ll be upstairs if you need to talk some more.”

“Come on Louis,” Niall tugs on Louis’s arm, “Come to school. We’ll be with you the entire day.”

“Why did my mom let you in here? She told me I could stay home today,” Louis grumbles from still within his bed.

“Don’t you want to put on your tightest pair of jeans and show Harry what he’s missing out on?” Zayn offers also standing above the bed.

“Guys, I am so fucking embarrassed. I won’t be able to look him in the eye,” Louis moans as he pushes himself up to talk to his friends, but his lower body still remains under the blankets.

“Louis,” Zayn says seriously, “You are a lot stronger than you give your credit for.”

“I never said I wasn’t,” Louis replies solemnly, “But what the fuck do I do when he’ll look at me and then immediately turn away when we make eye contact? I know I can handle it eventually… I just
need a little time. But hell. I’m so embarrassed. We have sex and I say I love him? How desperate is that?"

“It’s not desperate,” Niall replies, “It’s love. It was only a matter of time before this happened. Yesterday just happened to be the day.”

“And we can’t take care of you here. We can at school,” Zayn answers.

“How about you guys come over after school and I’ll smoke us up,” Louis offers, trying to ease his friend’s worry.

“Louis,” Zayn says with a gentle of grab of Louis’s wrist, “I’m all about smoking, I don’t see anything wrong with it. But using it as a crutch… I have seen you make so much personal growth in the past few months. You were a freaking beautiful disaster. And now look at you. You are proudly moving away from all of this, to better yourself. All I’m saying is, don’t let this force you to fall backwards. You’ve progressed and I am so proud of you. Remember, you’re Louis fucking Tomlinson.”

“I’m not falling backwards… I just need some time. Please, I’m strong enough to face this, just not today,” Louis pleads.

“If you start slipping, we’ll knock you back into shape,” Niall states, “We love you.”

“I love you too,” Louis replies, “But to quote the wonderful Sara Bareilles I’ll be alright, just not tonight. Come over after school please?”

“Whatever you need,” Zayn confirms.

Harry sits alone at the group lunch table. Liam briefly came by to tell Harry he had an interview to complete so he would be skipping lunch, but he could sense Liam knew something was up. He squeezed Harry shoulder as he left, to show some sort of support or sympathy. But Harry has not really lost anything. Not that he knows of at least.

All Harry knows is that Louis did not show up to school today. Their shared classes had an extra empty seat next to Harry. A couple people asked where Louis was at, but Harry did not have an answer to give. They have not talked since the events of the previous day took place. Harry was tempted to text him earlier, since Harry did contain some concern since Louis always told Harry if he would be missing school. But since Louis always does tell him, Harry believes Louis did not contact him for a reason. So Harry wants to respect Louis’s wishes to be alone, even if it feels like the most unnatural thing in the world.

Harry diddles on his phone, repeatedly running his fingers over Louis’s name on his contact list, but he decides for the hundredth time today not to press on the message button.

But where is Zayn and Niall? They should at least be at school unless they stayed home with Louis. Harry swears he saw Niall’s truck parked in the school parking lot earlier in the morning. This causes Harry to repeatedly look up to the hallway where Louis, Niall, and Zayn normally come from. Droves of people flood into the lunch, but neither of the two enter.

Unconsciously, Harry clicks on Louis’s contact once again to ask where the fiancés are. Right before he hits the send button, he remembers why he has to text Louis in the first place. He is not here. He forcefully lays his phone against the table in frustration. It should not be this hard not to talk to Louis. It has been one day, but why does it feel like the most difficult thing Harry has ever had to do?
When he looks back up from the table, his eyes immediately meet Zayn’s deathly gaze. Harry fears that stare. If Zayn’s anger could shoot fire out of his eyes, Harry would already be evaporated.

Because Zayn has every right to hate Harry right now, in his opinion. Zayn is known for being overly protective of his family. The boys jokes that Niall and Zayn are the parents of the group, but Louis holds a special place in Zayn’s heart. Zayn is mama bear, and somebody hurt his baby. Harry better look out.

Zayn immediately turns 180 degrees and hightails it out of the cafeteria. Not for Zayn’s sake, but for Harry’s.

“Zayn!” Harry shouts as he jumps from his seat. Zayn has already turned the corner before he hears Harry’s call. Instinctively, Zayn heads for the auditorium. Zayn does not control of much in this world, but the second he enters the auditorium, everyone is under the authority of school’s stage manager. The auditorium is his world. He controls where things go, how things are made, and what people are allowed to do. So as he feel powerless to stop the drama unfolding around him, he can gain some serenity from just being in the room itself.

He pushes open the auditorium doors dramatically, comparable to how Maleficent or the Evil Queen enters a room from a Disney movie. Zayn hits on the lights and walks towards the stage.

“Please stop,” Harry yelps as he pushes open the door a second later.

“Harry, get out,” Zayn orders, not looking back at his friend.

“I need to talk to you. And you need to talk to me it seems,” Harry comments as he trots after Zayn.

“I have nothing to say to you,” Zayn declares.

“At least tell me how Louis is, please,” Harry requests as he grabs Zayn’s shoulder to stop him from fleeing the scene.

“Why the fuck do you care?” Zayn growls as he spins around and smacks Harry off of him.

“How dare you ask me that!” Harry charges, “When have I ever shown any disregard to Louis?”

“Where the hell have you been the entirety of your relationship with Kendall? Did you even pay an ounce of attention to him?!” Zayn inquires.

“Like I knew something was off but…” Harry mumbles.

“But you didn’t care enough to figure it out did you? Where the hell were you when he spiraled out of control, when he skipped school because he couldn’t stand to look at you so happy with her? Where were you when he fled the winter formal because he literally collapsed when he saw you ask her out? Where were you when he would get smashed at every party you kissed her at and would leave a blubbering mess about how much he loved you? You were so fucking selfish that you didn’t even care that all that was occurring. You’re not stupid or blind Harry. You cannot tell me you had no idea he felt this way,” Zayn hollers.

“I’m not a mind reader. He should have told-“

“This is not Louis’s fault. Don’t you dare turn this around on him or I swear to God,” Zayn threatens, his hand aggressively pushing against Harry’s chest, “He does not owe you anything.”

“What was I supposed to do? Break up with her because he seemed off?” Harry questions.
“You shouldn’t have slept with him. You should have known better than that,” Zayn answers, “You know Louis better than anyone. You should know how he feels.”

“I don’t even know how I feel, let alone him!” Harry admits.

“Well you better figure it out before it is too late,” Zayn warns darkly.

“Too late? What does that supposed to mean?” Harry asks after a brief pause.

“Nothing Harry just get out. I have stuff to work on,” Zayn attempts to walk away again.

“No, I’m trying to be involved with what Louis is feeling now. Tell me what you meant,” Harry demands.

“I just meant like, figure it out, as soon as possible,” Zayn lies with a sigh.

“No that’s not. I’m not leaving until you explain what you mean,” Harry grabs on to Zayn’s wrist as a warning of his threat.

“You better let me go Styles,” Zayn snarls.

“Not until you tell me,” Harry jerks Zayn towards him.

“Harry, Louis is leaving,” Zayn reveals surprisingly easily.


“He’s leaving this town Harry. After graduation, Louis is leaving this crummy ol’ town,” Zayn explains as Harry’s grip loosens.

“No. You’re lying!” Harry accuses Zayn.

“What do I have to gain from lying to you? You asked me what is up with Louis and I told you. Now let me go,” Zayn commands.

“And you’re letting him run away?!?” Harry then inquires, “If you fucking love him so much why are you-?”

“We’re going with him,” Zayn answers, “Me and Niall. We’re going with him.”

“No,” Harry whimpers, the whole situation beginning to sink with him, “But he’s my best friend. He’d never leave me.”

“Well he is,” Zayn states bluntly, “So whatever you feel for Louis, you better figure it out before it’s too late, because he’s gonna be gone.”

And with that, the bell rings throughout the school, alerting the students to the current class period ending. Harry stares at Zayn, hoping to hear more, secretly praying Zayn would say this entire thing is a lie, but it is not. In fact, it actually explains a lot for how Louis has been acting for the past few months.

“Harry I gotta get to class. Don’t get angry at Louis about this. You’re putting him through enough shit as it is. If you care about him as much as you say you do, that’s the last you can provide to him,” Zayn request from Harry, “You coming?”

“I, uh, need a moment,” Harry appeals from Zayn.
“Sure,” Zayn comments as he leaves for Harry to have some alone time. Though as Zayn leaves the room, he pulls out his phone, smugly smiling to himself as he types a message to Niall and Liam: *Operation Saving Private Stylinson is now in effect.*

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By the time Harry leaves the auditorium, he is well beyond being late to the next class. The hallways have already been emptied of students.

His chest is tight. Pain aches through his body. Louis cannot be doing this. Louis could not be leaving. It has always been Louis and Harry. Harry has several times termed Louis his *friend soulmate.* But this hurts much worse than a friend leaving should.

That is when Harry notices he cannot breath. He tugs at his chest, hoping that would somehow alleviate the stress, but it does not. He must get somewhere safe. Somewhere where nobody can see the coming storm.

He remembers there is a gender neutral bathroom on the edge of the school. Harry knows it is intended for non-binary students, but whatever is coming cannot be contained in a normal bathroom. He tries to run down the hall, but shortness of breath makes him extremely weak. His left hand is held against his chest as his right holds himself up against the wall while he trots. When he finally reaches the bathroom, he fears what if the door is locked or if someone is inside, because he would collapse right in this corridor for everyone to see.

To his luck, the door easily opens upon his grab. He staggers into the bathroom and locks the door. Immediately, he falls to the ground as angry tears stream down his face. He does not know what he is supposed to feel. It has always been Louis and Harry.

One thing Harry is not used to in his life is consistency. He never expected people to stay around in his life until Louis appeared. Louis is the one thing Harry could always depend on. And while Harry knows all friends part at some point, he never thought it would be like this or so soon.

Guys came in and out of his life as a child. His father did not even want to stay around with him. But Louis did. Because of that, Harry actually felt like he had qualities that were worth sticking around for. Around that, actual confidence flourished within Harry. It was Louis that pushed Harry to start singing in the first place. Louis has shaped so much of Harry’s life, Harry does realize he does not know who he would be without him.

He feels betrayed but he knows he should not. Louis promised, many years ago that they would never part. Harry believed him because he had no reason not to. But now that promise does not appear to be set in stone.

Harry is in the midst of a full blown panic attack. He does not know what else he would call this: he cannot breath and is hyperventilating on the tiled, bathroom floor. With what little air he does suck in comes back out in sobs. Louis is leaving, and Harry does not know what to do with himself without Louis.

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By the time Harry collects himself back together, he missed his last class period and is already late to the next. While he can breathe again, he still feels relatively shaky and unstable. His hand still presses against the wall for support, his face carries a drained expression.

“Harry!” A voice calls from behind him. Harry immediately recognizes the voice, and while he has
always wanted to hear it more often, now is not the time. He knows he cannot escape this confrontation.

He straightens his posture and spins around, “Kendall.”

“Are you alright?” She asks concerningly, “You look like you have a fever.”

“I’m… not sick,” Harry responds cautiously.

“Sure you aren’t,” She smiles, “I just wanted to ask if you were coming to the auditions after school?”

“Audition? Those are today?” He question, completely forgetting about the rest of his life as the drama unfolds.

“You’re so forgetful Styles,” Kendall rolls her eyes jokingly, “It's Wicked.”

“Thanks for the reminder, I would have went straight home after school if you hadn’t told me,” Harry replies.

“Anytime,” Kendall says with a brief squeeze of Harry’s shoulder, “I’ll see you there.”

Harry notices that is the first time she has talked to him in public since their breakup. But as soon as she leaves, his mind immediately goes back to Louis, his current absence, and his coming absence.

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Harry stands backstage watching Chad, Zayn’s former fling before Niall, perform his audition in front of the music committee. The show they audition for this time is Wicked. Since Harry performed a song from Wicked when he tried out for the Wizard of Oz in middle school, Louis convinced him to sing a song from Wizard of Oz for the Wicked audition. Louis has always been about bringing things full circle. And now here it is. Harry’s eyes wander restlessly around the auditorium as he peeks around the curtain.

“You ready Harry?” Chad asks as he walks off stage.

“Huh?” Harry snaps.

“You’re up,” Chad reminds him while gliding past Harry.

“Ah, Harry Styles,” The head choir teacher proclaims with a proud smile, “What will you be performing for us today?”

“Uh, Over the Rainbow by Judy Garland,” Harry answers unsure of himself.

“His voice is to die for,” She whispers to the judges next to her, “You may begin!”

Harry nervously nods his head as he waits for the piano accompaniment to begin. His hands are tied behind his back as he twiddles his thumbs. He has never felt more insecure.

“Somewhere over the rainbow way up high…” Harry’s voice begins. But his voice does not perform like it usually does. It sounds weak and wobbly.

“Someday I’ll wish upon a star, And wake up where the clouds are far, Behind me…” Harry sings as his eyes redirect to the upper right corner of the room. That is where Harry’s good luck charm always sits. Since Harry’s first audition, Louis has always came to every one. Harry claims Louis is
his good luck charm, but Harry knows he likes Louis there because Louis can calm his mightiest of nerves.

But that chair remains empty today, because Louis did not come to school, because Harry broke Louis’s heart. Harry’s voice cracks as he stares upon the seat. Louis is not here, and Harry will have to get used to that chair being empty for God knows how long.

Harry’s spirit shake as his performance collapses. His chest tightens again as he gazes into that corner of the room. A couple of the judges look back to see what Harry gawks at, but they do not see or feel the importance of the emptiness. His knees shake and sweat coats his face. The song eventually dies into a whimper before it is meant to end.

“Harry?” The choir teacher asks with great apprehension in her face.

“I’m… sorry.” Harry squeaks out before he flees off the stage. Harry does not know what happened back there. He cannot remember such a flop since… well the one audition Louis did miss while Louis was in high school and Harry was still in middle school, and Harry made Louis promise he would come to every one of them after that.

And that brings Harry’s true fear to light: what is Harry without Louis?

Harry has not felt embarrassment on this level in years. He starts to run for the hallway, knowing it will lead out of his horrid trap that is a school. Harry knows where his feet want to take him: they want him to sprint to Louis, where they can pretend this day never happened. And better yet, they can pretend they are the only human beings on this small celestial body.

“Harry!” A figure prevents him from entering the hallway.

“What?!” Harry nearly screams.

“Slow down,” Kendall says placing her hands upon Harry’s biceps to keep him in one place.

“I know what I’m doing,” Harry sighs as he calms himself.

“What happened in there?” Kendall questions as she stroke his arm.

“I’m just not feeling very well,” He lies.

“Well I can see that,” She awkwardly chuckles, “Is there anything you need to talk about?”

“I don’t… I don’t know,” Harry rubs his fingers against his tired face.

“I think I have a few things I need to talk about though,” Kendall admits.

“What do you need?” Harry quickly redirects his focus to her. No matter the situation, Harry will always put someone else in distress over him. Especially someone as close to him as Kendall was.

“I may have… Actually, I know I was very immature about our breakup. It’s been awhile since it all went down, but I had the feeling you actually wanted to talk things out. And if you still do, I think I would too,” Kendall explains delicately.

