Animal

by sexystylinson

Summary

written by SS98 and all credit goes to the wonderful writer ss98

The devil is real and he isn't a little red man with horns and a tail. He can be beautiful because he is a fallen angel and he used to be God's favourite. Harry has a condition that disallows him to feel physical pain. For a man thriving on fear and resistance from his victims - his prey - Harry is not prepared for the affections of a witty and ignorant Louis. "Are you afraid?"

"You won't hurt me."

"Yes I will." Harry loses himself to the darkness that swallows his brutality and rigid anger, but he needs Louis to be his anchor. His sanity. "There is no one else now. You can only love me, feel for me as I do for you. What I am is too lost, too disturbed to retrieve. Do you
understand? You've done something to me and I don't want it to stop, so you can never leave me again. You are just mine now. Mine."

written by ss98 and shoutout to louvee on ao3 for sending me this fanfic as i fucked up the download on my phone

Notes

written by ss98. i have nothing to do with this fanfic and yes i am allowed to post her works

See the end of the work for more notes
chapter one

*NARRATOR’S POVs*

Even a baby can be dangerous when given a sharp scalpel.

It began where the conventional and cliché stories all began: high school.

Louis was eighteen and ready to graduate with a month left of secondary education books before the big leagues, aka college. He was a straight A student without nerdy glasses and the bullies. He had a routine. He woke up at 05h59 and shut off his alarm before it went off. After a shower and brushing his teeth, he had a breakfast of Cheerios or buttered toast if he's feeling frisky that morning.

He lived alone, no parents or siblings to pester him about the lack of a partner or friends because they were dead. Tragic train wreck when they all went into a subway for the first time, that accident is also the cause of a malicious scar in his side.

Louis took the bus every morning to school or to the pet shop he worked in. He genuinely loved his school because nobody ever touched him, it was a firm ‘to each their own’ basis around here. But then November 11th came around.

It was the perfect winter's day in Middleton. The snow met the icy tar and pavement like old friends after a drought. It really was a drought in Louis's mind, he's missed the snow flakes so much. He enjoyed walking extra slow to school on days like this, waking up a half hour earlier just to make up for the time.

Their school was open for today, since the snow just started, but would probably be closed tomorrow. That's great because Louis needed an extra day for his Trig test.

The principal droned on about their morning announcements that Louis didn't listen to. It would appear in the circulars they handed out at the admin anyway, so he kept his earphones in playing Ariana Grande's *Santa Tell Me*.

French. Algebra. English. He grabbed those books from his locker and neatly slid the excess ones back in. People called him metrosexual for being so neat and tidy, taking care of himself and never letting go. He was gay though. Happily gay and lonely.

He felt the stiff silence fall across their hallways but chose to ignore it. The Populars probably arrived. Damn idiots with money and no brain. God was giving people intelligence while they were probably eating in the back.

Taking his earphones out, he slotted them into his satchel and grabbed a blank notebook. One of five in his locker. His first class was in the building next to this one, so Louis had a six minute walk ahead of him before he got to his seat at the back of French class.

He estimates about two songs can be enjoyed that walk - maybe one and a half if you ignore the bridge and final chorus. Popping his headphones back in, Louis begins the trek to Building B. He has to cut across the parking lot to get there in time to be there before the teacher, which he does. Halfway complete his journey, Louis decides to look up and shut out the catchy rhythm of *Karma Chameleon*. In the brief fifteen second gap, he catches a glimpse of a fairly pretty female exiting a Range Rover from the passenger's side. There's no smile to the hidden driver or
wave, she just stumps off so that's probably a parent of hers driving.

Louis' ridiculous chuckle is cut short when the second door opens and the person previously behind the steering wheel exits hastily. Another fifteen seconds is spent observing this new person.

*Definitely not her father,* is Louis' first thought. He tightens his hand around the strap of his Totem backpack and takes in this perfect stranger's features.

On the outside he is less than approachable but not revolting, at least not to Louis. Louis knows revolting.

This boy - man? Maybe he's in his early twenties - is wearing a 'SWEARING IS BIG AND CLEVER' hoodie with black jeans that are ripped at the knees. Louis never understood that style. Not much can be seen of his face from this distance, except that he has perfectly pale skin and dark eyes. Louis can't see any tattoos, mainly because his body is entirely covered by cloth, but if the furious expression on his face is anything to go by, it's safe to say this individual is not friendly.

His hair, Louis decides is his favourite feature. It's straight and stopped at his shoulders but curled a little at the tips. It was damp from a fresh wash and Louis stops thinking about what brand of shampoo he thinks this stranger uses. So he's the girl's boyfriend. That would make lots of sense. He's attractive, yes, but Louis knows his boundaries.

Louis watches, forsaking another half minute and a song change, as he gives girlfriend something. Her cellphone. He says nothing to her and nor she to him. He storms back to the awaiting vehicle with powerful strides, knocking several students and a teacher in the shoulder. Louis recognises that teacher and panics. His French teacher.

Before he can glance down at his watch and take off in a sprint that will have him shaving off free time, he manages to unintentionally capture his subject's attention. The man from the Range Rover just glances to his left, glowering at everyone and everything, and his stormy orbs get hooked on Louis' peaceful blue ones.

Louis turns pale, maybe even green, from the persistent staring and steps back like the added distance will put his mind at ease. It doesn't only because the man across the yard from him stops walking just to tilt his head curiously at Louis.

Fighting the urge to collapse right then and there, Louis swallows and lifts his fingers just a little to signal a short wave. An awkward, stiff wave that has the newest of Louis' acquaintances frowning deeper. That is the end of all Louis' courage today and he decides to quit while he's not exchanging words. His French teacher is a few feet from him so he simply turns on his heel and takes off down the open hallway to the correct classroom.

The stranger doesn't haunt Louis' mind for the rest of the day, but he regrets that he wasted so much time that morning on him. Waving at a complete stranger, officially Louis' dumbest move. Across town, at AKA Bar where lone rangers from everywhere and cross country travellers all come to get lost in the booze of life, Harry was drowning his second Scotch - no rocks - in his usual seat. Two Scotches and two vodka shots were his limit.

Earlier that day he and Gemma had fought. It was right after breakfast when she forgot her assignment in the basement - that's where she usually did her projects even though it was Harry's room - and went to fetch it. She uncovered one of Harry's less desirable hobbies wrapped in a few dog towels and pushed under his bed.
He remained calm and asked why she was snooping around when all she had to do was get her
damn stuff. She argued that wasn't the point and even shoved him a little.  
*Shoved.*

Harry got angry then because nobody's touched him so angrily or with such intent in years. He
didn't hit her, because she was still his sister. Simply, he dragged her - kicking and protesting - to
the basement and explained exactly why he bashed the head of thirty-something year old man in.
It was no *thrilling* experience or adrenaline-induced fit. He was tightly wound all the time
and felt ready to combust painfully if he didn't release some knots.

This was one way: torture. Each time he did it he felt lighter and more at ease. He visited lady
friends sometimes but they didn't work out too well and neither did the slutty boy-men. He
fucked the way he felt. Hard and rough, ignoring the pained protests of his sexual partners. He
was merciless because nobody gave him mercy, granted him the benefit of the doubt so why
should he be any better?

"Anything else, sweetie?" The kind bartender he never learnt the name of asks as she wipes her
hands.

He shakes his head and drops a flap of bills before leaving. Thinking about where to go and what
to do, Harry let's his mind wander to this morning at Gemma's school. Where he saw Blue Eyes.
He knew they were blue because they were striking in appeal all the way from across the bloody
parking lot.

It was odd, what happened then. The boy waved and ran off like he was telling Harry *later we'll meet.* Maybe they could, Harry would like to entertain the idea that this particular boy
isn't a total waste like everyone else. He looked like someone who will make a difference, try
hard to accomplish something. Yet he was swathed in sweet innocence. Nobody who has been to
to the dark side of life and returned looks like that, full of naivety and ignorance.

Harry liked people like that. He *loved* people like that.

He'd have to take care of Gemma, make sure she really followed through with her promise not to
mention anything to anyone about his cravings for overkill.

*So that's how it begun on November 11th.*

Harry didn't stalk Louis, but did insist it was fate that made them stumble across each other
almost everyday. Louis was nervous at first, blushing often uncontrollably like when they
'bumped' into each other at Tesco the day after the parking lot incident. Harry says it that way
because it wasn't at all a coincidence, he had been parked outside Louis' house for two hours
waiting for him to make a move.

He had underestimated Louis' observational skills because Louis knew he was there all that time,
and it was oddly flattering to him. People like Louis were rare, bordering on extinct. People
didn't like this kind of attention, but Louis wanted all the attention he could get from this
beautiful stranger.

Harry stuck to the pasta isle when Louis was in the frozen good section. The boy knew he was there, just smirked and moved along like he didn't notice. Harry was practically screaming
"*See me!*”

Eventually Louis genuinely forgot he was being watched and strolled into the candy isle for
more Cadbury, when Harry decided to confront him. He always got what he wanted, and didn't
bother with whether he was forward or not. He wanted to be noticed now by this pretty boy, so he'd be able to say there was some semblance of claiming.

"Hello."

Harry came across as too abrupt at first, shocking Louis into dropping the slabs in his hands. It was the most uncomfortable few minutes of Harry's life, and to this day he wishes he'd have said something else or smiled at least.

He waited for Louis to pick up what had fallen, pained frown on his forehead all the while. "Uh. H-Hi." Louis stutters.

Harry tilts his head to the left, just like he had in the parking lot. "What's your name?" Louis was a coward, and he was playing a game too big earlier by being stupidly oblivious by act. "L-Louis. T-Tomlinson. Louis T-Tomlinson."

"Styles."

"What?"

"Harry Styles. My name."

"Oh!" Louis might have created crumbs in the pasta packet he was holding. Damn fettucini. "You have a nice name."

Harry smirks to expose one of two dimples and absorb the nerves Louis sent out in hoards. The boy's cheeks turned pink and he couldn't bite his lip to suppress his smile fast enough. "Are you here with someone?" Harry asks for formalities.

"I think you know that answer, Harry." Louis seems to be going off some confidence reserves, dumping everything in his shopping basket gracelessly.

Harry's taken aback by that answer. "You are.....observant."

"Thank you."

There was something Harry still didn't understand. Why was this Louis so calm and not running away, piercings screams following him? He was standing in front of Harry with that permanent blush and soft smile that made Harry so fucking hungry for it.

"I don't understand." Harry keeps his gaze following Louis' even when the boy looked away. He was fully enthralled by this perfect shade of blue.

Louis doesn't say anything, deepening his smile into a cute laugh. Harry wants to grab him and do an obscene amount of dirty things to him because of that sound.

They were both too forward about this, both being such different but so similar in personalities. Harry was going to take and Louis was willing to give everything. From Day One.

"How do you go to school?" Harry blurts.