“You do?” Harry attempts to reiterate.

“Yeah, very much so, but if you are past that point, all you have to do is say,” Kendall states.

“Right now, I don’t know where I’m at on anything to be honest,” Harry reveals.
Kendall smiles, “My parents are going out town this weekend for one of my sister’s beauty pageants. Would you be interested in coming over to discuss our situation?”

“Yeah, I’d really like that,” Harry replies unsurely.

“It’s a date. How about I talk to you tomorrow about specifics?” She offers.

“That’s be great,” Harry half lies.

“Thank you Harry,” Kendall says with a kiss on the cheek, “Talk to you tomorrow.” With that Kendall exits the hallway, leaving Harry in an even greater mess than he could have imagined when the day began.

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Harry finally must leave the school. If he thinks he was an emotional mess now, he does not know how it could get any better at home. At least at school he had some form of a distraction. But there all he will have is his thoughts. It does not help that Harry happens to have left all of his books inside Louis’s locker because by this point they share a locker. And Louis always opened the locker up for Harry so he does not know the code to it.

“Thank you so much for your valuable time,” Liam says to one of the girl who left the audition earlier, “I will hopefully have the story up in a couple days.” This causes Harry to look up from his feet as he enters the cafeteria.

“Anytime Liam,” The girl says with a grab of Liam’s muscular forearm as she leaves, “If you need anything else from me, you have my number.” His face turns bright pink due to her obvious interest in him.

“Seems like she’d be willing to give you the exclusive story,” Harry chuckles as he approaches Liam.

“I’m not used to people being so straight forward, well besides Louis of course,” Liam awkwardly laughs.

“Hey I need to talk to you about something,” Harry sighs, Liam’s mentioning of Louis reminds him of things.

“Oh what is that Harry?” Liam asks as he stands up from the table.

“Fuck how do I tell you this?” Harry whispers to himself under his breath.

“Is someone hurt?” Liam questions with worry.

“Someone is leaving, three someones to be exact,” Harry admits.

“Who?” Liam inquires from Harry.

“Niall, Zayn… and Louis. They’re leaving after graduation,” Harry pauses for dramatic effect. He waits for Liam to gasp, or fall back into his chair, or accuse Harry of joking. But he does none of those things.

“Oh,” Liam replies unenthusiastically.

“Oh?” Harry squeaks, “Just oh?! Don’t you care about them at all?”
“I mean, oh shit, fuck,” Liam stumbles, “And going to Europe of all places…”

Harry pauses and gazes at Liam in confusion, “I never said they were going to Europe…”

“Shit…” Liam sighs.

“How do you know they’re going to Europe? Zayn did not even tell me that,” Harry slowly articulate as he tries to measure the gravity of the situation.

Liam does not know how to answer Harry.

“You already knew,” Harry accuses Liam, “Why didn’t you tell me!?”

“Because he asked me not to!” Liam defends himself.


“No not Zayn,” Liam attempts to avoid the larger question at hand.

“Who? Liam, I thought we were closer than this? Why would you hide this from me? Everybody in the group knew excluding me,” Harry rambles.

“Louis asked me not to,” Liam finally gives Harry.

“Louis?!” Harry nearly yells as the argument becomes extremely heated, “Since when are you closer to Louis than you are to me!?” But what Harry really wonders is why Louis is confessing his secrets to Liam and not Harry. When did Liam and Louis become closer than Harry and Louis?

“It’s not the matter of closer, it’s different,” Liam tries to explain.

“How is our friendship any different than yours and Louis’s?” Harry retorts, “When did he tell you?”

“Me and Louis had just finished having sex and-“ Liam let’s slip under the pressure of Harry’s accusations and their intense conversation.

But before he can finish his sentence, Harry shoves Liam against the stone pillar behind him. Hitting the object with a thud, Liam has no time to react. The next thing he knows, Harry’s left forearm pins Liam by the chest against the pillar. When Liam finally opens his eyes, Harry’s right fist is raised to his face, Harry’s nostrils flaring in anger.

“You and Louis were what?!?” Harry yells.

“Harry, calm down, it’s me Liam,” Liam pleads.

“You and Louis are fucking!?” Harry accuses again, his fist shaking in rage.

“Harry, breath, let me go. It’s me, Liam, one of your best friends. Harry, you don't want to hurt me,” Liam attempts to soothe Harry without forcing a confrontation. One of Liam’s hands gently presses against Harry’s fist. Upon Liam’s touch, Harry registers what Liam is saying. Liam is one of his best friends, and while Harry is shocked by this revelation, he would never physically hurt anyone, particularly his brothers. He has already hurt one friend this week, he does not need to hurt another.

“Um, I’m sorry,” Harry sighs as he pulls himself off of Liam.

“It’s, uh, okay,” Liam says while he pushes himself off the wall.
“I don’t know what got into me,” Harry admits looking down at the floor in shame.

“Harry?” Liam starts.

“Yeah?” Harry mumbles.

“Don’t you think there is a little more emotion behind that action than you’d like to admit?” Liam suggests.

“What do you mean?” Harry lies, “I’m just finding out all these secrets and I’m the last one to know them…”

“No,” Liam states defiantly, “What made you snap, was, Louis sleeping with somebody else.”

“No… I… um, it’s I feel like I’m being pushed out of the group. Everybody knows things but me,” Harry makes up, “When did this start? Are you two like dating?”

“Just friends with benefits,” Liam answers honestly, “About two months into your and Kendall’s relationship. The night of Zayn and Niall’s engagement.”

“I feel like I know nothing about my best friend anymore,” Harry admits weakly, “He’s in love with me… going to Europe… sleeping with you…”

“Well, all of his secrets are kind of intertwined with loving you, that’s why he couldn’t tell ya any of them, you know?” Liam replies.

And that hurts Harry, knowing Louis felt like he could not tell Harry anything because of his feelings. Best friends are not supposed to do this to each other. Keeping secrets or feeling like they cannot tell each other things. What are Louis and Harry to be exact anymore?

“Please do not take any of this out on Louis. He hurts so much, he thought keeping it a secret was the best way to handle it. You can’t blame him for that Harry,” Liam pleads.

“Yeah…” Harry nods emotionlessly, “I think I’m just going to head home now.”

“I’m sorry Harry,” Liam comments, “I never wanted to hurt you. I didn’t think me and Louis doing what we are doing would affect anyone else but us. They say somebody always gets hurt when two people fool around with no strings attached… But I guess this time, it wasn’t me or Louis, it was you.”

Harry gazes up at Liam in annoyance. Now he is the one getting the pity-party, not Louis.

“Tonight, please think about your actions. Think about why you are so upset Louis is leaving. Think why you nearly punched me when you found out about us two. I think there is more going on in your head than you want to admit,” Liam requests from Harry, “You don’t punch friends because of secrets. You punch people when feelings are involved.”

“Yeah whatever,” Harry shakes off Liam’s remarks as he leaves the school.

Once Harry exits the building, Liam pulls out his phone, dials a number, and then holds it against his face, “Hey, I told Harry. He reacted exactly as you said he would.”

It is the big day. Harry never thought this day would come, and he never believed he would actually be here for it but here he is.
He walks into a reception hall to see a beautiful decorated masterpiece. White is the theme, but is that a real surprise for a wedding? But so white everything appears fuzzy. There are also dashes of purple among all the white, adding a touch of majestic color to the décor.

Harry throws the travel bag, still being carried in his hands, under a table near the door to keep it out of sight. His eyes search desperately around the room for him. Is this the wrong place? Is Harry too late?

“Harry?” A voice calls from behind him.

Spinning around, Harry faces a beautiful man wearing a more than stunning purple tuxedo that look surprisingly similar to his outfit he wore to prom. There he is: The Purple Prince.

“Lou,” Harry sighs in relief. His eyes quickly travel to his friend’s left hand, and to his joy: no wedding ring. Yet.

“I didn’t think you were going to make it,” Louis smiles ever so brightly as walks briskly in Harry’s direction. Harry can sense what is coming. Opening up his body, Louis jumps into his arms.

“The more I thought about it, the more I realized I couldn’t miss this day,” Harry replies as he easily lifts Louis into the air during their hug. With Louis’s chin gently resting on Harry’s left shoulder, Harry buries his face against Louis’s neck and takes in a strong wiff. Gawd, he missed the smell of Louis.

“Have you seen the other boys yet?” Louis asks while Harry sets him back on the ground.

“Uh, no, I haven’t yet. I just landed and rushed here as soon as I could,” Harry admits.

“Let me go find them and-“ Louis says before he is cut off by Harry.

“Can we just have moment, you and me?” Harry requests.

Louis looks a little dumbfounded by what Harry wants. But they honestly have not seen each other in person for a couple years, so it makes sense why Harry would want that.

“Sure, of course,” Louis agrees.

“What if I give you your last dance as a single man?” Harry suggests, “It’s only fair since you taught me how to slow dance all those years ago.”

“I’d really like that Hazza,” Louis confirms as he lifts his arms up, signally that his arms will link up behind Harry’s neck so Harry will be leading, “Dancing in silence as usual?”

“I kind of got that covered actually,” Harry replies, winking at the DJ at the same time. Harry may or may not have called beforehand, hinting to the DJ of his subtle plan. The DJ does not care how this ends, he gets paid either way.

A slow rhythm plays from the speakers. *I can taste your lemonade, Bittersweet like every summer fling. And keeping up with all your stories, Talking to your ghost when I'm asleep.*

The Neon Trees’ *Voice’s in the Hall* is Louis’s song. Harry knew it the moment he heard it play from his sad YouTube station. And every time Harry hears it, he think of everything him and Louis was when they were young. And a week ago he heard it again, playing as Harry held the wedding invitation in his hands once more. Harry knew he would hate himself for the rest of his life if he never took that chance to make the song stop playing. He must go to Louis. He must tell Louis every
single word before it was too late. Harry already regrets not seizing Louis when he had chance when they were teenagers. He is not going to have any more regrets after tonight.

_I could feel the red rain on me; I can see you shaking when I kiss. You still hit me like a buzz, Seventeen and drunk enough to wish._

It is now or never. As they dance, all of their memories flash through Harry’s mind. When they met, when they kissed, when they danced, and when everything else. And hell, Louis looks so angelic in his tuxedo as him and Harry glide across the floor. Louis is this prince of royalty as Harry is just some peasant that missed his chance to be king years ago. Louis cannot seem to look Harry in the eyes throughout all their spins. Maybe it hurts too much, maybe it been too long since they last done this, maybe Louis does not feel comfortable around Harry anymore.

_And you really got your hooks on me; Maybe that's the punishment for love. I still stay up late at night, Trying to hear your voices in the halls._

Louis looks so much older. Not with wrinkles or gray hair, but he has turned into a full-on man in Harry’s absence. It is not that Harry has not seen him. For the first year while Louis traveled around Europe they did not talk. When he came back they did for a bit, but so much has changed about them during that time; they grew into different people with one not holding the other down. So Louis went off to university and Harry in a different direction. They still do Skype once in a blue moon, just asking how the other is doing and new adventures. But after awhile Harry began seeing a shadow in the room with Louis. And Harry knew who it was, but that did not make the situation hurt any less. Watching Louis fall in love with the man that Harry should haven been. Harry should have been brave enough.

_Every time we drive the coast, Heading toward Las Vegas in your car? Playing on your broken speakers, Me asleep and warm inside your arms. No it's never like what it used to be, Maybe it's just never really was._

Louis’s chest rests unfathomably close against Harry, causing Louis to perk up, “What’s in your pocket Harry? Feel like you have a bullet in there. I sure hope you weren’t expecting a shot gun wedding.”

That is not a bullet that is Harry’s jacket pocket. It a box, a very tiny box holding a very tiny gift. The second Harry saw it in that jewelry shop he knew it was meant for Louis’s finger. He only bought it a week ago, and prayed to God that Louis’s fingers have not significantly grown since he last held them. Along with the ring in his pocket is two tickets to Las Vegas. Harry knows if he plans on tearing Louis away from a wedding, he would have to promise one in return. A promise Harry had no problem fulfilling. But Louis could change the destination to wherever he wanted. As long as Louis left with Harry that is all that Harry needs.

_But every night when I get home, I can hear your voices in the halls. Every night when I'm alone, I can hear your voices in the halls…_ 

“Lou, I need to talk to you about something, and it has to be now,” Harry pleads quietly as the song ends and their dance stops.

“Yeah?” Louis questions.

“Styles?” Another voice rings out in the room.

“Babe?” Louis asks as he pulls away from Harry, causing a large emptiness.
“Never thought I’d see you here,” Liam says to Harry.

“What are you doing out here?” Louis squeaks as he hides behind Harry, “You aren’t supposed to see me before the wedding!”

“I didn’t know why music was playing, I came to investigate,” Liam replies, “Oh, will you quit hiding behind Harry? I’ve already seen you!”

Louis slowly complies as he tentatively steps back into the light, weakly presenting his outfit.

“My god,” Liam sighs gratefully, “I never could have imagined you could be more gorgeous, but everyday you prove me wrong.”

“You look alright I guess,” Louis jokingly teases as he steps over to Liam.

“To be honest, I hoped you were out here. I couldn’t wait for a moment longer to see you,” Liam confesses as he wraps his arms around Louis.

“Well if this wedding is ruined, it’s your fault,” Louis tells Liam.

“I can’t imagine how this day could be ruined,” Liam gleams, completely ignoring Harry standing feet from them.

“Did you say you needed to talk about something?” Louis asks as he turns his head to the third wheel in the room.

Harry lost. He knows that looking out how in love they are. He would be a fool trying to crash this wedding or do anything. Harry is too late. He lost his chance.

“It… it can wait until after the wedding,” Harry lies.

“Are you sure?” Louis does not believe the fib.

“Yeah… yeah,” Harry falsely confirms.

“I hope we have room for him at the reception,” Liam says to Louis, “We didn’t plan for any extra guest on the seating chart.”

“We can definitely pull him up a chair to our table,” Louis counters.

“I probably cannot stay that late…” Harry lies again, “I couldn’t get off for more than a day. It’d be best if I just flew back after the ceremony.”

“But you just got here!” Louis argues.

“I know… but we have to grow up at some point… and this is reality now,” Harry comments, more on Louis and Liam’s love than not being able to stay.

“Don’t you wish we were kids again,” Louis smiles at Harry.

“Yeah… I’d do anything for that,” Harry sadly admits.

“We better head back to the changing rooms. Zayn’s going to think you got cold feet,” Liam says with a pull of Louis’s arm.

“Never,” Louis grins at Liam. Liam then touches Louis ever so sensually as he pulls him in for a
kiss. A kiss that Louis easily complies with. Harry watches with dread knowing this is how it will be from now until the end of time.

He feels himself fall. Everything goes black.

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“Louis!” Harry yelps as he jumps out of his sleep. A nervous night sweat covers his body while he gazes around the room. This is his room. His bedroom. Not some empty apartment in the big city. Harry is not an adult. There is no engagement, besides Zayn and Niall’s of course. It was a dream. A horrible dream.

Harry looks over to the empty side of his bed that Louis normally sleeps on when he spends the night. Harry has a pretty tiny bed, so there is not much of an empty space, but Louis always sleep on the left side and Harry always sleep on the right. Even when Louis is gone, Harry leans more on the right side instead of sleeping in the middle like a normal human being.