Louis frowns at the odd question but answers anyway, unable to resist the cloak of deepening hard emotions in those emerald eyes. "Bus. I walk sometimes."

Harry nods, hands shoved so deeply into his pockets that it should hurt but it doesn't. He never feels pain, never could. Never has he wished that he could though, having congenital analgesia is
the best thing that's ever happened to him. Now, he's a victim of passion. Passion for pain and suffering, loves to witness it come from other people so he gets a glimpse of what it should be like. When they scream, it's a thick steam that comes out through their mouths. He lives for that steam, the moment of a person's final gasp.

Upon looking up, he sees that Louis isn't there anymore. He panics for the first time in a long time, glancing around him frantically.

What if someone else found him? Snatched up Louis' glorious attentiveness while Harry was lost in his head. He doesn't want that, not before he got his chance. He took large strides to cover the ground of the store, and found Louis at the cashier, smiling at the tired man behind the till. Harry hated the scene.

"What happened?" He doesn't touch Louis, but he still stands as close as he can to him. Louis is surprised by Harry's sudden turn up and takes a moment after his gasp to calm his breathing.

"Louis?" Lou. Harry wanted to call him Lou.

"You uh...stopped talking."

Louis paid for his groceries and accepted the stocked packet. Harry followed suit, not done with this conversation yet after glaring at the cashier. He hated him. Bob is what the name tag read. Fucking Bob. Louis was supposed to be with him but this idiot was smiling too long, too much and it kept Louis there.

"What?" Harry let's the door hit his arm, not flinching or hissing because it didn't hurt. "You stopped talking after I answered you. Looked like you were a thousand miles away so I left." Louis shrugs, walking in the direction of his home with Harry in tow.

"Oh," Harry curses himself mentally. "Well, I want to drive you to school."

"That's very kind." Louis smiles, a real smile that Harry commits to memory. "But we don't know each other."

"I want to know you."

"I would like to know you too, Harry."

"So let me drive you to school."

Louis actually laughs at him, not in a rude way. "You're cute."

"What?"

"You're cute. A bit hasty, but cute."

"Why am I hasty?"

"Because you're offering to drive me to school when you don't know me. I could be a kidnapper."

Harry does laugh at that, but it held too much truth on the opposite end to be funny for too long. "You're not a kidnapper."

"Yeah but-"
"Let me drive you to school, Louis."

"No, Harry."

Harry's jaw clenches up and it's an admirable feat of beauty that Louis wants to touch, caress over and over.

"Will you think about it?" Harry asks instead.

"Um....maybe."

"How long will you take?"

Louis crosses the road laughing over his shoulder. "Goodnight, Harry!"

Harry deflates from his unexplained defeat and retires to his car. He tried, and he'd try again the next day.

He waited in his Range Rover the entire night for fucking Bob to get off his shift. When Bob finally did, it was two in the morning and Harry has never had such a lazy victim before. He was almost going to give Bob a head start just to mock him as he ran.

Harry got him in the back of his van with chloroform wrapped around his mouth and nose. When he got home, he stripped down to his boxers and put the stove on. He used his special pot and filled it with water and olive oil before setting it to boil. Harry watched until the first bubble rose and popped, then he went to get Bob from the car outside.

His playroom was next to his bedroom, not hidden in anyway but always locked with a double bolt. Bob was strapped down before Harry lifted the cloth and slapped him, urging him to wake up faster. The man stirred and groaned from a heavy head.

"What- Who the fuck-"

"Shut up." Harry growls. "Open your mouth."

Naturally, Bob keeps his lips sealed and added a challenge for Harry. He used dental clips to open Bob's mouth and keep it that way.

"Know why you're here, Bob?"

Bob can't shake his head or say anything, he's already choking on his own saliva. "You're here because I met someone today. Yesterday, actually. He's beautiful and I'd like to know him better. Me. Thing is, you were chatting him up too which isn't allowed, Bob. I don't like people touching my things."

Harry turns his back to pull out the tray of instruments he's collected over the years, humming a familiar tune as he picked up the scalpel. He rinsed it in alcohol and went back over to a squirming and sobbing Bob.

"Stop crying. Be a man." Harry rips open Bob's uniform down the center like they do in autopsies.

Cursing when he realises he's forgotten the customary apple, Harry leaves the room to check on the pot and grab one from his suspended fruit basket. He rushes back to Bob, the full-on hysterical man with tears and snot messing his face.
"Tell me, Bob." Harry straps his wrist down, aiming for that section first. "What part of you wanted Louis when you saw him?"

Harry drops the scalpel for a bigger kitchen knife, sharpened to a point and Harry's favourite instrument for times like these.

"Your dick?" He presses the tip of his knife to the flat front of Bob's underwear. "No?" Harry laughs humourlessly when he shifts the blade to Bob's chest, digging in deeper so a couple drops of blood peak out at him. "Your heart?"

Harry drags the length of the blade down Bob's middle, leaving a bright red gash in his wake. "Your soul?"

When he gets to Bob's throat, the overweight man starts to thrash about. "Your mind then? Is that it?"

Harry sighs and thinks about making it quick for this man. Instead, he goes back to Bob's wrist and he re-uses the scalpel to slice a neat block.

"Looking forward to go home and just wank in the shower to thoughts of him?" Harry bites his lip as he concentrates, ignoring the screeches coming from this blob of prey. "You still live with your mom, don't you?" Harry shakes his head, removing the skin skilfully to reveal the chunk of vibrant meat. "Pathetic."

Bob is a mess on the steel examination table under the harsh UV light shining on his face. The stubble on his chin is prickly and scratches his baby skin. His bottom lip quivers as he succumbs to the most embarrassing reaction to fear.

"Fucking really, Bob?" Harry shouts, voice as cold as ice. "Lucky for you bed-wetters, I had a drain installed. For now you have to just lie there."

Bob screws his eyes shut as a second round of horrid pain pierces through his body from his forearm. He screams but Harry turns his radio up to The 1975 and nobody hears a thing. Harry removes a beautiful chunk of flesh from his arm, Bob having passed out long ago from the incredulous pain.

He slapped it on a plate, easily excited by the wet slurp it makes and he cuts a piece of his green apple with the bloodied knife so the prickly sweet taste of the apple is laced with the sour hint of blood DNA.

It took two weeks for Louis to give in and let Harry drive him to school. Two weeks of the hardest part of Harry's life. There was no dating or developing relationship, just Harry being his forward and demanding self that amused Louis. It finally came to a head at the laundromat where Louis was taking care of business.

Harry doesn't know if his staring creeps Louis out even though he can't help it, so he decides to ask. Out of the blue while Louis inserts the correct amount of coins into the machine, Harry appears.

"Do I scare you?" Harry asks, not an ounce of hesitation or respect for privacy in his voice. "My presence, I mean."

"Hello to you too, stranger." Louis blows his fringe out of his face and dumps his cup of detergent.
Harry waits.

"Uh...no, you don't scare me."

"Why not?" Harry steps closer as if trying to feed off Louis' words as they came out. "Are you trying to? You're very cryptic."

"Is that what you think?"

Louis shrugs.

"I'm sorry." It tastes bitter on Harry's tongue and surprises Louis' ears. Harry's never apologised before, it was a weakness to him. "I'm not cryptic. You can ask me any question and I'll answer it.

"Okay. Sit down first." Louis pats the empty plastic seat next to him. Harry obeys and sits with a straight back. "Do you have a job?"

That's a tough one. "Not one that pays."

Louis nods in understanding. "So an internship?"

"No. Can I drive you to school now?"

"Well, I think they closed the grounds a few hours ago but-"

"Tomorrow, I mean." Harry chuckles, effortlessly for Louis.

"Why do you want to?"

It's Harry's turn to shrug.

"Promise me you're not going to murder me and dump me somewhere." Louis sticks out his pinkie finger.

Harry can't help the pleased twitch in the corners of his mouth as he links their pinkies together. "You have my word."

On the first day Harry drove Louis to school, it was without Gemma. Louis asked where she was and Harry didn't answer, something he did often when stubborn. Louis sighed and got out of the car, anticipating eight schooling hours when Harry rolled down the window between them.

"She's out of town." Harry answered him. It was partly true. Gemma will be out of town, after Harry makes the trip today to dump the dog towels.

Louis nods and steps away from the monstrous vehicle, waving once at Harry before jogging towards the staircase.

He contemplates his life choices as he hummed to Sam Smith by his locker. This could be his worst, and he's made some pretty nasty ones. Letting a man he's known two weeks drive him to school every morning, after lying to him that he had a car pool every afternoon.

Louis didn't see any harm in knowing Harry though, as a friend or more for that matter. He's been shoved into blankets of horrid event all his life, so a little bit more sinister ruling won't do him any good or bad.

Louis was different. Not violently so or drastically unbalanced chemically but he's been studying criminology since turning ten, and fell in love with the depth of killers' minds. It was gruelling
but fascinating at the same time.

That is exactly why he took Harry’s confession lightly three days later. Harry had asked Louis to come for dinner, cooked by himself. It wasn’t a propositional question, more like a statement. "Do you hate me?" Harry asks as soon as Louis’ ready to get out of the car. He had been doing his homework on the trip here because last night got lost talking to Harry over the phone. "No, Harry. Do you want me to?"

No. "Yes."

Louis frowns at him. "Is something wrong?"

"I'm cooking tonight. I'll pick you up at seven."

Louis’ eyebrows fly up to greet his fringe. "Do I get a choice?"

Harry shakes his head.

"Well then." Louis grabs his bag from the back and opens the door. "See you at seven."

It was a tad frustrating for Louis these days. Life in general, that is. Knowing Harry meant altering the routine had had for everyday. He still woke up at 05h30 but he had to wait around for Harry for at least an hour - during which he did the homework he’d skipped the night before because of Harry. But when Louis got horribly late one morning, he cut that schedule in half. Now, he slept at six - no exceptions - and woke up at two every morning. He used his little gym in the attic for an early workout before showering, completing all work and getting ready for school.

The day of Harry's dinner was the day new transfers showed up at school. Louis didn't care because lots of people wanted to come here, so he put his earphones on and turned on The 1975 - Harry’s recommendation. In the midst of subtly bobbing his head, someone slapped him. He reared his head to see who the offending asshole was, a hand braced against the reddening skin of his cheek.

"Didn't see ya there, mate." An obnoxious idiot with cow-chewing methods for bubblegum was in his face.

Louis backed up and hit his head on the closed locker door. He huffed and turned back around, not at all willing to fight a hooligan with grey eyes and blond hair.

"Oye." The same intruder tapped his shoulder. "I'm talking to you."

"Still?" Probably not the best thing he could have said right then to Trevor Golding, resident bully in Cleveland who moved here.

Louis gets pushed around a lot that day, mainly to the ground before his books follow after. He picks himself up each time and walks away, just plainly irritated by the nerve of some people. He lays a complaint with the principal and Trevor gets his transfer card back after the bruises are displayed, ready to be shipped out.