But now it is just empty. Harry does not know for how much longer it will be. According to that dream, if could be years, if not longer.

All Harry wants to do is get out of bed, ride his bike to Louis, sneak into his house, crawl into his bed, and cry. Cry for how scary a future he saw without Louis in it.

But how does Harry describe his dream to Louis without giving him false hope? Harry does not know what he wants to do with that dream. In the dream he wanted to whisk Louis off and elope supposedly. Does he want that now?

He does not know. All he know is that Harry misses Louis. Bad. He lays back in bed realizing he cannot use Louis for this. He must learn to cope with his on his own, just as Louis is suffering on his own alone too. But he rolls over and stares at the empty spot in the bed. Until his eyes cannot be held open for a moment longer.

Chapter End Notes

Again, for this next chapter I do not know when it will be written. Perhaps in a couple weeks if you are lucky? Most likely three weeks, but definitely not a in a week like I previously liked to do.

A lot more music will be written into the story, if you are a fan of that or not. My tumblr URLs and twitter handle are posted on my profile if you are interested in following either of those.

I would say we have two updates left until this baby is done!

As always, comments, questions, and suggests are always greatly encouraged and received favorably by me :)


Chapter 25 Part 1: Half a Heart

Chapter Summary

The hole Louis's absence creates in Harry's life becomes harder to ignore, but Kendall's return forces the group's plan to go into overdrive, now in a race for Harry to pick between the two.

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone :) sorry this is two week later than I said it would be, but I've been extremely busy, but you all at least act very understanding so thank you for cutting me so slack. This chapter turned out to be very long, but it is the climax so it kind of makes sense. So I decided to split it into two parts, but since it is already done I will be post it next Friday:) Anyways thank you so much for reading this story. It's so long, I don't know how any of you had the patience for it, but it means a lot.

Songs for the chapters:
Half a Heart by One Direction

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 1

Harry returns to school the next day tired as hell. After such a vivid dream, he had a hard time returning to sleep. His legs were restless to move and his mind could not help but overanalyze the nightmare. The words from his arguments with Zayn and Liam ring in his head over and over again. Was Zayn right? Does Harry have feelings to sort out? And did his and Liam’s near physical altercation prove Zayn’s point?

“Harry did you hear my question?” Vince repeats as they sit next to each other in class.

“What?” Harry yawns weakly.

“Did you study for the test today? I looked over my notes all evening, and I still don’t feel prepared for this,” Vince explains.

“We have a test today?” Harry alerts himself to the news.

“Shit, you didn’t know?” Vince questions.

“Louis normally reminds me of tests…” Harry admits as he looks over to the empty desk on the other side of him.

“Is he alright?” Vince asks.

“That’s a very good question,” Harry nods.
“How about you?” Vince prods worryingly. Vince and Harry are nowhere to being close friends, their real only relation of having this class together and the fact Vince and Zayn dated the same boy for a time. But Vince can sense something is wrong, anybody could, and human compassion is more prevalent in people than the world would like to admit.

“I’m screwed for this test,” Harry answers somberly, “I know that for sure.”

Harry sits alone at their lunch table for the second day. He does not even look up for his friends this time though. He is too emotionally drained to face Zayn once again and horribly embarrassed to look Liam in the eye for what he almost did to him yesterday. So he keeps his face down hoping they would receive the hint that he does not want another confrontation with them today.

“Hey there buddy,” Niall says softly as he takes a seat next to Harry, “How are you doing?”

“Don’t act like you don’t know,” Harry sighs, “Our little incestuous group does not even know the meaning of the word secret.”

“Incestuous? Excuse me, I’ve only kissed Zayn. I don’t know about what you’ve done…” Niall chuckles.

“There’s that one time I kissed Zayn,” Harry accidently rambles.

“Wait what?!” Niall nearly shouts with a large laugh, “When!?”

“You didn’t know?” Harry swallows regretfully, “I assumed he would have told you… Uh way before you two were together. That homecoming dance you took Demi to. It just sorta happened I don’t know…”

“See, there are still secrets in this group,” Niall smiles with a slap upon Harry’s back, “What did you think? Best kiss of your life, right?”

“Louis was better in my truthful-“ Harry stops his mouth cold as he realizes what he just said out loud, never have spoken about Louis and his physical relationship, but then he remembers Niall most likely knows everything anyways, “opinion.”

“So how are you doing, really?” Niall begins to prod.

“I don’t want to believe it all to be honest,” Harry replies in relief, happy he can talk about this issue with an actual person instead of running it in his head over and over again, “Are you really going to Europe?”

“That’s the plan,” Niall confirms, “Me, Zayn, and Louis.”


“It was Louis’s idea,” Niall answers, “We told him he would go wherever he wanted, and that’s where he picked.”

“Why couldn’t you have convinced him to go anywhere else… like stay here?” Harry whines.

“Louis decided to leave before he told us. When me and Zayn found out, we didn’t want him to go out there on his own. And Harry most of all, we want Louis to be happy, and he is not happy here,” Niall describes.
“Do I make him that miserable? Is my friendship really not good enough?” Harry wonders.

“The reason you are still in his life today is because of his love for your friendship,” Niall answers.

“So you’re not mad at me?” Harry asks.

“Why would I be?” Niall retorts back.

“Zayn seemed pretty pissed,” Harry tells Niall.

“I’m worried about you both,” Niall says honestly, “What will bother me is what you do from here.”

“So your approval rests on if I tell Louis I love him or not?” Harry questions with anger in throat. Harry cannot make himself love somebody. How could Niall request such a thing?

“No. I cannot make you feel anything, even if I believed it would be for the best,” Niall explains, “I mean, you may have to let Louis go.”


“Harry, you love Louis, right?” Niall prods.

Harry stares as a responds, not knowing if Niall means platonic love or romantic.

“And that love means you want Louis to be happy at all costs? And if you cannot give Louis what he needs to be happy, then maybe you have to let him look for it somewhere else… without you,” Niall states.

“But I don’t want him to go….” Harry admits weakly.

“Harry, if Louis came to you saying he has fallen head over heels for a boy who didn’t love him, most likely never could, and it was making Louis miserable at the sight of him, what would you tell him to do?” Niall asks rhetorically.

“I’d tell him to forget that guy! If someone does not see how amazing Louis is then his loss—” Harry replies before he realizes what he is saying. *Shit Niall is right.*

“So, if that time does come, I hope you know how to make that call,” Niall finishes defiantly.

“Too, many, decisions,” Harry rubs his eyes from the exhaustion of stress.

“You have more than Louis drama going on?” Niall inquires.

“Yeah, Kendall came to me yesterday and…” Harry starts.

“She wants you back?!” Niall squeals.

“I guess she wants to talk about it Saturday night,” Harry answers.

“Saturday?!” Niall nearly squawks.

“Yeah, Saturday?” Harry asks cautiously, “You alright?”

“You want to see her? Get back together with her?” Niall nearly begs for the answers.

“Uh, I don’t know, with the chaos of Louis leaving, it might be nice to have something stable in my life going on,” Harry admits.
“Yeah, yeah, I just gotta go, I’ll see you around Harry,” Niall declares in a rush. Before Harry can say goodbye, Niall is already gone.

“Babe,” Niall whispers into his phone once he enters a hallway, “Little blip in our plan. Kendall is back, we’re going to have to improvise, but I have an idea…”

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“Harry darling,” Kendall says with a surprising tug of the hairs on the back of Harry’s head, not as delicately as the way Louis would announce his presence.

“Yeah?” Harry looks up from his empty desk during the dead time at the end of choir class.

“About tomorrow night,” She starts.

“Tomorrow night?” He asks, nearly forgetting about their plans in the light of everything.

“Your friend Zayn came and talked to me,” Kendall informs him.

“He did?” Harry startles, “What did he say?”

“He apologized for meddling in our relationship,” Kendall gleams as she lays her hands upon Harry’s shoulders, “He admitted he should have came to me first if he thought we were having concerns instead of going directly to you. He said he wants us to be happy.”

“Really?” Harry does not believe what he is hearing. Zayn is more anti-Kendall than Louis is.

And Zayn never apologizes, even if he knows he is dead in the wrong. So he would never apologize about this. Something is up, Harry can sense it. This is not good.

“So, he invited us to come to Niall’s live open-mic night at Paul’s Café. There will be a performance he thinks we will like.” She requests.

“Do you know who all will be there?” He asks, secretly referencing Louis.

“I don’t know. We’ll have to go to find out,” She smiles mischievously, “What do you say?”

“Whatever you want,” Harry replies.

“I knew you would say that,” Kendall states as she bends down to press a kiss upon his lips. But it feels wrong. It does not feel right for Harry at all. He remembers how much a rush he would receive from her contact. Now it feels like a bloody lie.

“I’ll pick you up tomorrow around seven?” She inquires.

“Sure,” Harry says smoothly, but guilt boils in his chest.

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Harry carefully watches himself crease his tie in the reflection of the mirror. He has messed up the knot nearly three times now. He knows how to tie it. Louis taught him, and now he does it for Louis. But Louis always did it for him out of habit when preparing to go out together.

Harry is alone now, but that does not explain why he cannot get this knot right.

Fine something is missing. Something greater that should be missing from a friend’s absence. It is a
Niall’s talk had set him straight. Well actually it had made things worse. Harry must make a choice. And the choice must, above all, must be what is best for Louis. Is Harry what is best for Louis? When Harry does not even know what to label his sexuality as? He does not know if he can be a boyfriend to a boy, let alone be someone stable enough to not go to Europe for.

And then there is Kendall, which Harry at least knows what to expect from. They have dated. He knows her flaws when it comes to dating and what she expects from a relationship. She already has a plan to be here, regardless of what happens between him and her. So Harry’s decision about his future will not affect her future at all, which relieves much stress from him.

“Is everything okay?” Louis’s voice interrupts Harry’s thoughts.

“Of course it is,” Harry answers as he turns around to see Louis leaning against the frame of his bedroom door. He wears that gigantic white sweater that he loves (which makes him look so tiny in) and black jeans so snug they might as well be tights. Once again, a white fuzziness makes Louis look more angelic than human.

“This is why you aren’t an actor Styles,” Louis insists as he struts over Harry’s location, “Having trouble with your tie dear? And don’t lie to me this time. We don’t lie to each other.”

“You lied to me about your feelings,” Harry points out as he feels Louis’s fingers press against the fabric of the tie.

“Well in my defense,” Louis starts as he grabs both ends of the tie, “I didn’t lie; I only withheld the truth. Did you ever ask me if I did?”

“Trying to get out of this on a technicality?” Harry chuckles.

“I’d find any way out of this just so you would talk to me again,” Louis admits blankly as he pulls the larger end of the tie over the smaller end.

“I’m not mad at you,” Harry reveals honestly, “I was for a bit but not anymore.”

“Then why aren’t we talking? Why are you so nervous?” Louis prods, his fingers dragging against Harry’s chest.

“I don’t know. I don’t know what I’m scared of. I’m not nervous to see her tonight. I don’t think I even want to go,” Harry explains.

“Then don’t,” Louis commands, “You’re a free man with his own wants and desires and destiny. You know where you want to go.”

“I know where I want to go,” Harry agrees as he feels Louis’s hands land upon his cheeks, pulling Harry’s face closer to Louis’s.

“Then come to me. Come home to me,” Louis pleads as his breathe spreads across Harry’s lips, “I won’t ever let you feel this way again.”

“Ohay, I’m coming,” Harry agrees as he swears he feels Louis’s lips brush against his.

Ding-Dong! The door bells rings, alerting Harry. Harry opens his eyes and gazes at his lonely self in the reflection of the mirror. His tie’s knot is complete. Only an imaginary Louis could have done it.
was a pretend conversation, but one that let him finish tying the knot. Could it really be that easy?

“Harry,” Anne enters the room, “A young lady requests your presence at the door.”

“Oh thank you,” Harry coughs as he spins around.

“You look too good for her,” His mother smiles.

“Uh, thank you?” He responds, not exactly sure how he should answer.

“Why are you doing this?” She asks, “She cheated on you. You remember that?”

“Everyone deserves a second chance, right?” Harry answers unsurely.

“Some people deserve it more than others,” Anne states firmly.

Harry stares at her uneasily, knowing the person she is referencing, “I’ll be home late tonight.” Harry exits the room for the date.

“Oh, you told me to tell you when he’s leaving. He just left,” Anne says to her phone, “This plan is still pretty risky. It could really backfire on you… I know you know. Remember, I wasn’t a part of this if your idea goes south. But if it does go well, don’t you dare leave me out of the story. Love you babe, I miss you being here all the time. Good luck.”

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Louis sits in his bed flicking through various pictures of him and his best friend in his phone. He wants to apologize to Harry but does not know what for. Hopefully they will have some talk soon where they will agree to pretend that day did not happen. Louis is only here for less than a few months, so it really would not be much. Shit he still has to explain that situation as well. Honestly, he has no idea how to fix this. And for that, he hates himself a tiny bit. This is his fault to a point, being so secretive against his best friend. But this cannot be undone.

“Louis?” Liam asks with a knock of the door.

“Not in the mood for sympathy sex, love,” Louis grunts while Liam enters the room.

“You know, I do see you as more than a walking sex toy?” Liam enters with a chuckle as he shuts the door, “You are one of my best friends.”

“I get it, people care for me,” Louis says with a roll of his eyes, scooting over to give Liam a spot to sit on his bed.

“Let’s go out tonight,” Liam suggests as he takes a seat.

“Do I really look like I’m at the stage to go out?” Louis questions, referring to his current appears. He lays in baggy joggers and a black zip up jacket with nothing underneath; his hair a mess and stubby facial hair poking out around his face.

“You need to quit torturing yourself. You didn’t do anything wrong and thinking about what you could have done differently over and over again isn’t going to change anything. What is going to change is if you take some course of action tonight,” Liam explains calmly.

“What do you want to do then?” Louis asks, easily giving into Liam’s logic.

“Tonight Paul’s Café is hosting another one of their live performance nights. You know how proud
Niall is of this. I think it’d be great if you came,” Liam offers.

“Is Harry going to be there?” Louis inquires directly.

“Well uh, I don’t know,” Liam lies as he scratches the back of his head and refuses to look Louis in the eye, “I think he has plans with Kendall tonight…”

“Kendall?” Louis’s ears perk up.

“Yeah,” Liam regretfully confirms, “I thought it would be best if you knew. But you need to get out of your house and out of your head. Your friends love you and need you, come on please. Be my date.”

Louis shoots Liam the most dismissive look ever.

“Come on, you’re not gonna make me third wheel with the newlyweds all night, are you?” Liam pleads.

“Only out of pity, not because I actually want to,” Louis agrees as he throws his blanket off of him.

“That’s all I need,” Liam smiles as he turns his back while Louis changes clothing.

*Louis agreed to come, tonight might be easier than we thought* Liam texts to Niall and Zayn in a group message.

By the time Harry and Kendall arrive at Paul’s Café, the shop is already packed. Though there is a table marked for reservation near the stage. Is that Kendall and Harry’s name on it?

“You two made it!” Zayn says excitedly as he welcomes the couple in.

“I didn’t realize this was such a popular thing!” Kendall exclaims, “Who put this all together?”