Harry pulled up in front of Louis' house at 18h58 and stood at the door until it was 19h00. Louis let him, standing on the other side and smirking bemusedly at the wood. Harry knocked once and Louis promptly opened it.

"What the fuck happened?"
Harry's practised smile falls to the graveyard this neighbourhood was probably built on. He’s been in the car on the way here trying to curve his lips the right way after remembering that he’s never really smiled at Louis before. Absurd, he knows.

Louis didn't try hiding the bruise by his eye because why should he? Harry wasn't his boyfriend who was going to go after them and beat them in his name. Harry was the man Louis met formally in Tesco and they had a strange blossoming friendship, according to him. "Um..." Louis doesn't get his turn to speak when Harry's on him suddenly, examining the mark.

"Get off please."

Harry let's a flitter of anger come to light, warning Louis not to protest when Harry touched him. Holding his breath, Louis holds his tongue. Harry goes on a dare and applies a light amount of pressure to the purple bruise, in awe of how Louis' face scrunches up a bit.

That evening is the most outstanding of Louis' life. He's never known about a person like he can communicate with Harry without many words. Harry cooks and Louis sits on the counter, watching quietly.

"Here." Harry was cutting a cucumber, and took two slices away from the rest.

"Thanks." Louis pops them both into his mouth and watches Harry's head shake. "What?"

"Don't eat it." Harry taps his chin with his index finger. It's innocent, Louis swears.

Louis gazes speculatively at him until Harry blows out a loud breath and drops the knife in his hand.

"Close your eyes." He instructs.
"But-"

"Close 'em."

Louis pouts but obliges, his wet bottom lip sticking out as he waits. Harry forgets what he intended to do at first, just stops to stare at the childish boy in his kitchen with small hands and a wonderful mind. He reaches out and instinctively brushes his thumb along the protruding lip, making Louis suck it back in along with a breath.

Harry memorised the little veins running along the pink cushion, entranced by the fragile patience of this boy.

Snapping back to reality, Harry clears his throat and takes two more slices to place on Louis' eyes. He adds finesse and takes a moment extra to just brush Louis' skin delicately. "Do it." Louis whispers and Harry feels the ghost air touch his mouth.

"Do what?" Harry held Louis' neck in both his hands, not pressing but just touching sweetly. "I know you want to kiss me. So do it."

Harry knows this is dangerous. Too dangerous. Wanting to kiss someone, just for the benefit of light affection was always a sign of emotion. Harry didn't want those. He was enraptured by a boy in high school and he wanted to know him better, make sure this boy had some flaws that Harry would hate. He was shown up when Louis possessed no such traits, and Harry began to develop a consideration for this smaller male.

"No." Harry pushed him away. "I don't."
Louis moves the damned cucumbers to look at Harry in the eye. "Okay."

Harry peered at him through frosted vision of confusion and debatable envy. "What?" "Okay."

"What's okay?"

"That you don't want to kiss me." Louis was a little hurt but it would die off by tomorrow morning.

"But...don't you hate me?"

"For not wanting to kiss me? No, you idiot. You find me unappealing, I can't force you to change your mind."

"You're not unappealing."

"Thanks." Louis puts the cucumbers back in place. "Means a lot."

Harry hated himself. Louis was openly willing to give him something he's wanted for days now but Harry turned him down. Now Louis wasn't going to believe him. Time for Plan B then.

"Louis?"

"Harold?"

Harry didn't even flinch at the disgusting name. "I'm going to fuck you."

Louis chokes on the cucumber he'd given up on and started eating. "Uh...when you say-"

"But I want to show you something first."
*NARRATOR'S POV*

Louis' heart is pounding, repelling against the constricting walls of his ribcage. He's nervous, anxious and a little afraid all rolled into one fiasco. Nobody's ever told him they were going to throw him on a bed and do 'things' to him before, now it made him cheeks light up and his mind race.

"Harry-"

"Stop talking." Harry grabs his wrist and doesn't bother assisting Louis get off the counter considering the boy has short legs that weren't touching the ground.

Leading him upstairs to the bathroom, Harry flips on the light switch and never lets go of the unfamiliar closure Louis' hand-holding gives him.

"Cool." Louis looks around, never having had a tour of the apartment before starting to cook. Harry draws back the shower glass and reveals three taps. Hot. Cold. But there's one more. "Milk?" Louis teases and Harry doesn't understand this boy, but he desperately wants to. Finally releasing Louis' hand after draining the final dose of comforting familiarity from the touch, Harry stepped into the wide shower section. Louis looked on with many a question lingering in his fast-paced state of mind. He chews the inside of his cheek, incidentally biting off the worn out squamous tissue.

The tap that sat hooked between the hot and cold knobs was special, tinted navy and only needed to be pulled out to function. Harry did that now with unafraid hands, but cautious fingers. The bigger part of him was a little worried, but the aggressive portion that took and claimed what it wanted at all costs set him at ease.

There was no steam when the shower gage began to release liquid. Red liquid. Louis' jaw ran agape and he involuntarily stepped toward the healthy spray out of pure curiosity. Curiosity killed the cat.

He stood staring at how the blood fell from the metal head to Harry's hair, before dripping down his body and getting washed down the drain. The glint in his eye was dark fascination, taken totally by this dicey invention.

"Blood." He seemed to mouth the word with a surprised breath.

Harry shut off the tap and stared back at Louis with contempt and interest. He was matted in
blood, his hair felt caked to his skull but that didn't bother him. It was familiar, always able to soothe the raw nerve ends that drove him off a bridge. Something he's actually done in an old Ford Capri, but survived when a nosey passerby saved him. Harry thinks this is why that stranger gave him a chance he didn't deserve.

Louis had his upper lip between his molars, biting in thought. The corner was sore now from being split open by rough prodding. The rest of him was calm, no twitching or forms of anxiety. That seemed to soften the blow to a bothered mind of Harry neither knew was there.

Harry closes his eyes when he tells Louis the whole truth, giving Louis the chance to leave him without reluctance. He knows he'll just run after him and keep him by force but it's the sentiment that counts at this moment in time. Harry's never given up something he wanted before so it's blatant that he won't bloody start now.

"I kill people, Louis." He starts, his eyelids have dried to sandpaper but Harry feels nothing. Louis' eyes dart from the shower to him, boring into his soul and putting Harry on edge. Nobody's done that before and it provides him with a loud burst of energy.

Energy to step out of the non-slip tiled floor and cover the distance to Louis, that's oddly decreased. He stands there for a short empty while, waiting for something to hit him in the face or heart.

Nothing happens and and Harry takes in the softness of Louis' blue, blue eyes. It's his favourite colour. Harry reaches out and touches Louis' cheek, bloodied thumb and all. He leaves a streak on the smooth skin where he's touched, and he experiments further by brushing Louis' feathery hair away from his eyes. More blood touches Louis' forehead and left temple.

"Say something." Harry looks pained in his expression, the way he did in the laundromat.

"Louis. I said-"

"Do you now?" Louis cuts him off, having heard exactly what Harry confessed.

"Yes."

"So shouldn't you be showing me your lair and not your bathroom?"

Harry fights to keep his eyes closed even though he is certain Louis' laughing softly at him. "I bathe in their blood."

"I saw."

"You don't believe me?" Harry tilts his head to the side, trying to deliver the same sinister expression he gives to all his prey.

"No, I do."

"Then?"

"Is this your way of kicking me out? I'll leave if you-"

Harry kisses him with a hard, fervent mouth just to see if Louis' genuine about this. His wet, rust and iron tasting lips crashing against Louis' own. A kiss can tell a lot, if Louis is hesitating or just straight-out pulling away. A kiss in time can speak in abundance, just like how time can heal what a kiss caused.
But there's none of the above. Louis doesn't get time to groan from the harsh bite to his bottom lip, and Harry seems to lose himself just momentarily to this fantasy Louis renders in his world. Harry's arms form barricades around Louis' waist as he lifts him off the ground. He pries Louis' thighs apart and makes them wrap around his hips for balance.

All of Louis' clothing gets equally disturbed by the traces of others' blood that Harry's dabbed in. Neither noticed when Harry presses him against the cool wall.

Louis moans when Harry's hand floats to his bum, shamelessly kneading the flesh through his pants.

"I want you to believe me." Harry's never heard this kind of plea in his voice before.

"I do, Harry." Louis pulls back to convey the truth in his eyes.

Harry holds the basin with one hand and grips Louis' hip with the other. "Are you afraid?"

"You won't hurt me."

"Yes I will."

"You pinkie swore, Harry."

"Not in that way." Harry chuckles, already feeling at ease with Louis with no false sense of security. "I'd never hurt you in that way."

Louis' face suddenly scrunches up as he wipes islands of blood off Harry's neck and face. "Can you shower for real now?"

"Wait."

"Uh-" Louis was about to mention that he physically couldn't go anywhere, since Harry has him irreversibly pinned.

"What does this mean?"

"It means that you don't smell your finest."

Harry thinks he could finally nurture a sense of humour with Louis being as bold as he is.

"You're mine now?"

"Was that your objective?"

Harry nods once only.

Louis awkwardly slides onto the edge of the sink, legs crossed behind Harry's back and hands wandering the upper parts of the man. He presses his forehead to Harry's chest - fighting to ignore the less desirable stench - when the taller places his chin on Louis' head. Louis was tiny and never felt just how drastic the difference was until now, curled around Harry's lanky frame like a monkey.

Harry's hated silence with another person all his life, pregnant pauses that held depth he couldn't reach. He clenches his jaw and tries to find the will to pull away.

"Louis."

"Hmm?"
"You're mine now." It's decisive, no longer a question. The time for turning back - or the illusion of turning back - is long fucking over. "You cannot run, Louis."

"I play football, 'm pretty sure I can run."

Harry realises that he's going to have to get used to this customary sass that Louis exudes by the gallon. "You run away from me, and I will find you again."

"Flattering."

But, like every other man Harry had a breaking point. Louis was making one too many poking jokes at his methods, and he wasn't going to stand for it.

He storms out of the bathroom, rage evident on his face as he hauls Louis with him without strain. Kicking the door to his bedroom open he drops Louis carelessly onto the high mattress before crawling over him.

"Stop that." Harry attaches his teeth instead of lips to Louis' neck, making the boy buck his hips and groan loudly.

"St-Stop what?" Louis is already panting, chest rising and falling shallowly. "Laughing at me. I don't like it." Harry kicks off his own shoes before prying Louis' off immediately after.

In a half arsed attempt to keep the glorious maroon stains from tampering with his black bed sheets, Harry strips down to nothing and flings the items of clothing across the room. It gives a wet echo when colliding with the wall. Louis admired Harry's perfect physique, eyes trailing along every expanse of skin he hasn't seen already.