“Well it was a group effort on part of the shop, but me and Niall put in a lot of time. I’d say it’s pretty much him,” Zayn explains with a large smile at the mentioning of Niall.

“It’s surprising how big this thing is then,” Kendall replies, Zayn sensing the backhanded slap by her comment.

“So happy you could make it,” Zayn says directly to Harry, purposefully expressing his displeasement with her here, “How about I show you two to your seat! It’s pretty close to the stage, you’ll be able to see everything.”

The setting for their table looks awfully romantic. A couple rows of tables surround the stage, while rows of chairs fill the rest of the room. Kendall and Harry’s table has a white cloth and single candle sitting on top.

“You didn’t have to do this,” Kendall comments, really appreciate the ambiance of the room.

“Oh yes we did,” Zayn replies as he pulls the reserved place card off of the table, “This night must go perfectly.”

“Who all is performing tonight?” Kendall ask as she takes her seat.

“Oh a number of people as you will see,” Zayn smiles knowingly, “A number of surprises. I will see
you two in a bit.”

“Is all of this your planning dear?” Kendall whispers into Harry’s ear.

“I wish that I could say that it was,” Harry sighs in disbelief. He has no idea what is going on but he does not have a good feeling about it.

“Louis is on his way,” Niall says to Zayn as they stand in the corner.

“Tonight’s the night,” Zayn sighs nervously.

“Hey, remember, if this does not go down the way you want it to, it’s not your fault,” Niall reminds Zayn, “I don’t want you to feel bad because you cannot make someone love somebody else.”

“I know,” Zayn sighs with a sip of his drink, “I only hope to make them realize. When are we on?”

“Uh…” Niall looks down at the clipboard in his hands, “In about three songs.”

“Louis should get here just in time then,” Zayn comments, “Time for the grand show.”

“Are you alright Harry?” Kendall asks in between performances.

“Why do you ask?” Harry replies as he continues to look at the stage.

“I feel like you don’t even want to be here,” Kendall responds.

“I’m not in a very social mood tonight,” He answers, “A lot of shit going on.”

“Is it because of me?” She questions honestly.

“You’re not the shit,” Harry laughs.

“Then at least give me your hand,” She pleads, “Give me something.”

“Yeah I can do,” Harry lifts his hand and lays it on the table in front of her.

“At least it’s something…” She sighs with a squeeze.

“Uh oh, they’re holding hands,” Niall comments as he and Zayn prepare on stage.

“Shit, we can’t stall for Louis anymore. We gotta do this now.” Zayn states, “Go!” Zayn with a small shove pushes Niall center stage.

“Good evening ladies and gentlemen and any other gender minorities!” Niall says into one of the microphones on the front edge of the stage, “We having a good night tonight?”

The crowd hollers at Niall’s remarks.

“Remember, anyone who sings gets a free drink or baked good, along with the entire room being able to hear your lovely voice,” Niall announces, “For the next song, I will be singing with my beautiful fiancé Zayn. But the song we are about to sing is a special one.

“I and a friend of mine Harry, who is in the audience right now, wrote it a couple summers ago when two people who are and were very dear to us were not around. Their absences gave us a lot of inspiration. I hope this song reminds people who they truly care about. And while Zayn and I will be performing, Harry is welcome at any time to come sing with us, since this is our song.”
The lights dim as Zayn pulls up a second microphone to sing along with Niall. With all the lighting on the stage, Zayn also pulls up two stools for Niall and him to sit on in the front of the stage a few feet away from each other. He also sets up a third microphone and stool in between them incase Harry decides to join.

“This is Half a Heart,” Niall proclaims suavely.

Lastly, Zayn hands Niall his guitar. With a strumming of his finger, the songs begins. Niall is the first to sing, “So your friends been telling me, You been sleeping with my sweater, And that you can't stop missing me.”

“Bet my friends been telling you, I'm not doing much better, Cause I'm missing half of me,” Zayn follows after.

“And being here without you, Is like I'm waking up to,” Niall sings.

The song’s words start flooding back to Harry. He cannot help but feel how he did during that Summer. Harry was dating Taylor, and while she traveled a lot, there was something else going on that dominated his and Niall’s thoughts. That was the Summer Niall’s former girlfriend Karlie and Louis volunteered in Nicaragua with a church group. Having a lot of free time on their hands, Niall and Harry spent a lot of their time writing various love songs.

Harry assumed the melodies were written about Taylor. But with the shadow of their relationship gone, it does not feel like they are about her.

“Only half a blue sky, Kind of there but not quite. I'm walking round with just one shoe; I'm half a heart without you. I'm half a man at best. With half an arrow in my chest. I miss everything we do; I'm half a heart without you,” Zayn sensually chants the chorus, his eyes lovingly locked on Niall the entire time.

Hearing the lyrics again for the first time in a couple years, they do not match up with what Taylor and Harry were. Yes, Harry liked her around, at best, but he did not necessarily feel he was missing something when she was gone. He did not feel like a shoe was lost, nor that she shot him in the heart. I miss everything we do? What did He and Taylor even do? Snog sometimes? What was there to miss?

But what does fit those lines is Louis. Louis was missing. Louis is missing. Louis helped sculpt Harry into the man he is today. They were the ones that did everything together.

As Niall starts onto the second verse, Zayn looks over to Harry, “Come up here man! This is your song!” Zayn then gestures for him to join them on stage.

A few people in the crowd cheer, attempting to encourage Harry to follow through. Harry neglects to calls, shaking off the invitation.

“You’re high in demand,” Kendall whispers into Harry’s ear.

“I can’t please them all,” Harry awkwardly chuckles.

“Go up there,” Kendall eggs on, “Maybe it will save you face from your disastrous audition.”

With that challenge, the reminding of his failure, causes him to move. He oddly has no issue performing without Louis. But auditions were something else. Performing is all about Harry. Harry does not care what other people think about a performance because he always believes he did his best. Gaining someone else’s approval though, as during an audition, puts Harry on edge. Louis’s
presence countered that though, because Louis would always give Harry the leading role.

Nearly against his will, he steps up to the middle microphone on the slightly-elevated stage to a light applause from the crowd. The emotions of the song rock Harry. He feels weak, legs shaking, but his voice sings strong because it must.

“Though I try to get you out of my head… The truth is I got lost without you… And since then I've been waking up to,” Harry and Niall sing in unison.

Harry flies through a time machines, the words being his vehicle. Rememberable heat touches his skin. The smell of freshly-cut grass fills his nose. He remembers sitting on Niall’s bed with Zayn and Niall, Zayn sketching away as Niall strums his guitar to an unknown beat. A pen rest in Harry’s hands while he writes down words trying to find a rhythm in Niall’s song. But the bed feel empty, even when it has three teenagers on it. That is because there are two empty spots where Liam and Louis normally lied as well.

Harry gazed the vacant place next to him, sighed, and wrote down a few more words about feeling cold.

“Only half a blue sky (Only half a blue sky); Kind of there but not quite. I'm walking round with just one shoe; I'm half a heart without you. I'm half a man at best (Half a man at best). With half an arrow in my chest. Cause I miss everything we do; I'm half a heart without you,” Harry sings by himself, though Zayn does sing the intended background verses.

My Gawd this song is Louis. So fucking Louis. Why does everything come back to him? Louis, Louis, Louis… Louis?!

With a ring of the bell attached to the front door, two figures enter the café: Liam and Louis. Upon seeing each other, both of their hearts stop. Their first meeting since having sex and Louis confessing his love for him. No one but their friends can sense it, but tension sky rockets in the room. Who will flee first?

“I asked you if Harry would be here,” Louis whispers to Liam as the performance continues.

“And if you remember, I didn’t answer your question,” Liam replies with a cocky smile.

“What are you planning?” Louis accuses.

“Oh it’s not my plan,” Liam answers casually.

“So there is a plan?” Louis clarifies.

“Louis, we are all here fighting for you,” Liam states, “Just look at Harry.”

As Louis redirects his attention back to the stage, Louis and Harry enter this deep gaze upon each other. Harry’s heart now pounds as his vision blurs around Louis. Everyone else fades to black and white as Louis glows in color. Harry instinctively smiles at Louis, because typically one’s smile makes the other one melt. But Louis’s lips hardly move. Harry misses that smile.

“Without you, without you. Half a heart without you…Without you, without you. Half a heart without you,” The three boys chant into the ending.

The crowd breaks into applause, many giving a standing ovation. As people tower across the room, Harry loses sight of the tiny Louis. His eyes desperately search for him until Zayn and Niall pull Harry off stage.
“You wrote that?!” Kendall nearly screams as she joins the three, “Hell, that makes you so much hotter.”

“Oh it wasn’t all me,” Harry offers, “Niall did a lot too.”

“No mate, that song was mostly you,” Niall declares with a smack on Harry’s back.

“Did you know Louis was coming?” Harry turns his back on Kendall.

“We knew Liam was,” Zayn gleams, purposefully trying to ignite that jealous fire within Harry, “You know those two, inseparable at this point.”

“Yes I’m aware,” Harry glares back at him.

“We better go take our seat back before someone steals it dear,” Kendall suggests with a tug of Harry’s hand.

“Yeah Harry,” Zayn agrees, “Really sucks when someone steals your stuff, doesn’t it?”

Louis and Liam find a table one row in front of Harry’s, a few tables to the right. As Liam leads Louis to it, Louis watches the bonded hands of Harry and Kendall. It hurts Louis, seeing how little affect Louis’s declaration of love had on Harry’s life. Liam grabs a hold of Louis’s wrist to prevent losing him as they snake between tables and people.

Harry gazes down at Kendall’s hold on him. He is not even squeezing back. Her touch does not kindle anything in him like it did before. It has only been a couple months since their break up. Has that much changed between them? When he finally spots Louis again, Harry’s eyes immediately lock-on target to Liam’s grip on Louis. Rage builds inside Harry. No, that is his Louis, not Liam’s. Liam has no right to be grabbing him like that. Harry has never felt such ownership over Louis between the boys like this before. In fact, he found it kind of cute when Zayn and Louis would fall asleep against each other.

But watching Liam’s grasp on Louis, after knowing that Liam has most likely been… inside Louis. No, Louis is his.

“Is that Louis Tomlinson?” Harry hears a conversation. Even though Kendall begins to talk with Harry about something he really does not care about, his attention quickly diverts to the topic being discussed by two guys behind him.

“My gawd it is. To be honest, I haven’t seen him since we hooked up a few months ago,” One boy responds.

“You fucked him too? No shit, so have I,” The original one comments.

“Guess that makes us eskimo brothers,” One of the guys laughs.

“I would have done anything to get that ass again,” A boy says.

“Me too, He made it seem like it was a one-time thing though,” One of them describes, “I swear he moaned another guy’s name during it. After that he clammed up and avoided me like a hawk.”

“Careful, that boy will eat your heart out,” The other states.

“But not as fast as he’ll let you eat his ass out,” The boy chuckles.

Bang! With that comment, Harry slams one of his fist down onto his table. Kendall, along with a few
of the other people sitting around them, jump at Harry’s loud commotion. He spins his chair around, holding his right arm out and his index finger up, pointing threateningly at both the boys.

“You watch your mouth,” Harry warns, his finger shaking in rage. Both of the boys look terrified and shocked, not knowing who he is or why Harry would be mad at the first place. Louis and Liam turn around in their seats to gaze upon the upheaval taking place.

“Harry, what did they say?” Kendall asks as she places her hand on his elevated forearm to slowly lower it, “Something about me?”

“No,” He growls, “But something disrespectful that they should never say again.” Believing they received the message, Harry forcefully rotates back and looks back up stage, ignoring all the stares being brought upon him.

“Was that a part of your grand plan?” Niall inquires from Zayn, both of them leaning against the wall near the stage to obtain a proper view of that situation.

“Sadly no,” Zayn replies, “I wish it had though. Proves Harry is already on edge from our previous actions.”

“Well Louis is here and saw the performance, and Harry is still not interacting with him. What else can we do now?” Niall prods.

“You think I put all of our cards in a little song?” Zayn retorts, “Oh no honey, this is far from over.”

“You planned more without telling me?” Niall questions.

“I know you wanted that song to be what would make Harry realize, but we need methods more... direct. You, me, and Liam have already talked to Harry but we need someone to get the message across clearly. Someone that knows Harry and Louis more… intimately than us.”

“No, you didn’t tell me because you know I would have told you not to,” Niall reminds him, “Wait, more intimately than us? How is that?”

“That maybe have been a factor. If your plan had worked with the song, I would have cancelled the rest, but it’s always good to have a backup plan. I just don’t know where my backup plans are…” Zayn comments looking at the time.

“Plans?!” Niall nearly squeals, “Tell me what’s going on.”

“Well…” Zayn whines.

Ring the bell calls from the front door of the café opening. In walks a tall slender man which Niall and Zayn immediately recognize.

“Zayn,” Niall sighs, “This may have taken it a step to far.”

“Won’t know until we try!” Zayn replies as he points in the direction of Harry to the individual who just entered. The man nods and approaches.

“What the fuck is he doing here?” Louis gasps to Liam in shock.

“Holy hell,” Liam says, “Didn’t see that coming.”

“Harry?” The man asks with a light tug on Harry’s shoulder.
“What?!” Harry nearly yells as he shrugs off the touch. He spins around preparing for some form of an altercation. But when he see who it was behind, he freezes, “Nick?”

“Hello Harold,” Nick cheekily grins, “We need to talk.”

Chapter End Notes

Part two will be out next Friday :) and then a week or two after that the last chapter will be updated. I mean, there maybe an oneshot exitlude at some point, because a friend/fan asked for it. I'm horribly sad this is ending but all things must end eventually.

Any thoughts or questions are always loved in the comments! And my tumblr addresses are on my profile :)

See you all soon. Hope you have a spoopy Halloween!
Chapter 25 Part 2: Under Pressure

Chapter Summary

More characters return in the campaign for Harry's heart. Though when all hopes seems lost, Liam proves his heroism as the "Darkest Larrie", convincing Louis to join in the fight. But will it be enough? The only thing for sure is, Harry is definitely under pressure to make a choice.

Chapter Notes

Thank you all for waiting :) So here is the final climax of the story. Since most of this chapter takes place during a song, when you see italicized words, they are being sung simultaneously with the actions occurring, so keep that in mind. And don't forget, everything that has happened in this story, every detail, has happened for reason, and much of it will come up now.

Song of the chapter:
"Under Pressure" by Queen.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 2: Under Pressure

“Harry?” Kendall asks concerningly, “Who’s this?”

“A very old friend of mine,” Harry breathes, still in shock.

“I’m sorry my dear I really must barrow your boyfriend here,” Nick says to Kendall charmingly.

“I’m not really his girlfriend… yet,” She answers.

“Ah, good, this will make my conversation here with young Harold much easier,” Nick says as he lifts Harry to his feet with a pull by his bicep, “This way, follow me.”

“Nick, wait, slow down!” Harry calls to the deaf ears of Nick as Nick hurries him in between the rows of tables.

They finally hit the wall of the building and Nick directs Harry towards the bathroom, “We’ll need a little privacy.”

“That’s a one person restroom. This is going to look weird!” Harry cries as Nick pulls them in and locks the door behind them.