Harry corrupts the vision by shoving Louis back against the pillows and kicking his legs apart with his knees. Louis' body shudders with arousal, quick and desperate as Harry undoes his pants. He ends up the way he entered this world before Harry comes to hover above him. There was power, dominance about Harry that made Louis dizzy and forget he's about to have sex for the first time in his life. He's afraid to even think the wrong thing with the man above him looking at him that way, hooded plans and reverent intentions.

Harry's hips dug down on Louis' mercilessly as if demanding he surrender every private moment and intimate act. His body was damp from the shower escapade but Louis' too distracted to mind the smell anymore.

Having had plenty of experiences in sex, Harry still feels unsure of what he's supposed to do here. It's different this time but he forgets that in a moment of blindness, erasing all premeditated action of foreplay to stick a pillow under Louis' behind and hold his legs at an eagle's spread. Louis' breath is rapid and he clenches the bed sheet in small fists, expecting severe attention to a region most guarded to him. Most untouched. What he gets is a spray of saliva and the gutwrenching screams of his own when Harry plunges in. No prep, no mind.

He claws at Harry's back and biceps, not enjoying this at all even with his half hard dick slowly deflating now from the pain.

"Stop, Harry." He sobs, pushing Harry away when the man bottoms out.

Harry isn't totally heartless - for Louis, just Louis - and immediately freezes to take care of him. The boy under him was tight and warm, with velvety insides that begged for Harry's pounding. "Lou?" Harry finally got his wish of calling Louis that. "Can I call you that?"
"Get off, Harry!" Louis thrashed about in opaque agony until Harry pinned his arms above his head and rested all his weight on Louis'.

"Shh." Harry's never kissed any part of a person other than their lips to get them going, but now he peppers light ones all over Louis' neck, face and collarbones.

"Hurts." Louis blinks rapidly to ruin his tears and gets his hands free of Harry. Harry doesn't retract himself, nor does he move one bit. He simply lies there, feeling Louis' bruised walls clench around him in a brave crescendo of rhythm. Harry's arm wrap around Louis' body as little hands fist his still wet hair, both of them ignoring the squelch of moisture. It takes a good few minutes of waiting, Harry rock hard and Louis speedily approaching the same state.

"Better?" Harry kisses Louis' lips and decides and it's his favourite thing to do in the whole world.

Louis nods and carefully shifts his hips to test the waters. He learns to love the pain as it sends delicious sparks up his spine to his brain, instructing him to moan unashamedly as he ground against Harry's member.

"You have school tomorrow." Harry grunts, starting to move and relishing the sounds from his lover.

"Yeah." Louis' voice is blissed out, eyes rolled to the back of his head and neck exposed for Harry mark up.

"Gonna limp around all day." Harry lifts Louis' legs to wrap around his hips and picks up his speed gradually.

Louis' body shifts further up the mattress with every thrust, creating such beautiful imagery for Harry to memorise. He lifts up onto his forearms, before starting to really move and make Louis shriek. His hips pivot relentlessly upward, slamming against Louis' and stinging the sensitive skin. He groans often, genuinely enjoying the squeeze Louis gives him on each shove and pull. It's wonderful and Harry never wants to stop.

His teeth clamp down on Louis' skin, fucking harder and faster for a short minute before filling the boy with his warm seed. Louis comes shortly after, not for the first time but definitely for the best. He stares at the ceiling as Harry pulls out his softening length and collapses right on top of him.

"Louis?" Harry sticks his fingers between Louis' quivering thighs and prods at his entrance, grinning devilishly when the boy grumbles at the leaking feel.

"What?" Louis didn't mean to snap but he's so sore he can't think normally.

"You didn't answer my question."

"Yes you can call me Lou."

"We need to clean up." Harry rolls off him even when Louis whines at him to stay. He makes a questioning face at the boy.

"What?" Harry is comfortable enough to stand in the bathroom with the light on, butt naked.
"Where are you going?" Louis' eyes are closed and he's already giving in to the folds of sleep.

"Get up." Harry slaps Louis' bare behind, trying not to smile at the very faint ripple. "Go get clean."

Louis' already fallen asleep, face buried in Harry's favourite pillow - not that he knew that - and snoring softly. With a heavy sigh, Harry gets a warm wet cloth and wipes down Louis' entire body. He took extra time where the leaking was concerned but no one needs to know that.

Harry didn't know what to do after that. He stared at Louis' sleeping form for a good ten minutes - still naked, mind you - until he grabbed a comforter from the closet and headed downstairs. He used the sink to clean his hair and took care of the meal they were supposed to eat before trying to sleep on the couch. He failed, because he was still buzzing from sex with Louis and wanted to have more except Louis was knocked out.

Using the smallest knife in his collection, Harry sat on the couch with The Jetsons on and carved little things into his palm. None of it hurt, so he just carried on until he got bored and fell back against the couch. He felt slight pokes but it didn't hurt so it didn't matter. The clock said 21h54.

Louis woke up with a start at ten that night, gasping from the pain that shot up his back and swallowed back a cry.

"Harry?" Louis called into the empty room after feeling the cold sheets and examining the blank spaces. "Harry?"

Harry was downstairs and closed his ears to the calls. He turned on his side, and fought to find sleep even with the pungent regret residing in his chest. Sleeping with a person, literally, was too intimate for him.

Louis called three more times, voice cracking at the last attempt before giving up and going to sleep. He set a pillow down on the empty half of the bed as a signal. If it moved by morning then Harry had come.

The pillow didn't move all through the night.

Louis wakes up at seven the next morning, bit his lip and blinked past blurry vision to look around. He noticed the pillow and slipped out of bed with more pained sounds than necessary. Harry still didn't show up. He had gone out for a run at six and didn't tell Louis or leave a note. The door was open so Louis got dressed and dashed out of the apartment.

Harry got back at 07h15, bearing goods from Starbucks as breakfast. He was quite proud of himself for thinking up the idea by himself. That friendly heat fills his chest when the apartment is empty. He tries to control the remnants of his willpower but he fails and storms out of the building after capsizing the coffee table in rage.

Louis took the subway home, standing on purpose because sitting would feel like torture. He made tea in an actual mug and just took it with him on the brief walk to school, along with a chocolate chip muffin.

There wasn't much time to ponder his hurt feelings over last night, because he's late when he gets to school and immediately sits down for class. Sitting was the hard part because although Louis favoured some of the pain and the memory of how it originated, sometimes it played a bitch and he almost chipped his tooth with all the grinding. Nobody notices the mug and nobody says a
That is, up until his Religious Studies class door swings open on squeaky hinges and standing before the class is a not at all pleased Harry. Louis had been trying to toss the muffin's paper wrap with easy calculations, but now goes off by a meter and hits the back of a student's head. He looks down quickly, starting to scribble in his notebook - quotes from *Seven Psychopaths* - while the teacher talks to this visitor.

"Can I-

"I need to see Louis." Poor Mr. Jenkins. Harry can't be looking humble or polite right now if the hard tone of his voice is anything to go by.

Everyone looks at Louis, who cannot shrivel back into his seat anymore than he's already tried. Their eyes are curious, but none burn the way Harry's do. Louis gets up, mug in his hand because he's still thirsty and doesn't give a flying fuck, and walks out the door with a nod to his flabbergasted educator.

If Louis hadn't set the mug down on a bench, his favourite one of his collection would probably have shattered when Harry cornered him by the lockers.

With two large hands matching the size of their owner pressed against locker 325 on either side of Louis' head, he definitely wasn't going anywhere.

"You were gone. Tell me why." Harry's admirable green orbs have melted to black. Those eyes were cold and void of empathy.

Louis wasn't scared though, never was. "Yeah? You noticed?"

Harry tightens his jaw until Louis can trace the strong bone itself. "Tell me why."

"It's a two-way street, babe. You were gone too."

Nothing about Harry's composure changed. "I went out."

"Ridiculous." Louis wet his lips and shook his head, forcing Harry's arm out of the way so he could step him.

"Louis!" Harry calls after him, voice thick with irritation. "Don't walk away from me."

Louis says nothing and keeps going. Harry took two big strides and tried to be gentle about shoving Louis against the locker that was now open. Louis' locker.

"I said don't walk away from me!"

It was driving Harry mad, feeling this boy sink his claws into him and have control over the way he acted. Harry was slowly losing his hard-earned composure to *Blue Eyes* who he's known almost three weeks. Louis' not scared, but if he is he's the best at hiding it.

Harry retaliates with physical rage, something he understand and something that puts him in total control. He slams Louis' locker door shut right beside his head, with Louis' precious hand still holding it. Harry's not irresponsible and still cares - he will never verbally admit it - about Louis no matter how infuriating he is, and so covers Louis' hand with his own just as the ancient steel comes to a stop.
Louis' chest is rising and falling like that of a racing animal. He's never witnessed such a stormy emotion flood Harry's gaze and inhibit his body that way. He wasn't hurt at all by stubbornly holding the locker door because Harry covered his hand and took the harsh blow without a mewl. "How does it feel?" Is all Louis can say, heart still in the lurch about where they stand. "Being left behind?"

"I didn't walk away from you." Harry shakes his head, convincing nobody but himself.

Louis didn't want to mess with this Harry but if Harry hurt him against their pinky promise, he'd cross that bridge - or burn it - when it arose.

"Then what do you call leaving me to spend the entire night alone in your giant bed after we did the most intimate thing two people could ever do?" He was kind in words but the diction was less so.

Harry drew back and let his arms fall into his sweaty hoodie's pockets. The blood from an injured fist was soaking the fabric but he didn't feel a thing.

Louis was right, and it made Harry annoyed. Sex was intimate especially for Harry and Louis, not Harry and anybody else, this is something he admitted to himself last night. What he did was lousy, he could have asked Louis if he wanted to be alone or not. But he didn't. He assumed and now Louis is angry with him. Knowing this fed a deep pit of insanity, plagued with beasts that made Harry itch and want to scream.

He was so lost to himself that he didn't hear the bell go and see Louis leave. When he sunk back to Planet Earth, the boy he had so many things to say to was gone and still upset. Upset with Harry. Harry made him upset, and it was already killing him from the inside.

Louis went straight to cover his shift at the pet shop after sixth form, at three. He had a two hour shift and chose to blatantly ignore the navy Range Rover across the street.

"Hey, Lou." The always friendly manager, Delilah, greeted him.

"Hi." Louis dumped his bag in the back room and rushed to put his employee jacket on. "How was today?"

"Busy." She blew her blonde fringe out of her face. "Donny and Cash are gone."

"Aw. That's good then."

Louis couldn't help the smile that crept onto his visage. Donny was a handicapped dog and Cash was a bird with no feathers on his tail. This pet shop took in strays and did the occasional breeding session, but it was the only pet shop in town so everyone knew them.

Grabbing the dog treats from the storage room, Louis went to take care of the puppies at the front of the store. He pointedly did not look up at the street as he giggled at Furry the labrador who tried licking him.