“What’s going on?!?” Harry yelps as he is pushed towards the furthest wall in the tiny bathroom.

“Harry, what the fuck are you doing?” Nick questions sincerely.
“Well it looks like to the rest of the crowd I’m about to get a quickie in the restroom,” Harry replies.

“Since when have you cared what random people thinks?” Nick asks back.

Harry refuses to respond, mainly out of self-regret. Nick is right. Back when Nick was around, Harry did not give a rat’s ass what people thought about him. Nick… and to a greater extent Louis… liberated him. Damn, Harry slow danced with Louis in the middle of a party and gave no shits. Has he really changed that much since Kendall came into his life? Did Louis really make Harry feel limitless?

“With her?” Nick clarifies, “What are you doing with her?”

“I dunno…” Harry mumbles, “She asked to go out and…”

“How could you pick her over Louis?” Nick questions.

“I’m not gay-“ Harry declares before he was cut off.

“Then what the fuck were we all doing then?” Nick charges.

Harry goes quiet again, unable to articulate a response.

“What you, me, and Louis were doing wasn’t just physical. You cannot deny that,” Nick describes. “I felt it. Louis felt it. You felt it. And then Louis finally admits he is in love with you and you leave him out in the cold?!"

“Look who is fucking talk!” Harry finally grows a back bone, “Where were you on his prom night and I had to pick up the pieces! Look at the pot calling the kettle black!”

“This is totally different,” Nick argues.

“How?!” Harry retorts.

“Because I was there!” Nick admits.

“What?” Harry questions in confusion.

“Harry, I came that night,” Nick repeats slowly.

“No, no you didn’t. I was there. You cannot lie to me about this,” Harry orders.

“I did, listen…”

*Nearly One Year Ago*

Nick closed the door of black car with his bum, his hands full with flowers. A cool spring breezes ruffled his hair as the street light turned on above him. Nick was late, so late. He definitely missed the scheduled dinner that was planned. He had no way to make this up for Louis. In fact, he fully expected a yelling match to come for him. Nick deserved it though.

He ditched the date because Nick did not feel good enough. Nick knew the way Louis looks at Harry, and it drove him insane with suspicion. He believed walking away from the situation was the best thing to do, for all of them perhaps. But no. He loved him. Nick loved Louis. And this was not going down without a fight.
The only thing Nick knows is if this is to work, he cannot share Louis anymore. He cannot stand the
idea of another man’s hands clawing over Louis like an animal. More particularly, a man named
Harry.

“Louis,” Nick practices to himself as he slowly approaches the Tomlinson household, “I’m an idiot. The biggest idiot, but I am an idiot who loves you. I know the distance will be hard, but I’m ready for you to be mine. We have a lot to talk about, but mine and only mine, and I’ll spend the rest of our
time together trying to make up the mess I made of your prom night. Come with me, I promise you won’t regret it.”

“No that’s shit…” He sighed to himself as he walked around the final large tree before the porch. But as he stepped around it, the porchlight turns on, startling Nick. He hopped behind the tree in fear, waiting to see what comes outside.

First out popped Anne, followed by a few members of the Tomlinson family. After them came two boys, arms locked around each other. Harry leads Louis, pulling him towards Anne’s vehicle, laughing as he does so. Louis playfully tugs back against Harry’s arms, the largest smile on his face as he does so.

“Don’t forget to put those flowers in a vase!” Louis calls back to his mother. Nick then looks back at Jay to see a large boutique resting in her arms: an arrangement of flowers that puts Nick’s to shame.

Nick’s eyes immediately went back to the lovely couple. Nick could not deny: Louis has never looked more radiant than how he does in the presence of Harry in this moment. The way his arm grasped Harry’s bicep as they strutted to the car makes them look like Prince William and Princess Kate.

Nick had known it for a while but this definitely confirmed it. Louis appeared happier to have Harry as a date than to have Nick. As long as Harry is in Louis’s life, Nick does not stand a chance, and Nick must have enough self-respect to take a step back than to keep barking up the wrong tree. Louis was even so absorbed in Harry, he did not even notice the figure hiding in the shadows.

He watched Harry and Louis disappear down the street, and after a few moments the Tomlinson family returned inside. Knowing this would probably be the last time he saw this house, Nick walked up the final few steps, placed his boutique on the welcome mat, and vanished back into the night for his lonely trip home.

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“You came back for him…” Harry agrees.

“You beat me to him,” Nick nods, “But you had beat me a long time before that night. Harry, anyone would give anything for someone to look you in the eyes the way Louis does. And I saw rare moments where you looked at him with the same loving gaze.”

“A look isn’t love…” Harry counters.

“I regret that I never made a stand for him, to put myself out there bare and naked. Don’t let everyone’s sacrifices be in vain. And above all, don’t sacrifice your happiness because of fear. You’ll regret that far much more. Seeing how he is now, I would do anything to go back and fight for him. It’s far too late for me, but it’s not for you,” Nick pleads.

“I can’t do what you want me to, just because you gave him to me,” Harry states, though he is deep in thought about all that is going on. Could Nick be right? Could this have been set in stone a long
time ago?

There is then a loud pounding on the door, announcing someone’s demand to enter.

“Uh… one second,” Harry calls out.

“Gawd dammit boys, let me in,” A feminine voice shouts with another round of banging.

“Told you long enough,” Nick whines as he opens the door as Eleanor joins the two, “I was beginning to get worried about you.”

“Don’t fret, I can take care of myself darling,” Eleanor smiles at Nick with a hug, “I haven’t seen you in so long.”

“You don’t hate me?” Nick question as he shuts and locks the door once again.

“For hurting my little Louis for a while I did. But after the boys explained the whole situation to me, it’s understandable,” She describes, “Just don’t do it again.”

“Deal,” Nick chuckles.

“Now back to you,” Eleanor redirects her attention to Harry, “Really? Kendall again? After all she did?”

“What did that bitch do?” Nick asks with his big smile.

“Pretty shitty shit actual. Cheats on Harry and lies about it for months. When Zayn finds out and tells Harry, she then dumps him when they discuss it. Louis takes care of Harry and his broken heart while still loving Harry the entire time, and then Harry immediately goes back to her when she falls in his lap,” Eleanor explains while casting a dark glare at the green-eyed boy.

“No shit, I didn’t know all of that,” Nick looks back at Harry, “What the fuck are you doing?”

“It’s not that simple!” Harry says desperately.

“It’s not that simple?!” Eleanor charges back, “I’m pretty sure that’s exactly how it went.”

“Okay fine, the Kendall part is pretty simple… but the Louis part, the me and Louis part, not so much,” Harry clarifies.

“Sweetie, do you want to know how it happened?” She asks nearly condescending, “Do you truly want to know who Louis is?” All Harry can do is nod.

“Louis is the guy who helped you on your first day at school when no one else would. Louis is the guy who made you feel loved and good enough for one of the first times in your life. Louis is the kind of boyfriend who ditched me on our homecoming night because he was jealous that you were spending a night with Zayn and not him. Louis is the boy who you convinced to be your jack off buddy because… well I think you know why. Louis is the man who bikes to your house in the night when your anxiety takes over. Louis is the boy you kissed before he went to Nicaragua because you were going to miss him. Louis is the guy that hid his feelings for you from himself for years to protect your friendship. Louis is the man you and Nick went on three way dates with because that was the only way you felt safe about expressing your feelings for him. Yes I even knew about your guys’ three-way whatever you called, because he tells me everything. Louis is the guy who’s heart was broken after you asked out Kendall because he thought you were going to ask him, to the extent that he entered into an emotional death-spiral afterwards, but never gave up his duties as your best
friend for a second. Louis is the man who is in so much pain, he is literally leaving the country to escape it. Harry, Louis is the man who loves you more than what makes logical sense to me,” Eleanor rants.

“Yeah, I mean like you’re great, but not that great,” Nick jokingly winks.

“And above all, I am very sure Louis is the person you have very deep and romantic feelings for,” She ends, “Because when I list it all out, with all you two have been for each other since you met, what else does it add up too?”

Harry stares at the two people make their case before him. He tries to think of anything to disprove their united theory, but cannot. When Eleanor laid her evidence down like that, he knows the story all together fits. Nick demonstrated that Louis is someone who is in high demand but always picks Harry at the end of the day. Eleanor proved Louis’s everlasting commitment to Harry, along with the ways Harry gave Louis a reason to fall in love. Scientifically, Harry should be in love with Louis. But is he?

Another set of fits knocks on the door, grabbing all their attentions.

“Do you have someone else joining us?” Harry inquires weakly.

“No… this should be it?” Eleanor asks to Nick, to which he nods.

“Hey, there’s kind of a line forming, and I don’t know exactly what’s going on in there, but people gotta piss,” A male voice yells through the door.

“So what is it, Harry?” Eleanor asks, her hand covering the doorknob.

“I think… I think… I have to get back to my date,” Harry replies, honestly wishing his feelings for Louis were more clear.

Nick and Eleanor stare at him in defeat. They thought they had said their pleas so articulately and obvious. Maybe Harry does not love Louis.

“Yeah… yeah you probably should,” Eleanor agrees as she unlocks the door in loss, “Hope she’s worth it.”

Harry exits the room first, avoiding the stares from the line of the boys who were unknowingly waiting for Harry’s realization. His head gyrates in stress. All of the facts are lined against him.

“Where you been darling?” Kendall inquires while he takes his seat, “Nearly thought you ditched me.”

“Only ambushed,” Harry sighs. Her touch feels foreign; It does not feel right.

Louis appear relatively preoccupied with the performances taking place on stage, at least he tries to act calm with the drama unfolding around him. Liam’s eyes travel from Harry and Kendall to Nick and Eleanor, who walk depressingly slow to the wall where Niall and Zayn are stationed at.

“Awe! El’s here too! Let’s go say hi!” Louis demands cheerfully from Liam.

“No, you stay here, I’ll go check in first,” Liam orders as he stands up.

“You know, I would feel a bit more relaxed if I knew what you all were doing,” Louis admits, hoping for more information, “You already withheld enough of the truth from me tonight.”
“We all just love you and want you to be happy,” Liam simply explains to Louis, by which he takes Louis’s hand and kisses the top of it, looking at Harry the entire time hoping to spark something. Harry glares back, hot rage filling his eyes. “Be right back.”

“Maybe we have to admit that he does not love him, no matter how much we think they belong together,” Eleanor says to the group, the first words Liam hears from their conversation.

“No, he’s just being modest,” Liam suggests, “He has horrible management over his feelings. We are literally tearing down years of internalized homophobia. We cannot give up yet.”

“I don’t have any more back up plans,” Zayn stresses, running his fingers through his hair in anxiety as Niall rubs his back, “And now Louis is here and…”

“What if we have one last plan…” Liam begins.

“Didn’t you hear? I have no more plans,” Zayn repeats.

“Do you remember whose idea it was to bring Louis here in the first place?” Liam questions.

“It was… yours, last minute,” Niall remembers.

“Exactly, because as someone who has dealt with feelings for their best friend,” Liam briefly looks at Zayn, “I know how tough those self-built walls are. And Harry nearly punching me at the thought of me being with Louis means something, trust me. We have to exploit that and bring it to the surface.”

“Wait, you been with Louis?!” Nick yelps.

“We don’t have time to go into that right now,” Liam raises his finger to Nick to quiet him, “I brought Louis here for this exact reason. What I’m going to do next will be a bit extreme, but it’s for Louis, right?”

“What are you going to do? Have sex with him on stage?” Eleanor retorts ironically.

“No on stage…” Liam bites his lip, “This is the last resort, and I do not know all the aftereffects it could cause if it does not accomplish what we want it too. Do you all believe in me?”

“Whatever you need,” Zayn agrees.

“But you all do realize, the point of this is to cause Harry major emotional distress. People could get hurt by this. Are you all okay with the possibility?” Liam attempts to confirm.

“What do you want us to do?” Niall asks.

“Nick, I need you to go to sound system and mixer to use those mad DJ-ing skills of yours to create a sexy beat to Under Pressure by Queen. Niall and Zayn, you two need to sing it, we need to get the song hooked up on the karaoke screen. Eleanor, you’re going to do backup vocals while all of us excluding Nick clear an area in front of the stage for me and Louis,” Liam gives his orders.

“You’ve really thought this over,” Zayn smiles, seeing all the support for his drive to preserve his family.

“What takes to keep you all around,” Liam gleams.

“What’s the name of this one?” Niall grins.

“Operation The Darkest Larrie,” Liam declares as everyone moves to take their positions.
Louis could not help but feel anxiety as he watched his friends venture across different directions in the room. They have been horribly secretive all evening, and the added pressure of Harry glaring at the back of his head is too much. He has to run. He knows it is unethical and weak, but maybe that is exactly what he is. Fleeing the nation or fleeing a room, it has worked well for Louis so far, why stop now?

As he begins to push his chair out from the table, the lights dim around the room leaving the area in front of the stage lit. A beginning beat to Under Pressure seizes Louis’s consideration, he looks up at the stage to see an area cleared out in front of the platform. There stands Liam with his back turned to the audience, lightly shaking his hips and ass to the beat of the song. Above him on stage is Niall, Zayn, and Eleanor, their eyes bouncing between Louis, Liam, and the prompter which displaces the karaoke lyrics to the song. When Louis turns his head to figure out the source of the music, he sees Nick attempting to create a rhythm from the very simple mixer that the café owns.

“What are those assholes doing?” Louis sighs to himself as he settles back in his chair, actually a little intrigued to see how this turns out.

“Pressure! Pushing down on me; Pressing down on you, no man ask for,” Niall and Zayn sing into their microphone. Liam spins around, revealing his button-up shirt flung up and a tight white wife-beater shirt clinging to his body. A couple of the girls woo in the crowd, causing an obvious blush from Liam. But he has a mission at hand. Quickly using this as confidence, he starts sexually rolling his hips towards Louis, to which a few gasps echo through the room.

“Under pressure! That burns a building down. Splits a family in two. Puts people on streets,” They continue to sing as Liam sticks his hand out like a gun in Louis’s direction. He fires the gun with a pop of his lips and a very aggressive pelvic thrust. All the eyes in the room look towards Louis, who has no idea how to cater to all the new attention. That is when Liam begins walking between tables, obviously to obtain his friend.

“What the fuck are you doing?” Louis snaps in irritation, to which Liam grabs Louis forcefully hand and pulls him up to his feet.

Firmly holding Louis against his own body, “Louis, do you see all of us here? We are here, fighting for you. Come up here and fight for Harry with me.”

“Fight for Harry with you?!” Louis questions in disbelief, “There is nothing to fight for. He doesn’t have feelings for me.”

“See, that is where you are wrong. When I mentioned to Harry about you and me, he completely snapped and—” Liam tries to explains.

“You told Harry about me and you?! What the fuck!” Louis hollers.

“Look, a person wouldn't almost punch their friend because of a secret. A person would punch someone for doing the things they want to with the person they love. He’s jealous. Goddamn, look how he’s scowling at us right now!” Liam points at.

Still pressed against Liam, Louis rotates his head in Harry’s direction to see a red-faced Hazza, eyebrows buried down as far as they can go, watching every one of Liam and Louis’s motions. To prove his theory, Liam grinds against Louis for a moment, during which Harry’s hand tightens frustratingly into a fist. Louis gazes back at Liam, acknowledging Liam’s theory.