"Naughty." Louis held him close anyway as he fed the others and Furry wagged his short tail at the little girl who walked past.

Louis loved all his animals, but his favouritism went straight to Bolg the turtle. He had little red streaks on his pointy feet and always knew when Louis was coming to see him. He'd stick his head out of that shell - the only time he ever did - and accepted the lettuce offering.

"How are we today, Bolg?" Louis picks up the reptile with one hand and fed him the lettuce with
the other. "I think I'll take you home today. Just don't tell Delly, okay?"

"I heard you!" His boss shouts from the cash register. "But you can take him today, he only likes you."

Louis had enough money to buy Bolg but never really took that option seriously. He didn't want to leave him unattended while Louis was at school - or college - and risk it getting hurt. It's better for him here where Louis knew he was safe and monitored. Someone could buy him though and take Bolg away from Louis for good.

"Hey Delly?!

* * * * *

Louis ran upstairs to his attic and dropped his bag at the desk, then took Bolg's box and opened it into the neat all-natural reserve Louis' been preparing since he was sixteen. It's on the floor so Bolg won't fall from high tables.

"Your new home." Louis announces. "Like it?"

Bolg seems to because he's already munching on the lettuce - greedy fellow - that's been arranged like an artistic tree. There's a knock on the door downstairs and Louis kisses the turtle's shell before closing the attic's door soundly and jogging down the staircase.

"Coming!" Louis shouts when the knocks get harder.

He yanks the door open and stops short, breath mingled with his heart as it clogs his throat. "Harry."

The man who Louis last saw hours ago is blocking the entire doorway, massive height towering over Louis. He's wearing a thin black shirt with buttons at the top, those trademark skinny jeans and a useless beanie. His right hand is also bandaged.

Louis didn't look to Harry's left, but he does now and standing there is a girl about a foot shorter than her escort. She's blindfolded which is odd.

"Latest conquest?" Louis only knows retort and no remorse. It's how he reacts to things that hurt when they shouldn't.

Harry's nostrils flare but he swallows a smart remark, the unknown feeling swallowing it and him bit by bit already. He pushes the girl inside and Louis isn't sure how happy he is about this but closes the door behind Harry anyway before crossing his arms. In his own mind it creates a little support for the threat that was shoving his heart out of his chest.

"I need to sleep so-

"Forgive me." Harry says, eyes locked with Louis' and his hand digging imprints into the girl's arm. "Louis please."

"Harry, I don't."

"Or I'll kill her."

Louis' half opened mouth pauses for a minute in disbelief. "What?"

That's when the girl starts crying and Harry brings her to his chest, a slightly hidden blade that
Louis didn't notice becoming so against her throat. She doesn't say anything, or do anything besides cry.

"Harry, are you crazy? Let her go." Louis' arms drop and he steps forward.

"No, Louis. It's your fault. I can't...I can't keep feeling this way. This horrible. I need you to forgive me and- and take me back so it can stop. I hate feeling this way. Say it. Say it so we can go back to before."

Louis' gobsmacked and fishmouths from apparent shock, but has enough sense to nod vigorously. "Yes. Yes, I forgive you. Harry, it's okay now."

Harry may be a killer but Louis wasn't going to have it on his conscious that a person died because of him. He watches Harry drop the knife, and releases a breath he didn't know he was holding.

But as a last accomplishment, one more reward, Harry squeezes his eyes shut and grants this bar hopper mercy by snapping her neck. It was the final signature at the end of a contract, the last gulp before his cut-off drink.

_The deep breath before the plunge._

He doesn't open his eyes until he's stumbled over to a stunned Louis and drops to his knees. Harry hugs Louis' middle as if to say thank you and Louis runs a hand through his damp hair that smells of mint, saying you're welcome.

Chapter End Notes

end of chapter two by ss98
chapter three

Alone. Yes, that's the key word, the most awful word in the English tongue. Murder doesn't hold a candle to it and hell is only a poor synonym.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Louis' had enough of this silence. The daunting time flickers by and all he feels is discomfort. He's quite fit for an average high schooler but the latest addition to his injuries with unbearable pain, has started acting up again. About three minutes into Harry just hiding in his tummy and breathing heavily, Louis becomes feverish. He knew the cause of the problem because his behind has been unreasonably tender all day and is fucking *throbbing* through his jeans. He's a master at handling pain, but sometimes even he needed stitches.

"Harry?" Louis was staring at the girl, whose body was bent at an unnatural angle from Harry's force.

He wishes he wasn't so okay with this, but he is in this now and doesn't want to disappoint a man much stronger than him now or ever. He'll just have to figure this out. Harry looks up at him, look of pure innocence in his eyes, his arms still around Louis' figure. "Gonna get up from there?" Louis keeps his tone soft and free of anything - like fear or anxiety - that Harry could detect.

Harry nods - not a man of many words, Louis thinks - and rises to his feet. He had a slightly scrunched nose and deeply thoughtful frown on his face.

"What is it?"

"I want to stay over." Harry tells Louis. "Tonight."

"I don't mind." Louis shrugs. "Just clean up after yourself."

By that he meant, get rid of the bloody dead body from the doorway for Pete's Sake. Harry nods, reading Louis' mind. "I'll park my car in the garage then."

"Okay."

Harry bites his lip but says nothing more before leaving through the front door. Louis' shoulders sag in exhaustion, but all the muscles in his body creak from discomfort and the badgering dilemma in his lower regions. He ignores it all and goes upstairs to shower. He trusts Harry not to steal anything when he gets back, not that there's anything really valuable here anyway. He wipes the sweat off his brow and gets under the hot water's spray, a fleeting memory of Harry's extravagant shower quirk comes to his mind as he leans against the tiles. Harry does park his car in Louis' garage and takes the bar hopper's body there for the perfect hiding place in his trunk. He really needs more dog blankets, and now he knows Louis works in a pet shop so maybe he'll get some from him.

Upon re-entering the home, Harry listens to every prickle and static noise. He hears the shower loud and clear, the hum of the airconditioner and ticking of the overhead clock in the lounge. He enters the kitchen, out of the pure need to investigate. The room is small but sufficient
enough for a single person or tiny family. Harry wonders where Louis' family is and why they aren't home at - he glances at his wrist watch - almost six when it's dark out already. The shower's still on, and Harry listens to how the spray is interrupted by Louis' body movements. There's always the sweet splash of pressured water hitting cold tile, so Louis can't cover the entire shoot of water. Another indication of Louis' tiny stature that made him appealing to Harry on the first day of Gemma's twelfth year.

He sighs and shoves those thoughts away. She was still his sister and he occassionally thought about what it would have been like had he not ended her life, but somethings can't be helped. When Harry's finished using the magnet set on the refrigerator to create random words like 'fridge' or 'fruit', 'Louis' and 'Har0ld'. Louis called him that last name, but since he used the 'O' for Louis he had to make use of the number 0 for his own nickname.

The shower stops and Harry is glad because he is as bored as he's ever been in another person's home. He won't touch anything - he's still trying to impress Louis with his methods of wooing - and so decides that maybe being around Louis will scratch the temptation to snoop about. He trudges up the stairs as lighter footsteps pad down the carpeted hallway, Louis in a fluffy brown towel and Harry clenching his insensitive injured fist.

With his tongue pressing against his cheek, Louis opens his bedroom door to get some comfortable clothing and Harry reaches the highest step in time to catch Louis' towel's tail disappear into the bedroom.

He doesn't think anything of following Louis into his room, admiring the curved figure the boy possessed as he moved slowly, carefully. Harry smirks to himself, hidden by the shadow of the door - not intending to be so well concealed - when he remembers why Louis was moving as such.

Harry's met his match with this boy, because Louis always knew when Harry had his gaze on him, watching and forgetting all conduct of civility.

Louis' back is to Harry but he smiles secretly to himself as he dops his towel and starts to inspect his clothing assortment. He was neat, but not freakish. Everything had a hanger or clip to keep them crease-free and presentable. When warm, calloused hands slide across Louis' bare skin he smirks knowingly and bares his neck.

Harry doesn't lean down and kiss the tempting plane of smooth skin, supporting the structure of baby fine hairs that add to its glory. He does touch Louis' collarbone and neck multiple times with the fingers of his left hand.

Harry couldn't keep standing there unnoticed and ignored by the door when Louis decided he'd take a chance and release the grip on his Gloria towel. If there was anything he despised, it was being ignored.

Not for the first time, but definitely so in relation to Louis' presence, Harry felt like he was personally tainting something. He was somehow damaging the pure essense and auro that lingered around Louis constantly. He had justification to say that as well. While Harry had inked markings from his torso up just to cover the skin and hide it well, Louis' skin was the only thing in sight.

Harry didn't use lots of cologne, it bothered his nose and annoyed him with the strong scents. Harry had strength in other ways. Louis liked citrus and even berry aromas sometimes. "Don't be scared to touch me." Louis tells him in a soft voice that the angel of temptation, of indulgence used to call pilgrims in the East.
Harry was still hesitant, and he almost hated that he was. He spent all the traffic lights on the way here Googling just for this kind of thing, after figuring out on his morning run that he'd definitely done something wrong. *Yahoo! Answers* was quite helpful indeed.

Feeling the trepidation beat down on Harry with the warmth that radiated through his pores, Louis took Harry's arm and secured it around his waist. It was an easy lap since Harry had long arms and held him tightly, possessively. While Louis took delight in someone actually wanting to hold him so close, Harry's other hand intwined with his - accidentally in both their minds though deep down they were afraid of it being so - and snaked around to the other hip. Louis was locked in against Harry's chiselled chest and the red flags in his gut metamorphosise into butterflies.

"You are very......delicate." Harry wasn't too friendly with Louis' body but he couldn't wait to start learning it better than Louis himself.

The boy frowns and uses his only free hand to grab a pair of sweats. "As opposed to rugged like you, Styles?"

Harry smirks, already at ease with the Louis' manner of joking. He does take Louis' available hand and squeezes the sweats out of them - there was no pain for Louis because he dropped it immediately - before enclosing that hand in his fist and bringing it back to their cage. The essence Louis had, was the missing link Harry wanted.

It would fit right in with the steam of Harry's persona that stung you like the sun. Louis was the cooling agent, the ice blocks of a pleasant future. He was also the moth that flew too close to the sun and got burnt.

Louis had tense shoulders, having never wanted a stranger's hands on him during a massage and not knowing anyone willing to give him a friendly rub down. Harry wasn't that person either, not yet at least. What he did do, he did out of respect for the voice in his head that shouted *You don't want another person seeing him, being with him. Claim him, claim him now.* as it clawed at the backs of his eyeballs and scratched the inside of his skull.

"I like your voice. Say something." Louis coaxes, unable to bear this stifling silence any longer. *I like your voice. Say something.* It echoes through Harry's mind, filling the swollen empty cavities and adding bliss. I like your voice.

*Claim him, claim him now.*

So Harry takes a bite, not an actual vicious bite that ruptures vessels and tears skin, gathering a bit of Louis' skin where a stiff knot of tension formed near his neck and sucks on it until it's red. Blood rushes to the underside of the surface, and Harry's teeth leave marks as good as art. Louis' nails dig into Harry's palm that's sweaty now but he can't feel that either.

The pain of the disturbed tense joint is masked only halfway through with the pleasure of receiving a love bite. It hurt, but it hurt good.

Harry doesn't stop until the mark is bright red and matching the spilt blood on his hands, playing a wild card and kissing the bruise just once to assert his partner and all eyes. As he draws back to admire his handiwork, he thinks about where Louis and he stand in a uniquely stable relationship. Are they in one that's too unheard of to have a category? Nowhere perhaps?

*I like your voice. Say something.* So Harry does.
"I want to call you names." Harry forgets that they're standing in a tiny closet with Louis as naked as a newborn.

"Like?" Louis is almost panting from the stimulation of what just happened.

Harry clears his throat and Louis' ear cilia bristle from the warm breath. "I don't really know."

"As long as it's not mean."

Harry shakes his head, stubble scraping Louis' skin harmlessly. "Nothing mean. Lou?"

"Harry dear?"

Louis decided to go out on a limb and it proved successful when Harry softly laughed and bared more than a single canine this time.

"You're....you're mine, right?"

Harry dug his fingerbuds into Louis' hip and wrist, saying clearly that if Louis said no he'd have him here in this moment for as long as he can.

"I don't know. Do you want me to be?"

Without answering, Harry nodded and realised Louis must be cold since it's snowing outside currently.

"Then I am."

Harry held in his unsuppressable urge to smile, while he released Louis and picked up the discarded clothing. He knew how to take care of a person, had done it with his late mother until they put her on life support then pulled the plug. He felt nothing at that time, but he was starting to feel something a whole lot better now.

On his way up he slipped the sweats on for Louis, not at all staring at where Louis' shins became muscular thighs and further above that where nobody touched but Harry. Another thing to smile about.

Louis was giggling when Harry got back up to standing level, and awarded Harry a clean kiss on one cheek.

"Thank you." He felt he needed to say it, and Harry needed to hear it.

Understanding but also not comprehending the desire Harry now had to fulfil every arbitrary request or whim, he took another hoodie off the hanger and offered it to Louis. He wanted to hear Louis' praises all the time.

"Weather says there might be a blizzard tomorrow." Louis peers up at Harry, not intimidated at all by the difference in height. "Do you still want to stay?"

Harry nodded twice, a little too eager in his opinion. Louis grinned and pecked his other cheek as Harry slipped the warm, soft top over his shoulders.

"Pizza?" Louis is hungry, the juices in his stomach asking to be given an active duty.

"Okay."
They walk downstairs and while Louis immediately hops over the back of the couch with agility and skill, Harry checks the delivery menu pegged to the fridge for Donny T's Pizza and Subs. He is adamant on getting the best tasting ones there, and chews his bottom lip as Courage The Cowardly Dog comes on with its creepy themes.

Remembering his earlier question, Harry walks from the fridge where Louis trusted him to be alone, into the lounge. "Love?"

Louis hums, not revolted by the pet name Harry's used. The man sighs in relief that his mission isn't a total failure.

"What do you want?"

"Food." Comes Louis' reply.

Harry doesn't bother him anymore and orders in the kitchen so the noises the purple dog on TV make don't disturb his conversation, to inevitably prolong an interaction with an unerpaid stranger. He gets them a 'Something Meaty' sub and chicken and mushroom pizza. Simple and dignifies both their conditions for a meal.

Not knowing what is best for him to do now, Harry goes into the living room by Louis and sits on a couch separate to his. Louis chuckles but hides his face behind a cushion and keeps his eyes trained on the adventures of a family that lives in the eye of nowhere with nothing but a purple dog and a windmill.

Louis understood Harry, and that's why he never questioned him. He was sure Harry would have his moments of enjoyment but currently he just needed to get familiar. So did Louis, honestly. Neither male was accustommed to a romantic partner - or whatever they were to one another in their minds.

Harry clears his throat and the shift he makes in his seat is like that which follows after an inappropriate thought. "What are you watching?"

Louis sees that this is as good as Harry gets at conversation, and he could live with that because he himself was not an extrovert. "It's a cartoon."

"How old are you?"

Louis tosses the camouflage cushion at him with a childish huff of air. "I've been watching it since I was a kid."

"It's not very educational." Harry easily dodges the flying object and it lands next to him. "It isn't supposed to be. Can I have my cushion back?"

Harry is smirking as he prepares to answer this question. "I don't think you've been good enough."

Okay then, Louis thinks. He loves challenges and he has yet to prove that love delicate since every self-elected task has been a success for him.

"So I don't deserve my own cushion now?" Louis raises his right eyebrow just the way he used to when he was twelve.

"Of course not." Harry was getting braver in his talk, a lopsided smirk taking up residence on his face where one dimple would show the other up. "You have to earn the things you want, Lou."
Couldn't have said it better myself, Louis thinks while keeping himself composed and muting the television. Courage would have to wait.

He rose from his sofa and moved with unpracticed and impatient grace to Harry's loveseat. "Something you know all about, big boy?"

Louis climbs onto Harry's lap on his own accord, but he isn't shoved off immediately which is a win. Harry doesn't touch him and for a fleeting moment Louis gets to see a brand new sweep across his gaze. It was safe and foreign at the same time.

Knowing that Harry won't respond in the manner Louis needs, he takes control of the situation. He grinds down so his pelvis rubs against Harry's crotch. Harry's hands fly to his waist, eyes wide and caught off guard.

"What are you doing?" Harry stares at Louis' thin, wet lips wanting nothing more than to kiss him until they're swollen.

He wanted every part of Louis marked by him and his body filled to the brim with Harry's scent. That voice inside his head told him to make Louis dependant on him, love him while Harry didn't have to love him back.

Having lost his partner to the remarkable doings of his own mind, Louis takes advantage of this twilight zone and starts working on a lovely hicky just below Harry's sharp jaw. That wakes Harry enough to grab Louis' shoulders and push him away.

"What are you doing?" He repeats the question, now for a different accusation. Louis' shoulders offer a slanted shrug and his lips twitch in a devious little grin. "Earning what I want."

Let him do it. Let him feel for you. Love you. We need it. The voice with talons and a sharp tongue hisses at him, so that once again Harry will obey. He's never argued, never disagreed.

"Harry?" Louis had his cold fingers on Harry's neck.

But Louis let Harry stay and trusted him even after he confessed his fascination in overkill. His passion for torture. The voice in Harry's head wasn't around when all he could think about was how upset Louis was with him, how much that sting hurt him. Louis didn't look at him differently, and they were going to fit so well together.

So Harry agrees to ignore that vile creature plaguing his mind, and do what the spot in his chest where his heart should be tells him to.

Louis' sighing by this point, already used to Harry's moments where he seemed to float away and get lost in his brain matter. He supposes it's what he does sometimes as well, so he starts to get off Harry and ignore the whimper his libido makes.

Harry grabs his wrist to keep him put, and the back of Louis' knee to press against his thigh again.

"Where are you going?" He's looking at Louis but Louis wonders if he can see him. Louis doesn't answer because he won't answer just to have Harry go mentally bye-bye and leave him alone in a room when there are two people. But the old fashioned shimmer of Harry's eye blocks the mask of deep thought and Louis knows he's here now.
"You spaced out on me." Louis doesn't take long attaching himself to Harry again akin to a spidermonkey. "Again."

"I'm sorry." Harry's apologised to Louis in two weeks more than he's apologised to his family all his life.

"It's okay." Louis' voice is small, almost baby-like and Harry thinks he's the most precious human being.

The dying engine of a car in need of a servicing comes from Louis' driveway. Louis - being the sole owner of this property - begins to get up when Harry makes a split decision. He times it perfectly, and drops Louis on his back as he got pinned to the couch under Harry. The latter said nothing, just pressed their lips together in a bruising kiss then got up to answer the door.

The pizza is abandoned despite the money they spent on it, and just two minutes and thirty seconds after the pizza delivery man left Louis is nakedly splayed out on his bed ready to give himself to the man with destruction in his mesmerizing eyes.

Harry wanted him on his front, so Louis obediently got on his hands and knees. He was expecting the rough style of sex he's had before but it seems Harry didn't want that. He pushed the small of Louis' back until the boy was flat on the mattress, a shapely pillow holding his hips in the air.

Louis shivered when Harry touched the inside of his bare thigh, the baby hairs nobody can shave off stood to greet Harry's fingertips. He thought about whether Harry was behind him, where he could not see and just looking at Louis' body react to him. He glances over his shoulder to see Harry kneeling between his legs just in boxer briefs. Running on lack of experience, Louis swivels his hips to tempt Harry and the hungry gleam in his eye.

Harry responds by gripping Louis' thighs and holding it against the mattress once spread far apart, baring the sight of Louis' sensitive and fluttering ring of muscle. "I saw something." He kisses the base of Louis' spine and moves up until he's kitten licked between the shoulderblades, then starts downwards to relish the whines Louis can't control when he's close enough but not there yet.

"On the Internet." Harry continues, admiring Louis' tight muscular body and massaging the little chubbiness on his hips. "I don't want to hurt you so I learnt how to do this."

"Do what?" Louis doesn't need an answer because the hot feel of Harry's tongue pokes him there.

He mewls and rolls back towards Harry for more, always more. Harry appreciates that Louis is hairless. He doesn't know how it is so but there's absolutely nothing more perfect than groping Louis where he's the most filled.

If Harry's faking interest, he's fucking incredible because Louis' lost control over his lungs as they work overtime to give him oxygen. He fists the sheets when Harry's thumb slips into him, wiggling about until it's snug. Harry's got quite a long thumb and Louis keens at the sensation it drives up his nervous system.

He makes little noises into the pillow where he's stuffed his face, and grinds down to get some friction for his aching length that's pulsing for attention. Harry stops him, stilling his hips with soft force.
"Be good for me, Lou." Harry kisses the inside of his thigh, dangerously close to where his thumb is doing circles now.

Louis nods blindly and bites his pillow as a second thumb enters him, stretching his bruised hole and driving him up the wall. He cries out but it's muffled by stuffing and Harry starts licking into him slightly, using his thumbs to hold Louis open enough. The stretch burns and Louis loves it so much.

Harry points his tongue and delves back in, his mouth closing around Louis' rim to add suction and make Louis come undone just with this. Louis’ body shudders and shivers from intense pleasure, clenching around Harry as he fought to keep his hips still.

He managed to but now that inside his body was coated in Harry's saliva and the useless friction of the pillow was too coarse for his lonely prick he came on the same object and hissed from sensitivity. It crushed his lungs and obliterates his higher intelligence.