“They say in life you regret the things you don’t do, not the things you do. Don’t you want to say you fought for Harry? You’re going to regret for the rest of your life if you don’t do something. You
will always wonder what if I launched the battle for Harry’s heart, telling him exactly what he means to you and what you’d be willing to do for him? You already told him how you feel, now you need to make sure he feels it as well. Here is your chance to never have any regrets. We are all willing to do it for you Louis. But are you willing to do it for yourself?” Liam brings up to Louis.

Louis’s eyes bounce back between Liam and Harry multiple times, coming to the conclusion that Liam and all of his friends here tonight want what is best for him. If anything, if he cannot do this for himself, he cannot leave Liam looking like a total twat. If they are willing to make the sacrifice on his behalf, he can do the same for them.

“I always do the wrong thing at the wrong time. Look how I handled Zayn’s feelings for me, and what I did with you. I’m not the hero I want to see myself as. In fact, I’m kind of an asshole. But maybe I can be the person who does the wrong thing at the right time. Join me,” Liam pleads.

“I hate you so much Liam Payne,” Louis says as he pulls Liam in the direction of the stage. Niall, Zayn, Eleanor, and Nick’s faces light up upon Louis joining their adventure. Their plan was not in vain.

“Chippin' around, kick my brains 'round the floor,” Zayn and Niall hum as Liam and Louis return to cleared out dancefloor.

“Wait, what are we doing?”, Louis questions in panic, “I can’t dance. You can’t dance!”

“Remember when we practiced those YouTube dance tutorials so I could impress Sophia?” Liam reminds him.

“These are the days - it never rains, but it pours.”

“Shit that was a couple months,” Louis squeaks.

“It will have to do, come on. Waltz!” Liam commands as he places his hands upon Louis’s body, “And remember we gotta make him jealous. That means being as slutty as it can be.”

“Um ba ba be… Um ba ba be… De day da! Ee day da!”

“Slutty is my natural state, Payno,” Louis confirms as he places his hands on Liam, their feet quickly moving around the dance floor.

“It's the terror of knowing what this world is about. Watching some good friends, Screaming, ‘Let me out!’”

All of this is looking eerily familiar to Harry. He had a nightmare that Liam and Louis would end up together in the end, and now it appears it is actually happening. The noble way Louis glides around the dance floor reminds Harry of them way Louis should be dancing with him. He has half a nerve to stomp up there and shove Liam out of the way, but Kendall’s grip on his hand reminds him it could never be that easy.

At one point Louis jumps onto Liam, his legs wrapped around his waist. Liam cups Louis’s bum out of reflex to prevent him from falling while Louis rocks against him. Harry watches how it would literally look if Louis and Liam had sex standing up. Why are they torturing him?

“Tomorrow gets me higher, higher, higher...Pressure on people - people on streets.”

“Salsa!” Louis suggests, remembering one of the many dances him and Liam practiced in Liam’s quest to impress Sophia.
“There’s my boy!” Liam gleams, proud to see Louis finally joining in with their ideals.

“Turned away from it all like a blind man; Sat on a fence but it don’t work.”

Nearly mirroring one another, rapidly pace their feet ahead and behind them while rolling their hips to the beat. Perhaps even experienced salsa dancers would have been impressed. To the nearly inexperienced crowd, it is quite a show.

Louis could not deny this is the most fun he has had in the past few days. Turning the situation into a performance, gawking stares from the crowd further enticed Louis to push this to its edge. And seeing the striking glances from his friends also constructing this battle, Louis feels loved. Even without the romantic affection he desires from Harry, in this moment with all the funding from his friends, he has never felt more loved.

“Keep coming up with love but it's so slashed and torn. Why? Why? Why?”

Glancing back over at Harry, Louis can sense that this is not enough. A little Hispanic cultural dancing is not going to make Harry realize what he needs to.

Acting purely on adrenaline, he whispers into Liam’s ear, “I have an idea but it is kind of… graphic.”

Liam’s ears perk up, “I’m just pleased you’re creating from this! Not going to get me naked in front of this room, are you?”

“Only in you want me too,” Louis devilishly replies as he grabs ahold of Liam by the shirt to stop him from moving. With his other free hand, Louis transfers his attention to a girl sitting in the front row. At first she thinks he wants her to contribute to the show. But as Louis’s free hand points up, spins, and then signals for a motion towards him, she realizes what he really wants: the chair she is sitting on. Understanding with a smile, she stands up and pushes the chair to center of the dance floor.

“Insanity laughs under pressure we're cracking”

Forcefully by the shirt, Louis pushes Liam down on the chair. Liam lands with a grunt by how hard Louis manhandled him.

“Can't we give ourselves one more chance?”

It becomes increasingly obvious what Louis intends to do. Stepping over Liam’s legs, Louis’s feet land upon the ground right below where Liam’s hips would be. Louis’s bum rests upon Liam’ groin. Staring him darkly in the eyes, Louis begins wiggling his hips on top of Liam.

“Why can't we give love that one more chance?”

The audience goes dead silent as the sexual tension builds. Louis repeatedly brushes ass over Liam’s crotch, to which Liam could not deny that an erection grew in his pants from the contact. That is when Harry realizes he would do anything to see Louis perform a parody of Nicki Minaj’s Anaconda video.

“Why can't we give love- give love- give love- give love- give love- give love- give love- give love?..”

Trying to mimic all the lap dances he has seen in movies or television, Louis rolls the opened shirt off of Liam’s shoulders and down his arms, revealing his muscular biceps to the room. Caught up in the moment of their well-established sexual chemistry, Liam rubs his face up Louis’s chest to the final
resting spot on Louis’s neck. Unpurposefully, he takes in a sharp breath of Louis’s scent and presses a light kiss upon Louis as well. Harry boils in wrath. He feels like he is receiving a live show of his worst nightmare: the dynamics of Louis and Liam’s sex life.

“Remember that position we fucked in while hiding in the janitors’ closet when we skipped that pep rally?” Louis whispers into Liam’s ear.

“How could I forget?” Liam retorts.

“We’re gonna do that,” Louis orders.

“Cause love’s such an old-fashioned word,”

Liam is not exactly sure how the position is supposed to work out on the dance floor, but agrees to go with it for Louis. He pushes Louis off of him as he scoots the chair back to the edge of the dance floor for the girl to sit in. When he looks back to Louis, Louis stares back with a nervous stance, but Liam nods for him to do what he wants. Louis then kicks his right leg high into the sky.

“And love dares you to care for,”

The crowd gasps, it appearing as if Louis nearly kicked Liam in the face. But as planned, the back of his heel lands on Liam’s shoulder. Pulling his body close to Liam’s, Louis virtually performs the splits against Liam’s body.

“I don’t remember you being this flexible,” Liam mumbles as he balances Louis. All Louis can do is nod in acknowledgement, nearly in pain from the stretch.

“The people on the edge of the night,”

Liam drags Louis across the dance floor, Louis’s body nearly limp against Liam’s muscular frame. But damn, Louis looks hot as hell the way his petite body bends for Liam. His groin continually bumps against Liam during the process, proving his elasticity to the crowd.

“And love dares you to change our way of”

Louis throws his leg off of Liam and spins around, vehemently pressing his ass against Liam. Liam proceeds to wrap both of his arms around Louis’s torso to keep him in place, while Louis’s hands travel upward. Louis’s fingers run through Liam’s hair, both of them sexually cradling the other.

“Caring about ourselves”

Louis attempts to grind his well-known bum against Liam, but Liam knows the song is coming to an end and needs a coup d’état. He turns Louis around and links his arms up behind Louis’s waist to end this in a more sensual way.

“This is our last dance. This is our last dance.”

With Louis’s forearms placed upon Liam’s shoulders and his fingers connecting behind his neck, the couple now spins rapidly in place. A couple members of the crowd ooh as they watch. Harry does not know what he finds more sickening, their near love-making or this romantic display.

“This is ourselves… Under pressure.”

But something feels different for Louis and Liam. When Louis gazes into Liam’s eyes, he feels a sinking in his chest. The moment seems unfamiliar. Both boys have a sensation that this is the last
time they will be holding each other in such a way. They cannot explain feeling such a way, but they do.

“Under pressure.”

Coupled with wanting to drive Harry into a jealous fury while also feeling the intimacy that has formed from their sexual exploits, Liam does something he never expected to do in public: His lips land upon Louis’s as the song comes to an end. Louis kisses back, trying to express his appreciation of Liam’s support for the past few months and desire for what he assumes to be the last kiss between the two.

Just as the crowd is about to awe, Harry jumps to his feet in fury. With his rapid motion, the chair beneath him falls backwards causing a large bang that jolts everyone in the room. As the music cuts out, all the eyes divert to Harry, not knowing what to expect from him. The group does know what could go wrong though. Niall prepares to jump down on the main floor to serve as a barrier between Liam and Harry, though Zayn grabs his arm to prevent him from prematurely doing so.

He appears beyond irritation and jealousy. He breathes deep like an angry gorilla, which chest rising and falling. Louis’s hands retract from behind Liam and land upon Liam’s chest, him too feeling the apprehension in the room. Liam grip lessens upon Louis, hoping Harry would come up to run off with Louis in the end. Besides for literally having sex in front of Harry or proposing, Liam does not know what he could do to make Harry more jealous. All he can do now is wait and see.

“Harry?” Kendall interrupts the obvious tensions. Harry’s eyes bounce between Kendall and Louis, his heart being tugged in two different directions. To his left lies Kendall, the first girl to ever truly win his heart, whom held beautiful beyond compare upon first glance. And yes, they have been through a lot of shit but here they still are trying for each other. Then there is Louis. Louis who has always been by Harry’s side no matter what, though their changing dynamics from friends to boyfriends creates unknown implications and aftereffects. Either way is risky and unstable. Liam and Louis’s chemistry is also undeniable.

“No, no you didn’t. We failed. This has nothing to do with you,” Liam replies, hugging Louis tight.

Guilt builds within the group for bringing Louis into their game.

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The group cleans up from the end of the open mic night. Nick helps collect all the cords from the sound system, speakers, and microphones. Niall, Zayn, and Liam move around the tables and chairs back into the formation normally used for business hours. Eleanor and Louis sweep up the floor. Everyone cannot help for their eyes to follow Louis. His mopey stance cannot help hide his defeated attempt at Harry’s heart.

“Can you all knock it off?” Louis requests without looking at his friends.

“We’re just cleaning…” Zayn whimpers.

“That’s it, everyone line up!” Louis orders as he drops his broom and claps his hands to show authority.
“What?” Niall squawks.

“We’re getting this done with. Line up in front of the stage,” Louis commands as everyone quickly follows in line. There in order stands Zayn, Niall, Liam, Eleanor, and Nick.

“Zayn,” Louis says standing in front of him, firmly gripping Zayn by the shoulders.

But Zayn cannot look Louis in the eye. He was so focused on his goal to save his family, he did not give much thought to how it could affect Louis or Harry. “I’m sorry,” Zayn concedes.

“That’s not what I wanted from you. I wanted to thank you. I know why you did this, you didn’t want to lose anyone and you felt this was your last choice. To be honest, this is what is best for me. If you had not have tried this and we went to Europe, I always would have wondered what if I had made an actual fight for Harry to be mine. Now I did and will not be giving that a second thought while we travel. Zayn, I love you so much. You are my brother,” Louis presses a light kiss upon Zayn’s cheek with a hug, “I know it’s not the way you imagined it to be, but I cannot wait for the future you, me, and Niall are about to embark on. I’m really pleased you are going to be a part of my future.”

“I love you too,” Zayn smiles, “Now, I can’t wait either.”

“Niall,” Louis gleams as he takes a step over, “My oldest friend. Thank you so much for putting with Zayn’s insanity while he did most of this. I’m sure you talked him down from plenty of his wild ideas.”

“He actually wanted to play a slideshow with all of the pictures of you and Harry while we sang Half a Heart,” Niall lightly chuckles.

“Yeah that may have been a step to far,” Louis also softly laughs, “You do whatever it takes to make the people you love happy. When I tell people about you, I describe you as the world’s last good man. I’d tell you to never change, but I love watching the man you are growing into and the how the love in your life has shaped you. Keep it up babe. Can’t wait to be your third wheel in Europe,” Louis finishes with another kiss on the cheek.

“You’re not a third wheel. We’re a high functioning tricycle: you, me, and Zayn,” Niall hugs Louis.

“Liam,” Louis starts, “When convincing me to join you in dance, you told me you didn’t see yourself as a hero. And yes, there are some dark moments in your past. But tonight you used your super power of doing the wrong thing for good. You are now a hero. I always thought I had three good consequences for why I was held back: Niall, Zayn, and Harry. But now I know I have four: you. You even sacrificed your reputation of being the heterosexual one!”

“Well maybe I realized my reputation with you all was more important than with the rest of school,” Liam offers.

“And I’m sorry you felt pressure to do all of this. It was wrong of me to think you would be okay being left here with Harry, while losing me, Niall, and Zayn. So all of this makes sense to me.” Louis kisses Liam’s cheek.

“El,” Louis smiles, “I’m so moved you came here for this. I know you’re busy off being a Uni girl. I’m sorry for not keeping in touch with you more.”

“Oh I could have tried harder myself, but you know I am always here when you need me. Just give me a call, and if it’s an emergency, I’ll drop whatever I can.” She vows.
“Love you,” Louis kisses her cheek.

Nick looks extremely nervous about his interaction with Louis. They really have not talked since Nick dumped him the day of the prom last year. He does not know what to expect.

“Nick Grimshaw,” Louis steps over.

“Louis Tomlinson,” Nick repeats, “I’m sor-“

“Don’t,” Louis stops him, “We could have a talk for hours about everything. But let’s cut to the end. You broke my heart.”

Nick nods acknowledging Louis’s pain.

“But tonight you came here to fix it. Actions speak louder than a ‘sorry’ ever could. So for you driving hours to become a part of this just so someone else could possibly fall in love with me, we’re good. We’re more than good. I understand why you left me now. You have self-respect and knew you deserved better than what I was giving you. That is something I have not been strong enough to do with Harry, suffering for months with my feelings for him. You’re a role model,” Louis describes sweetly to Nick.

“I’d really like for you to be part of my life again. Would you be okay with that?” Nick desires.

“Yeah, I’d be okay with that. Thank you for everything,” Louis finishes with a kiss upon Nick’s cheek.

“Wait, I have a request,” Nick states softly with a small touch of Louis’s wrist.

“What is that?” Louis replies.

“Let’s make a deal. If by age thirty you aren’t married to Harry and I’m not seeing anyone, we should get together,” Nick proposes.

“You want me to be your backup plan?” Louis squeaks joyfully.

“Hey! We have that deal!” Niall calls out to Louis.

“You’re actually getting married you goof!” Zayn claims with a playful smack against Niall’s arm.

“Oh, right,” Niall agrees.

“Come on Louis, we could run away together,” Nick offers as his hands lightly cup Louis’s cheeks.

“I’ve always wanted a boy to say that to me,’ Louis admits, “So when we are thirty-five…”

“Thirty! I said thirty,” Nick clarifies.

“If we are both thirty and single, we’ll run away together,” Louis confirms.

“Perfect,” Nick gleams, “Do you want to grab a bite to eat with us after this?”