Harry pulled out before his tongue could turn blue from no blood flow when Louis tightened up. He groaned when he imagined it around him, it would be so much better this time than compared to their first go.

He didn't turn around, just scrambled for the sachet of lube from his pocket and tore it open with his teeth. He put a reasonable blob on his fingers and saved the rest, slipping one finger inside Louis again for the express purpose of stretching him.

Louis woke up from his warm glow and grumbled about not being able to handle it. There was a heavy sting to his left thigh and he kept all his protests in after that. He would handle it. The first finger makes six pumps, retracted until just the the tip was in and shoved back in knuckle deep. Louis swears that if Harry tried hard enough, he'd reach Louis' prostrate buried deep in the folds on his heat. Harry's middle finger joins the first digit, and the short nail scrapes Louis' walnut-sized special spot.

Harry found himself ogling how the curve of Louis' back collected tiny sweat droplets and how it arched perfectly. Louis' jaw was slack and frozen in a gasp, eyes shut and body desperately sliding back towards Harry. Nothing he's ever experienced has been this powerful, this pleasurable. It was exquisite and knocked sense out of his mind.

"Har-arry?" Louis squeaked as Harry fucked his fingers into Louis, allowing lasting bursts of pleasure.

"Yeah, baby?" Harry kissed Louis' shoulder and the boy moaned, allowing that chaste touch alone to spur him on. Baby.

"P-Please do it." Louis' voice is not his, it's shredded and manipulated into wounding weaker, pleading.

"I will."

Harry brushes the sweat off Louis' nape and bends him at a cruel angle for a kiss. Louis was submissive in bed, Harry noted. The muscles in his arms and torso were protesting as they shook but as long as Harry's lips were there, he didn't pull away to relax them.

Drawing back and letting Louis flop down onto the mattress like a lazy balloon, Harry parts Louis' legs even further and pulls his fingers out to the ringtone of Louis' whine at emptiness. He sits back pulls his boxer briefs down to his knees, just till there so there was enough room to
satisfy his urgency right now. He was hard enough for the vein on the underside of his member to stick out, and he uses the drops of precome on Louis' flattered ring of pink muscle. The remainder of the unflavoured lube is used to slick up himself properly.

He was realling concentrating when he positioned himself at Louis' entrance, not wanting to hurt the boy this time no matter how much Louis was shuffling backward. "Shh." Harry drags out, smooth as cool silk on Louis’ burning body and laces their fingers together as he slowly sinks into him.

Louis' air is lost to him for a moment and he fists Harry's fingers in his palms as he welcomes this lovely heavy intrusion. Harry goes out on a whim and kisses where he left a lovebite earlier. He settles on his forearms when he's bottomed out, enjoying the feeling of Louis' body accepting his claim. A dozen ragged breaths later, Louis' okay to move after the shocking sting of being impaled dies down.

Harry starts to move his hips, hovering above Louis and roughly speeding up until every bit of his skin is red with heated passion. He bites Louis' neck enough to leave imprints, using that tedious grip to hold Louis in place as he pounded into him. It was never slow with Harry, there was too much energy - too many emotions - to fuck out of himself.

He held Louis' hip with one hand and rocked his bed until it knocked the wall and Louis was screaming for the neighbours to hear. Neither cared.

Harry just went harder until he could feel the head of his member colliding with Louis' swollen prostrate. He would be sore in the morning but right now, there's nothing but ecstacy. It wasn't enough for Louis, but it was too much also. His nails dug into Harry's wrists and he begged for harder, faster.

When Harry began to feel that guilty pleasure pit tighten in his lower abdomen, he bit down exceptionally hard on Louis' skin and got in deeper so that Louis' legs were almost thrown aside. Louis groaned and cried out, no time for soft sounds as Harry fucked coherent English right out of him.

A string of rambling left Louis' lips as Harry drew his hips into the air for easier penetration. He had a deathgrip on Louis' waist and it was definitely bruising there as they rocked together. Louis was a mess, and his body went ahead with releasing thick white ropes all over the sheets without him being ready. Harry rides out Louis' high and continues using his delicious clenching to get himself off. Being close was painful now.

Moments later he spilled his seed inside Louis and groaned before collapsing bonelessly onto his petite lover's back.

He didn't move until Louis shoved at him, unable to breath properly since he's smothered by the pillow and growing too painfully sensitive to handle it now. Harry pulls out and watches drops of his come leak out of Louis' exhausted body.

Louis knows Harry will leave now, since he's tossing around in deliberation while Louis' trying to sleep. He sighs and ignores the stickiness of their chests so he can climb onto Harry's chest, bracketing Harry's thighs with his shins and tucking his feet under the man's knees.

Harry's strikken by this action, and stays extremely still until Louis' done moving. When it's over, he puts an arm around Louis' waist and pays attention to the boy's breathing.

"Do you want to-"
"No." Harry cuts Louis off, knowing that Louis was going to ask if he wanted to leave or still stay. "I'm fine right here."

"Okay."

"I want to take you somewhere." *Show you something*.

"Where?"

"One of my matches. Boxing."

"I didn't know you boxed." That was the conventional way of asking for more information from a person you wouldn't risk asking outright.

"Anger management." Harry smirks and clicks his tongue.

"I'd love to come." Louis was playing the supportive partner, but from these weeks of knowing each other they both agree anger management is going to be fruitless.

"I'll take you. I have a fight in two days."

"How good of a boxer are you?"

"Wanna know if you're wasting your time?"

Harry chuckles and stops slowly as he notices the free flow of this conversation. There was no second thinking, just mutual and fitting words.

"No!" Louis pinches the sparrow’s tail. "For scientific purposes."

"Sleep."

"Don't leave then."

Louis wanted him to stay with him, and that makes Harry smile secretly in the dark. "I won't."

Chapter End Notes

...the end of chapter three by ss98...
There are moments when even to the sober eye of reason, the world of our sad humanity may assume the semblance of Hell.

While Middleton indulged in talk of the new haunted house opening up in their wildlife-free forest, Harry lay awake in bed.

It wasn't his bed with one pillow - this one had two - and his wooden ceiling. He stared at the sky's stars visible through Louis' perfectly positioned window and slowed his heartbeat to match Louis' just because. Exhaustion is not something Harry's felt before, but now his eyes were half-lidded and stubborn.

You're going crazy. That voice was back to being his compadre, his pal.

Maybe he is going crazy. So soon though? He expected indications of a senile retirement before he was overrun by the crazies. Maybe he'll start seeing little green men like Charlie Sheen, or the spirits of strangers he bumped and never apologised to.

Harry rubbed Louis' back to soothe himself, failing when the rabbiting in his chest takes on a whole new level of unhealthy. His ears are ringing and he squeezes his eyes shut, locking out the unpleasantness of outside. A driver's Honda wheels screech as they rub against old tar roadwork, and Harry wants to scream.

You're going crazy. You can't help it.

He tries to shut out that unhelpful echo, shove it back down to the vault in his mind where it hid like a serpent who only surfaced when Harry was vulnerable. Like Harry preyed on flesh, this serpent thrived on his weaknesses.

It's his fault. It's your fault too for letting him do this to us.

Harry looks up because this voice sounded solid, real enough to be coming from......the doorway. Leaning against the door frame was a reflection of himself, naked and living in a transparent layer of a snake's scales.

He clenches his teeth and rolls over, imminently crushing Louis' body but the boy's a heavy sleep and doesn't even stir.

Gonna kill him then?

"No," Harry doesn't know why he's growling at, basically, himself. He glares at the version of himself who makes a tsk sound and crosses his ankles.

He did this to us-

-so you must do this to him. Another voice enters his plagued mind from the dresser. Harry knows what he'll see if he looks at Louis' sleeping form, knows it will make him kneel over a toilet. He also knows it's an illusion.

When the third challenger speaks, it's from the window. But for long, Harry?
"No!" He covers his ears and screams so his lungs hurt, his trachea stretches beyond its limit.

"Stop it!"

After that, Louis wakes up and the hallucinatory silhouettes vanish. He awakens with a start and puts his hand on Harry's sweaty shoulder, but gets shrugged off.

"Harry?" Louis' sweet voice is the light at the end of Harry's haunted tunnel.

Harry lets his ears free and the ringing is still there, making his room spin like he's on a slanted axis. He grabs Louis around the middle and hugs him against his chest like how a toddler afraid of the bogeyman relies on their teddy bear to fend off the monsters.

With Louis' scent and softness Harry calms down, taming the snarling reptile within and forcing it away from the forefront of his mind. Louis combs through his hair reassuringly, ignoring the painful stretch in his thigh to comfort Harry's rocking frame.

"What happened?" Louis pulls Harry's head up from below his chin to look in his pained green eyes, so raw in its history of neglect and abuse.

Harry just shakes his head and grabbed the comforter off the floor, wrapping it around Louis' shoulders and pulling him back in. It was his silent way of saying he just wanted to hold onto something and not speak.

He wasn't ready to share this part of himself with Louis, he sincerely doubted he ever will be. His brain felt stiff like a time bomb on those last few seconds before an entire bank building turned to ash.

Louis sighed and went with this, trapped by all his limbs and relying on Harry to not drop or squash him.

Outside the snow had just begun. It fell in glorious sheets that covered the streets and all hovering pedestrians at three in the morning. When it showed in Middleton, all its residents felt as though they lived in Alaska rather than where their forefathers actually built factories in the industrial sites around this fine town.

Harry was buried in Louis' warm neck feeling helpless and lost in anguish. He needed the control he had before, wanted to have it wrapped around his finger to follow him at voice command. The serpent in his mind took that from him, and made him feel mindlessly submissive.

Knowing that Louis is someone who won't fight him on early morning fooling around, Harry grovels at any prospect that will allow him domination.

He drops Louis onto his back, blind to the bewildered look he receives, and rips the sheet covering him off. When Louis tries to grab him, Harry's chest rumbles and pins Louis' wrists to the mattress.

Harry takes his shirt off the floor and uses it to bind Louis' hands above his head. He doesn't bother with speaking, warning the boy of what he's going to do. He needed control again, the same control Louis' gentle and caring manner stole from him. He would reclaim it by fucking what was his out of Louis.

"Har-"

"Shut up." Harry's eyes are black with slits of green around the circumference.
Louis let Harry take him with his hands tied up and body at his mercy. His thighs are red from the strain of trying to slow Harry down and receiving sour smacks to the heated skin. He screams when he climaxes and Harry bites his lip hard before slamming in forcefully to fill Louis up.

The control was a beautiful kind of electricity that made Harry's mind feel light and normal. When his seed started leaking out of Louis, Harry tried to keep it in by holding Louis' hips up and pounding into him until Louis couldn't breathe without choking.

Louis' helplessness made Harry feel better. It was like they'd done a swap, Harry got his control and Louis was back under him.

"St-Stop now." Louis kicks Harry's knee and pushes him away. "'M hurting."