“I actually want some time alone if you all don’t mind. This has been what was best for me, but it is still a lot to process. I think a quiet walk home is what I need right now,” Louis answers, “I’ll talk to you guys later.”

“Guys… one last thing,” Louis states before he exits, “Recently, I learned one of the biggest lessons
of growing up and becoming an adult: not all love stories have happy endings. I’m coming to terms with that; I hope you all do as well.”

With that, Louis disappears out the door. While the physical mess of the open-mic night was nearly gone, the emotional aftermath is not.

“Let’s lock up. I still need you to drop me off at work when we’re done here Daddy,” Zayn comments to Niall as the group watches Louis leave.

“Daddy?” Eleanor scoffs, “You two are disgusting.”

“So you and Louis?” Nick breaks the saddened tension to Liam.

“Best fucking lay of my life,” Liam responds in deadpan.

“I hate you,” Nick laughs with a playfully jealousy.

Chapter End Notes

Only one chapter left guys! Hoping for a happy ending? Guess you will have to wait and see. The last chapter should be out in two weeks time

May do a one-shot as a sequel after:) but we'll see as well
Chapter 26: Wolves (Actually, I Know It Was You from the Start)

Chapter Summary

Harry can no longer hide from his feelings as he enlists the efforts of his friends to win over the heart he should have had from the start.

Chapter Notes

Holy shit guys, I can't believe this is over. I've been writing this story for nearly a year and a half and now it's done. I never intended it to be this long nor take this long to finish. But here it is. My baby is all grown up. I hope this is the ending you all wanted, the ending had been chosen since I started the story so everything that I wrote was a lead up to this, as you see I bring back some facts from throughout the tale.

Song of the Chapter:
"Wolves" by One Direction

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

By the time Louis arrives home, his optimism has crashed. He should have stayed with his friends as they tried to cheer him up; being alone has rarely actually ever helped his mood. But luckily he has more than just them.

Louis sneaks past his family and tiptoes to his sister's door. He knocks lightly.

"Who is it?" Lottie calls from her room.

"The only person polite enough to knock?" Louis suggests.

"One second," he listens to her shuffle around and then the door clicks open.

"Hey big bro, what's up?" She says unconvincingly casual, herself leaning against the door frame but her arm blocking the entrance. But her eyes are a little red. Lottie cannot help to hold back a cough. When he peaks around her standing in her pink pajamas, he sees her window is cracked open.

"Are you…" He starts.

"Shut up," She squeals as she pulls him into her room while shutting the door, "Please don’t be mad!"

"Give it here," Louis orders.

"You aren’t going to take it to Mom, are you?" Lottie pleads.

"Only if you don’t share," He clarifies as he walks around her and takes a seat on a chair near the window.
“You smoke too?” She asks dumbfounded.

“Are you really that surprised?” Louis replies somberly.

“Oh,” She sighs, clicking the pieces of the puzzle together. She realizes it is totally obvious that Louis smokes.

“Why you smoking tonight?” Louis asks as he pats the seat next to him, telling her to take a seat.

“Oh, no reason really. A little stressed I guess but nothing major,” Lottie answers as bends over her bed and pulls a small box from underneath it, “What about you?”

“Kinda made an ass of myself,” He admits, “I definitely know that Harry isn’t in love with me.”

“Shit,” She sighs as she takes the seat and pulls out a pipe, the bowl still full from her previous use, “I don’t know what to say besides: that sucks.”

“How about you say: here you get the first hit bro,” Louis sadly chuckles, to which Lottie hands it to him.

“Are you okay?” She inquires, watching him concerningly.

“Can we please watch more Disney movies,” He sighs, blowing smoke out the window. Lottie can see tiny tears welling up in his eyes.

“Fuck boys,” She agrees.

“Your friends were sure acting weird tonight,” Kendall comments as her and Harry enter her large and quiet house.

“You could say that again,” Harry replies while he somberly shuts the door.

“Like even for your friends’ standards,” She points out while he pulls off her high-heeled shoes, “And they’re pretty odd to start off.”

That comment feels like a subtle diss against his friends.

“I thought Liam was straight,” Kendall also says, “Guess you’re now the token-straight character in their lives.”

“Doesn’t really matter,” He answers while he follows her through the vacant house to her room.

“Dating Louis of all people?” She accuses, “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“You think they’re dating?!” Harry questions surprised.

“You don’t think so?” Kendall retorts, “Wait, you didn’t know?”

“Not really… seemed to smack me in the face tonight,” He lays upon her bed.

“You didn’t?” She says confusingly, “But I thought you and Louis told each other everything?”

“I thought so too,” Harry confesses regretfully.

“That must be pretty tough for you babe,” Kendall sits upon his lap, “I can understand why though.”
“Why?” Harry wonders, desperately wanting an answer from her.

“Harry, you don’t have to play dumb with me,” She laughs, “It’s cute, but you know why.”

“I do?” He inquires.

“He has feelings for you,” She replies easily, “Anyone could see that.”

“Am I really that dense” Harry marvels.

“Don’t look so sad,” Kendall cups his cheeks, “I know it must be hard on your friendship, but it looks like he’s moving on. It’s for the best.”

“Moving… on?” Harry repeats back to her, misery filling his chest. When she says that, he realizes that he does not want Louis to move on. That is the last thing he would ever desire. Harry does not even have Louis and those words sting.

“The one thing I do not want us to do,” She gleams, “I know we have a lot to talk about, but I think I know something that will make you feel better. Stay right here.” With that she hops off of him and disappears out of her room.

With her absence, Harry lays back into her bed and closes his eyes. Finally a moment of silence. He breaths in the familiar scent of her room. It feels like ages since he last smelled and felt her presence. So much has happened since then, especially in the past couple days. Is he even the same Harry?

“You really going to let me move on?” Harry hears Louis’s voice. Opening his eyes, he sees Louis above him, upside down from Harry’s view. Louis gazes down upon Harry with that light smile of his that always makes Harry melt.

“Please don’t ever leave me again,” Harry pleads to the imaginary Louis.

“I was only gone for a few moments,” Kendall chuckles, interrupting Harry’s dream.

“Sorry about that, I-“ Harry begins to say as he leans up. But in the doorway he sees quite the sight. There stands Kendall, only in a pair of lacy bra and underwear, leaning suggestively against the door frame of her room.

“You missed me?” She winks.

“Sure…” Harry half lies as she struts across her room to Harry.

“What did you miss most about me?” She questions, retaking her seat upon Harry’s lap. He positions looks eerily similar to how Louis sat on Liam just earlier in the evening. He quickly tries to press that image out of his mind, but now that it is there, it is stuck.

He is about to her say her ass, but compared to Louis’s, it is nothing. Especially compared to the ass on some of Kendall’s sisters.

“Uh, your eyes,” Harry replies, trying to sound sweet.

“I remember the first time I saw you Harry Styles,” Kendall whispers, “Do you remember the first time you saw me?”

“Of course I do,” Harry replies, “You took my breath away.”

“Do believe in love at first sight?” She again requests.
“I don’t… I don’t know,” Harry answers honestly.

“Close your eyes, and think back, to when someone made your heart stop upon seeing their eyes. Just remember…” She commands.

Harry closes his eyes…

*More than 4 Years Ago*

His heart pounded. Not from possibly meeting the love of his life, but from the nervousness of the first day of school somewhere completely new.

He should not feel so afraid, but he was only recently driven out of his previous hometown when his so called best friend Nick accused him of being gay after a nighttime cuddle. Harry did not know what the big deal was. He still does not. They merely fell asleep in bed together after a movie and when Nick woke up… well… If things go wrong here, Harry does not know where he could go.

He lost everything. His comfortable home, his place in school, any other friends he had. Now he is here. It is not that he only fled due to Nick. Daddy issues also provided a great excuse to leave, so here he is at this new middle school. It is the first day so lots of people seem lost, it is not only him, but at least they have other people to ask. Who does Harry have? No one.

It does not help that his hands are full of school books and papers for all his classes. His small stature causes him to barely see over the stack, let alone see his feet below it.

The front office may have given him his locker number, but he has no idea where D hall is. How is he supposed to know that? Is he in D hall? Did he just pass D hall?

He tries to rearrange the book he holds. He has no clue why he stacked them this way, the smallest books on bottom and the largest on top. Didn’t the Egyptians teach him anything? Pyramids are the strongest structure. Not whatever this is. In a rapid movement, he attempts to flip them upside down.

But little Harry had forgotten about gravity. During his failed rotation, all the books tumbled down, crashing wildly on the ground. He looks down in embarrassment. He hears a few kids snicker and laugh as they walk around him, as if he is not even human.

Maybe he should just go back. Sure, he had no friends at his old school anymore, but how is that any different from here? At least he knew where he was going there. He feels angry tears welling in his eyes as he lowers himself on to the dirty, tiled floor.

“Oh no…” He whispers to himself as his hand touches the first book.

“Hi,” He hears a voice call from in front of him, “You alright?”

Harry laughs. He is not really sure why, but perhaps because the question was asked in the first place, when things were most obviously not alright. He drops his shoulder and sighs, “No, if we are being completely honest, no.”

It is obvious from Harry’s lowered view, his face still not looking at the figure, that whoever is helping Harry is trying to sneak a view of his face. So while still being really embarrassed, Harry slowly raises his head to grant the helper his request.

The first thing Harry sees is a book extended to him in the air. As he slowly moves his head up, the
book leads to a soft-looking hand, the hand leads to a **tanned from the summer** arm, the arm leads a torso which has a stripped t-shirt on it, and the torso leads to a face.

And on that face is the most beautiful smile Harry has ever seen. This boy does not even know Harry and his face shouts **home**. Harry’s heart was already pounding from anxiety, but when he sees those sea blue eyes with a fringe nearly covering them, everything calms. Does his heart actually stop? Maybe, but Harry could not tell with his minor ongoing social anxiety episode.

“Good,” The mystery figure chuckles in agreeance, “I like honest.”

*Maybe moving here wasn’t the worst thing that ever happened to me* Harry thought.

And that is the story of how Harry met Louis.

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Harry awakens from his flashback to lips upon his. But it is not the lips he wants.

Kendall pushes herself down upon Harry. Harry has kissed her so many time it feels highly familiar, but not right, not right at all.

Her hands spread across his chest, trying to undo the knotted tie and buttoned shirt.

“How do you want it?” He hears Louis’s voice say. His eyes jolt open, attempting to clarify what he just heard. There is Kendall in his sights plain as day.

“Come on baby, tell me,” Louis’s voice echoes again, but this time it comes from Kendall’s open mouth. *Oh god* Harry thinks *I’m literally going crazy in love.*

He closes his eyes hoping the illusion will soon disappear. He feels hands grab him by the wrist and place his hands on her back. But her strength feels a lot more… powerful than he remembers. As he his hands travel down her spine, the touch is very different. There are more hairs than he recalls her having, because she always was very meticulous about body grooming. And then his hands grope her ass, but her bum feels a lot thicker… and more muscular since the last time he touched her. Wait, he remembers this touch, a touch he has known for years. Louis. He is touching Louis.

No, Harry is with Kendall right now. He remembers coming home with her. These fantasies and daydreams are becoming too real. He runs his fingers back up her spine and feels the bra she wears, but the body itself still reminds Harry of Louis more than anything.

“Do you see anything you like?” He finally hears Kendall’s voice say. He graciously opens his eyes, ready to return to reality, but he does not believe what he sees.

Now he sees Louis, wearing her undergarments just as she was, as he holds himself sexually over Harry.

“I said, do you see anything you like?” Louis opens his mouth for Kendall’s voice to come out of.

Harry stares in fear of what he is seeing. He has lost it. He has literally lost it.

“Are you alright, Harry?” Louis with Kendall’s voice questions ominously.

“I don’t know,” Harry answers honestly.

“It’s all going to be okay,” Kendall’s voice echoes.
“I love you,” Louis’s voice finally comes out of his body. That is when it all matches up: the feel of Louis, the sight of Louis, and now the voice of Louis. This feels right. This is how it is supposed to be. Even if Louis looks a little weird in Kendall’s underwear, though Harry would not say Louis looked back in them.

But then Harry blinks, and Louis is gone and Kendall has taken his place. Well technically she has always been there, but Harry stares at her in disbelief.

“Didn’t you hear me?” She asks as she tries to kiss him once again.

“Ah!” Harry yelps as he knocks Kendall off of him. She falls onto the other side of the bed as he rolls onto the floor.

“Harry!” She hollers as he hops to his feet, “What’s wrong?!”

“Um, I don’t know how to explain…” Harry replies quickly as he zips his pants back up and tightens his belt.

“Well you have to!” She hisses, “Where you going?”

“This… this does not feel right anymore,” Harry answers while he rebuttons his shirt.

“Why?!” She screams, “What are you doing?”

“There’s somebody else,” Harry finally admits to himself and her.

“Who!?” Kendall shouts, “What’s her name?”

“No,” Is all Harry responds with as he backs out of her room.

As he slowly exits through her hallway, down the stairs, and through the front room, he can hear her screaming or crying, he cannot decipher which. Time moves in slow motion for Harry. Everything made sense until a few days ago.

Or did it? Did it really make sense or Harry only convince himself it did? Convince himself that Louis was his friend and friend only because it was easier for Harry that way. But ripping off all these band aids the past few days, and thinking about how easy everything else was with Louis. Maybe this is where it was always supposed to lead.

And as much as he would like to stay and comfort her, he knows there is nothing he can say to change what is happening. He does not love Kendall. Not anymore. Because…

“I’m in love with Louis Tomlinson…” Harry finally whispers to himself, outside, on the yard of Kendall’s home.

Holy shit that feels liberating. He says it again: I’m in love with Louis Tomlinson… And again, and again. Each time he chants it his volume gets a little louder. He takes a step with each saying, until he is under a street light, screaming it into the streets.

“I’M IN LOVE WITH LOUIS TOMLINSON,” Harry shouts for the world to hear.

“We get it!” Some older male yells from his porch, causing Harry to spin around, “Not what ya going to do about it?”

Shit what am I going to do about it? Harry thinks to himself as he looks down the dark street where he stands. Harry has fucked with Louis’s emotions so much the past few days, if not few years. He
cannot do this any longer. He has to fix this, and tell Louis this, and everything, and make Louis his and never frown again from Harry’s fault or doing.

“I’m going to tell him!” Harry yells to the gentleman he cannot clearly see in the darkness of the night.

“Then why the hell you screaming around here for? Go!” The man orders Harry.

Harry looks down the street, trying to decide which direction to go. But then he remembers he is going to Louis’s, and Harry knows how to get to Louis’s house from any point in this town. Because Louis’s home might as well be Harry’s.

That is when Harry starts to run. It begins as a trot, then a jog, then a run, and then a sprint because he cannot wait a further minute to be where he belongs. He has kept Louis waiting long enough, and Louis does not deserve another second of hold up.

One would think it would be hard to run in skinny black jeans and a button up shirt but Harry pushes through because he must push through. There are people that go through much more difficult struggles everyday than black skinny jeans. If they can pursue, so can he. And above all Louis deserves the best, and that is exactly what Louis is going to get. Though he does loosen his tie and unbutton his shirt a few notches because he does not want to be smelling like a pig when he arrives.

His face lighten and darkens with every passing of a street light, that much close to Louis’s how by every one of them.

“Wooooooo!” Harry hears a wolf or coyote howl from the edge of town. But all Harry can decipher is the beast calling “Looouuuuuuu!”

As he passes the Dillons general store, he sees flower pots stacked up outside the main door. *Louis Tomlinson deserves something, I can’t go there empty handed, maybe some of his favorite sweets* Harry thinks as slows down his pace while approaching the store. And Zayn works there so maybe he will be able to help Harry out.

Upon Harry’s first inspection the store seems rather empty, a checkout girl at one of the registers, but no one else really in sight. Harry will have to do this on his own.

As he passes past the flower stand, he knows he has to get Louis flowers. Louis at least deserves flowers.

“Watcha doing here Harry?” Zayn surprises Harry from behind, “A little late to be getting those for Kendall, don’t ya think? Or did you piss her off and need to make it up to her?"

“Oh, these aren’t for Kendall,” Harry states seriously, but not looking away at the many bouquets, still trying to find the perfect one for Louis, though Harry knows none will meet the expectations he has in mind.

“Then who are they for…” Zayn starts.

“Louis,” Harry answers.


“Yes, my Louis,” Harry looks at Zayn blankly.

“Yahoo!” Zayn shouts in victory, throwing his arm into the air, “I did it!”
“Did what?” Harry questions.

“Made you realize you’re in love in him!” Zayn grabs onto Harry by the cheeks to explain his point.

“I wouldn’t say you did…” Harry mumbles, which causes Zayn to cast a dark glare, “Fine, you played a main role.”

“That’s all I wanted to hear,” Zayn chuckles, “So you’re getting him flowers?”

“Of course,” Harry replies.

“Flowers? Just flowers?” Zayn repeats, “Louis deserves better than that. Especially with all the shit you put him through recently.”

“What do I do? Buy all of them? Also get his favorite candy?” Harry suggests.

“No, no, no. Come with me. We can do better that that,” Zayn orders, “Wait, still get some flowers and candy. It won’t hurt.”

Harry meets Zayn up at the checkout, to see Zayn pleading his case to his coworker.

“Please, two of my best friends are about to get together and I gotta make sure he doesn’t fuck it up,” Zayn begs to the woman behind the counter.

“Zayn, I’ve been working all day and just want to go home,” She answers, a tired strain in her voice.

“Please, I will cover two of your shifts,” Zayn offers.

“Zayn…” The woman whines.

“Three shifts,” He seeks to further entice her.

“Four, if it’s that important to you,” She finally concedes.

“Four?! Fine, four,” He sighs, “Thanks you Lydie.”

“Uh, Zayn, do you mind if I use your discount?” Harry squawks, breaking the tension between the two coworkers. Zayn glares at Harry, resenting what more he wants him.

“Put it on the counter,” Zayn growls.

“Now what?” Harry asks as he and Zayn walk away from the cashier after paying.

“Just getting on that,” Zayn replies as he pulls his phone out. And who else would he call but his fiancé.

“Hey babe… Are you still with the gang?… Nick and Eleanor have left but you’re still with Liam. Great, that makes this a lot easier… Yeah so guess who I have here. Harry say hi,” Zayn command as he shoves the phone in Harry’s face.

“Uh hey Niall it’s me Harry,” Harry awkwardly squeaks.

“Now he’s going to tell you why he’s here,” Zayn says bringing the phone back to his face, and then returning it to Harry’s.

“Um, I’m going to tell Louis I love him and want him to be mine,” Harry states a little more
confident.

“WHAT?!” Both Harry and Zayn hear Niall yell through the phone.

“I know!” Zayn squeals, taking the phone back, “We did it baby. We did it.”

“Not yet,” Harry points out, “Louis still has to say yes to me.”

“That’s right,” Zayn exclaims, “So can you and Liam come get me and Harry. Harry needs help. He wanted to get Louis only flowers. Right?! Only flowers. Idiot.”

“Zayn?” Harry reminds Zayn, “Kind of on a timetable here.”

“Yeah,” Zayn comments, “So get Liam and your cute little ass here. ASAP.”

Zayn hangs up his phone, as him and Harry sit down on the curb of the street waiting for the other half of the group to appear. But Harry has doubts about what he can do.

“How can I ask him to stay Zayn?” Harry questions, “I’m literally asking him to give up Europe. You remember when he was younger, only wanting to leave this town.”

“Yes Harry, he has wanted to leave,” Zayn agrees, “But he’s rushing his leaving process to escape his feelings for you. His original goal was for us to leave all at once and see the world together. Show Louis he has a whole new world for him right here, being yours.”

“A whole new world…” Harry mumbles, “I think I have an idea Zayn.”

“What is it?” Zayn prods for an answer.

“It does not matter if the other boys cannot help, let’s wait to ask them,” Harry responds.

A few minutes later, Niall’s rustic truck pulls up in front of the two boys on the ground. Niall and Liam hop out to join, thus bringing Harry and Zayn to their feet.

“So what’s the plan?” Niall asks.

“First,” Harry hugs the three guys in a group hug, “Thank you. I mean, I definitely wanted to punch one of you tonight,” Harry’s hand braces against Liam’s back, “But I probably would have been in denial for God know how’s long, so thank you.”

“It was not completely selfless,” Liam mentions, “We did not want to lose each other as well.”

“I know,” Harry replies, “But it’s my fault we were almost driven to breaking apart. Even if it hurt, I needed this, so thank you.”

“It was our pleasure. Not going to deny, it was kind of fun planning it all,” Zayn laughs.

“And Liam?” Harry asks as they all pull away from the hug.

“Yeah mate?” Liam responds.

“Is there anything going on… between you and Louis?” Harry articulates weakly.

“He’s all yours,” Liam gleams.

“So now what?” Niall interrupts.
“Well I have an idea, and I need all of you for it. Niall, can we use the back of your truck to store what I want to use?” Harry asks.

“Of course, but what are you going to put back there?” Niall inquires.

Harry dodges the question, “Zayn, You keep all the props you made from set design, right?”

“Yeah, I demanded it. There’s a storage closet backstage that holds them. The key to it is on my keychain. But I don’t have a key to get into the school itself,” Zayn explains.

“Liam, you got a key to school, correct? That you have from being editor-in-chief for the journalism department?” Harry redirects his attention to Liam.

“Yes…” Liam mumbles, “But I’m not supposed to use it for any other reason…”

“Gawddamnit Liam,” Zayn curses, “This is one of the times it’s okay to break to rules. We’ve come so far and done so much, we can’t stop now. What are you going to do Harry?”

“Going to show Louis he can see the world with me,” Harry gleams, “Let’s go.”

Under to cover of darkness, the boys drive to their high school, sneak in, and remove all of Harry’s desired props, and disappear into the night without the being detected.

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Louis and Lottie lay upon her bed watching Aladdin. Not exactly an I don’t need no man movie, but maybe Louis wanted to watch it due to its exotic landscape and the movie containing the innocent belief in happy endings. He may not be going to the Middle East, but he will soon be going to a whole new world and that gives him hope.

“Louis?! The two hear Jay yell. They listen to her enter Louis's room, stand for a second, and then charge back into the hallway.

“Lottie! Do you know where Louis is at?! Jay shouts as she marches to her room, but Lottie was smart enough to lock her door this time.

Louis and Lottie jump to their feet, unsure why their mother appears so concerned. With her drugs already safely hidden, they quickly move to the door and let her in.

“Mom, I’m right here. What’s going on?” Louis questions, trying to calm her down.

“You need to look out your window, right now,” She commands, pulling him down the hallway by his arm.

He stumbles into his room by the force of her push. He walks to his windowsill, expecting either Niall, Zayn, or Liam to be doing something stupid to cheer him up.

“What do you-“ Louis begins to bark as he pokes his head outside from his second-story bedroom, but then he sees a sight to choke off his voice.

All over his yard, there stands settings and props from well-known plays and choir shows performed at his school: an Eiffel Tower, Pagoda towers from Japan, the Himalayan mountain tops, the Pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx, Big Ben from London, Irish Castles, the skyline of New York, the beaches of the Mediterranean, and majestic mosques.

All of this is lighten by the porch light of the house. Though weak, in the darkness of the night it
does well to brighten all needed. Harry stands in the middle of this display, holding a bouquet of red and white flowers and a megaphone which the school’s acting director would use for plays. Behind him, he can see Niall, Zayn, and Liam leaning against Niall’s truck parked on the street. Though their smiles shine bright, none smile brighter than Harry’s.

“Louis Tomlinson!” Harry shouts in the megaphone, “I love you!”

Louis let’s out a small laugh from how ridiculous this situation is, but also from relief that his feelings are not irrational. *It’s mutual.*

“I know I’ve kind of messed things up recently, but Maybe It Was You from the Start! Actually, I know it was you from the start,” Harry happily exclaims.

Louis looks up at his friends behind Harry and sees them nod, knowing what Harry said to be true.

“I know you want to leave here and see the world, but I can’t imagine a world where you are not in my world, so I brought it all to you,” Harry explains as he points at the various settings placed upon Louis’s front yard, "For now we can see the world together, right here in this town."

“I can see that,” Louis laughs, his body leaning so far out his window he is a little worried he could topple down any minute.

“Look, I brought the globe to you. All I want you to do for me, if you can still see a place with us in your future, is come down those steps and meet me here. That’s all I ask of you, please,” Harry pleads to Louis, “We can figure everything else out from there.”

Louis steps away from the window and contemplates in his room. Both Jay and Lottie stare at him like he is insane.

“What are you doing?!” Lottie hollers, “He’s down there waiting for you!”

“I’m just trying to figure out what shoes to put on…” Louis mumbles.

“You don’t ever wear shoes!” Lottie reminds him.

“Louis,” Jay says motheringly as she places her hands upon his shoulders, “You deserves this. I know it’s scary to actually get what you always wanted, feeling so bad for so long, but you deserve to be happy.”

“I do?” Louis questions seriously.

“More than anyone,” Jay agrees, “Now go.”

Louis nods as he hops between Lottie and Jay and runs for the hallway. Of course forgetting his shoes because Harry Styles is more important than slipping on sneakers.

By the time Louis reaches the staircase from the end of his hallway, he is surprised by an unexpected sight. Harry is already half way up the stairs by the time Louis appears. They both freeze where they are at and stare at one another in a moment of silence.

“I was coming,” Louis admits, feeling out of breath at the presence of Harry.

“I know,” Harry grins with those big dimples, “But I couldn’t wait a second longer.”

Out of pure joy, Louis does something without thinking. He leaps into Harry’s arms, but that may not be the best idea on a staircase. Harry attempts to balance the change in weight, but both
eventually tumble down the stairs together.

At the bottom of the staircase, Louis lands on top of Harry, their faces easily lined up with the other.

“Perhaps I should have thought that through,” Louis comments as he attempts to go in for a kiss.

“Not here, not here. Wait!” Harry commands while he pulls Louis and himself to their feet. Harry then drags Louis out of the middle of the front lawn.

Both of their hearts pump so fast as the adrenaline surges through their bodies. The world spins around them while they gaze into each other’s eyes.

Finally both of them think as everything behind them begins to blur. Yes Harry bringing the world to Louis was a beautiful gesture. But Louis does not need any of that. He only needs the thing right in front of him: Harry.

“You ready for a whole new adventure,” Harry asks as he pulls Louis closer to him.

“It’s not going to be easy,” Louis replies honestly.

“We’ll be worth every second it,” Harry states, drawing his lips close to Louis’s.

And finally their lips clash. It may not be their first kiss, but it is the first of its kind. Because Harry is finally letting this feel like love more than a repressed fling. And for Louis, even though he has been kissing Harry like this before, this time Harry is kissing him back to way he always wanted. Not to be used for sexual pleasure, but Harry absorbs everything that Louis is, and he cannot get enough. The early morning dew under Louis’s bare feet makes him feel like he is walking on water. Their tongues slide into each other’s mouth like they have returned home.

The world spins, all of the settings revolving around them, as Niall, Zayn, and Liam in the background clap for the new couple. Their family is saved and whole again.

“What are we?” Louis must ask.

“I don’t fucking care as long as you're mine,” Harry replies, desperate for Louis to kiss him once again.

“I love you,” Louis proclaims, praying to God for a different response than the last time he said it.

“I love you too,” Harry agrees sweetly.

And that is the story of how Louis got Harry, and Harry got Louis.

Chapter End Notes

I really hope you all enjoyed that:) I'm sorry if some are disappointed we don't get to see Harry and Louis interacting as a couple, but the point of the story was how they got each other, and Niall and Zayn's relationship is kind of meant show how couples interact post-chase. Plus Louis and Hary were often very coupley without declaring it in much of the story. If it wasn't clear, I put a lot of Wizard of Oz symbolism in the story. Zayn is Dorothy, Niall is the Scarecrow, Liam is the Tinman, Harry is the Cowardly Lion, and Louis is the Wizard and briefly the Wicked Witch.
Looking back and as I got to understand the boys more throughout the time I was writing this, I feel like Harry and Louis’s character’s should have been switched. Though I like the portrayal of a more vulnerable Louis, I don’t know, I feel like in real life Harry realized his feelings for Louis before Louis did for him, and Harry appears the most emotionally aware of the boys. And I know I didn’t take into account Zayn leaving the group... I already had so much of the plot decided before he decided to leave, it would have been really hard to incorporate that into the story. It would have changed so much.

Because there is a legitimate reason why I wrote this. When I started writing this story, I was undergoing a really rough breakup, and I wanted to believe in happy endings again. So even if I couldn't have the happy ending I wanted in my own life, at least I could make one happen somewhere else. That's why I wrote this. To believe in something again even when life tells us not too. Zayn's story line was the show there are happy endings in the world, just not the ones you thought they would be. Especially when Louis decides to leave for Europe, showing happy endings are not always people. I also liked showing all the boys fluid sexualities. Only Louis and Zayn say they’re gay, the rest of them never really declare what they are and I think we need more of that in the world. Liam was hetero-romantic while still being sexually attracted to men, while Niall and Harry could be assumed to be bi or pansexual, whatever you could see them being

I perhaps am going to make a one-shot smutty sequel at some point, probably taking place a year or two after the end of this story, just showing where life is taking them into the future. (A friend of mine asked for it since I didn't fully deliver on one of the tags). I don’t know if it will come to be or when, so if you are interested, make sure to subscribe to me and see if it ever comes!

If you liked my writing style in this story, I wrote a new one called "Letters to You" which is focused on Ziall at university with some dashes of Zouis and Larry. This is not a sequel nor related to my first story at all, though I wrote this because I really enjoyed writing Ziall’s dynamic in my first story so I wanted to expand on what their dynamic could look like in a different situation. This fic, while mostly in 3rd person, does include a series of letters written by Niall that put much of the story into 1st person narrative. Normally I hate reading 1st person stories, especially for fan fictions because it feels weird to me to write a real person’s thoughts out loud, but given the format of reading letters much of the story is in first-person.

Anyways, thank you all so much for reading this. All the fan support meant so much and motivated me to keep up this story even when my motivation was drained. I really could not have done this without you and our interaction mean more than I can explain to you. As I’ve said before, my tumblr url is on my profile (polydirecton.tumblr.com) so of course I will suggest to follow that. Love you all.

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