Then Harry thought about what it would cost him to keep this control. Hurting Louis everytime he needed a fix? To get himself back on track, he'd have to.

The way Louis looked now, breath in pants and garbled words being swallowed with spit that would otherwise block his pipe of air. He rolls onto his side and curls up around his pillow, eyes shut even though his hands were still bound.

Harry, feeling resolved, spoons him from behind and doesn't feel an ounce of regret or discomfort. That's because Louis housed that irritation now, too sore to get a proper rest. After Harry untied him, he hoped sleep would become him but he stayed awake flinching at how the cold air hit his skin.

"Harry?" Louis whispered.

"What, Louis?"

"Nothing."

For Louis, sex was a little more than about control or power. It was two people doing what they can to become one. Not for Harry though, he used sex as an escape goat.

"Lou?" Harry starts their soon to be short-lived conversation.

"Hmm?"

"I'm sorry." Harry had felt Louis emotionally pull away, already developing the intuitiveness he's been avoiding since birth.

"It's okay."

"I care for you." That wasn't a lie anymore. Harry did care for Louis, maybe not in a conventional way but that didn't mean anything.

"I care about you too."

Harry smiled and took Louis' hand, only to have the boy hiss and pull back. He notices the red lines around Louis' wrist and doesn't know what to think. Control meant someone getting hurt, he'd prepared himself for that; but now that it was Louis who pulled away, he was lost again.

"I'll sing to you." Harry kisses Louis' cheek to compensate,
Louis shakes his head. "I'm fine."

Harry insists and tangles their legs together as a symbol of offered assistance and approaching something precious to him. But Louis bites back a sob that arises from Harry nudging his tender behind with a strong, firm knee too indelicately.

"What?" Harry moves his leg and sighs, forgetting the desire for dominance so it can be replaced by confusion.

* * * * *

After Harry's taken advantage of a good night's sleep, - although he fell asleep at a little after five waiting for Louis to be comfortable - he wakes up at twelve. Louis' not in bed and Harry finds that his regular composure for nonchalance has found him in the dark again.

Harry fixes them some breakfast and lunch - he despises the word brunch because it's for people with time to make up new words when Chambers already catalogues the necessary ones.

He feeds Bolg and sets the turtle on the floor to move around freely.

The blizzard hasn't picked up yet but according to the current news report it should do so by late lunch time. Louis calculates the time in his head and finds that he should be able to take a plate of his famous Nutella cookies - don't ask - across the street to Mrs. Robinson. The woman lives alone with Pumpkin her cat who gave birth a week ago to an adorable round of kittens. Louis even got to name one Sizzle.

There's heavy footsteps descending the staircase and Louis takes a deep breath, hating himself for mixing the batter too early and leaving him with nothing to occupy his idle hands with now. Harry's fully dressed but Louis turned on the heating in the house so they wouldn't need to pack on clothing.

"What are you doing?" Harry asks, flicking hair out of his eyes.

"Good morning to you too." Louis sees Bolg slip under his only high couch and he sighs.

"It's the middle of the day."

"Your fault for sleeping in."

Harry doesn't even laugh, but Louis' going to admit it wasn't his best attempt at a dim witted joke.

"Why are you dressed?" Louis looks at the counter when he's talking, then peeks up through his lashes.

"I'm leaving."

"What?" Louis stares directly at him, feeling the hot air leave his body in a shallow breath full of surprise.

"I have to go." Harry is actively passive in his expression, lips set in a grim line and eyebrows
settled neatly above his thin eye lashes.

"Why?" Louis can hardly hear himself. What had he done wrong? But he keeps that question to himself; during pain you never let yourself appear hurt.

Harry couldn't see right through Louis' tough exterior, he failed to notice the insecurities piled on one another behind blue, blue eyes and feathery hair. Harry was blind to inward beauty and retrospect. He and the serpent that commanded him only saw what they wanted to see, and sometimes it went too far.

"It doesn't matter." Harry snaps. "Don't ask me that."

"Did I-"

"Do something wrong? Yeah, you did."

Harry didn't have a coat so he just left in a heavy mass of angry feelings. His weight was still felt on Louis' shoulders after he was gone. Even when Louis started to cry and slid down to the floor and Bolg crawled up to him oblivious to human pain, human angst.

"What did I do wrong?" Louis wraps his arms around himself and just let's himself feel broken for the first time.

_Nothing_, a little voice that sounded too much like himself to be normal answers. _Pretend. Pretend nothing ever happened and you'll see why it's the best thing you can do._ Louis fought the edging depression and got up to wash his face. To outsiders, he was the exact same lonely Louis who was born happy with being antisocial. To outsiders, he wasn't the boy with a swollen heart and misunderstanding swimming through his veins.

Mrs. Robinson thanks him several times for the cookies and let's him stay over while she put them on display. Sizzle played with Bolg despite the turtle hiding in his shell the entire time. Louis would gaze out at the worsening weather conditions and smile at his reflection just because that knew exactly how he felt inside.

"Why don't you stay for dinner, dear?" Mrs. Robinson follows him to the door and Sizzle clings to his sweater at the front.

"It's okay, Mrs. Robinson. School's open for tuition tomorrow and I have to be there but thank you."

"Maybe next time then."

"Definitely. Have a good night."

"Goodnight, Louis."

Louis crosses the street when the wind is too strong and howls at him around his hoodie. One blow knocks him to the ground and he groans from the ice tar hitting his sore hip. The driver of the navy Range Rover grips his door handle tight enough for it to crack under his pressure, but Louis gets up and Harry recloses his door again.

Harry was a jerk, he knew that. He had to part ways with Louis because it was getting too comfortable, he was falling too _deep_ too soon and that would only end in disaster. He thought Louis is what he wanted but after surviving all these years with nothing but a line of homicides and criminal cannibalism, he doesn't _need_ anything.
"Lou." He holds his steering wheel and whispers to the emptiness of his car.

The cold air gathers by his lips, and by order of a miracle Louis pauses before unlocking his door. He doesn't look up and doesn't react physically but Harry knows Louis knows. It's a terrifying thought.

"Lou." He does it again just to string it out, but this time Louis opens his door and goes inside without hesitation.

*Louis' better off without us. We're better off without him.*

Harry listens to the stingy serpent who rears its head behind his eyes and hisses venom. He starts his car and drives away to the venue of the haunted house that he's been constructing from day one as an easier way to meet people and grab them with the help of a few colleagues.

Chapter End Notes

end of Chapter Four by ss98
Chapter Five

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Christine "Barbie" Parker was an avid fan of all things horror. Despite the stereotype that came with her nickname since kindergarten, Chris managed to beat all odds against her blindness in the left eye and went about a successful life. She's transferred here from Chicago for the brand new research university that's opening in Middleton.

Part of her carefully constructed tourist plans, was the haunted house on Pike aHill. There were groups that went up at least three times every day - minus Saturday - and today she would be part of a six person troop at lunch. She didn't let the fact that she came here alone with little money and minimum salary job faze her excitement.

Chris drove up with her rental car and introduced her to the awaiting folks in a circle. They were friendly and she liked that about people, they didn't discriminate. The Middleton brochure hadn't been wrong then.

The building looked aged and like it has been abandoned for years with moss and fungae growing up the sides. The paint was peeling and being at such a high point in the mountain, the mist floating about them added to the feel of suspense. It was all in good spirits, Chris knew. When their guide came out to greet everyone, he exited from the spooky house itself. Her sight wasn't excellent but she didn't need both eyes to confirm that he was the most attractive human being she's ever seen. The Middleton brochure had definitely undermined the town. She smiled politely and tried not to stare into his eyes that were as green as the tree peaks around them.

* * * * *

Louis' spent the final week at high school torn between two places: home and dance classes. Dance, he discovered, is his method of flushing out the toxins that plagued his life at every corner. The most difficult was ballet for him, despite having been to classes up until he was twelve. His body wasn't out of shape as such, but getting back into the groove of things had begun to physically hurt.

Their instructor had them wear shoes twice as small, and underneath their feet were wrapped to create the perfect form. It was painful only for the first few hours. He did all without protest because it was a vital part of the recommendation that he'd need when he moved to Chicago. Over the course of this week, Harry's been impassive about his inconsolable state. He's been trying every remaining ounce of luck to win Louis' respect back, but things were still rocky. His first attempt ended in him getting a flat 'no' at the laundromat. Actually, he would have liked a word or two from Louis' mouth.

He walked in defenceless just the day after he left Louis' house, and expected to be forgiven anyway because why not? Right?

Wrong.

Louis was folding the clothes he'd taken out of the drier and layering them in a basket. Bolg was
with him. Harry walked up to the smaller male, aware that Louis knew he was there. "I didn't mean to leave." Harry rushes to say and why were his palms sweaty? Louis ignored him.

"I'm sorry."

Louis chose not to even look at Harry, much to Harry's irritation. He clenched his jaw and tried again, more blunt. "I want you to forgive me."

Louis exited the laundromat with Bolg and his basket, continued to walk home even though Harry followed him still speaking.

"I don't understand why you're so mad." Harry was close behind him on the sidewalk. "Louis?"

That night, Louis didn't cry because that was weak so he ate a tub of ice cream and stayed up past seven to just be by himself - and Bolg.

Harry went back to the haunted house and slammed the front door so hard the hinge snapped off. He didn't greet the miners who worked for him that were mutated by radiation and couldn't actually talk, but stormed up into his bedroom and pulled the alcohol out of his mini fridge. He trudged downstairs to the kitchen again and grabbed the keys to his basement from the hook. Harry went down to the basement and accidentally kicked an empty cage that's caked in dried blood and some other material. He told it to be quiet and took a swig of his Captain Walker bottle. That night, Harry would make certain he was drunk enough to be sloppy with his 'surgery' and drown out the screams with stories about Louis.

He found Chris' cage and grinned charmingly at the weeping girl curled up in the corner. "Aw don't cry." He kicked to side she was leaning against to get her attention. "Crying won't help, darling."

"Wha-What do y-you want?" She sobbed, choking on spit and air. "How long have you been in here?" Harry asked thoughtfully.

"I-I-"

"Two days? Yeah that's about right." He points to the sky and bites his lip. "Thing is, I've favoured you and that isn't fair, now is it?"

She sucks in a breath and looks away from him, body shivering from the cold.

"Answer me!"

"No." She whispered. "I agree." Harry looked around for a bit at the number of empty gated cubes and sighed. It took a moment more for Chris to break into a fit of ugly sobs.

"Oh shut up." Harry glared at her. "No point in it now."

"P-Please-"

Harry liked to think of his captives being 'safe' up until he came home and required a generous fix. His fixes were becoming more in demand now that he had nothing - and no one - to spend time with.

He was careful with Chris, because he knew about her eye. He strapped her down and told her all about Louis as he made the first incision.
"Believe it or not-" He gagged her when she started to scream and went back to her hip. "-but I think he's just pretending to hate me."

He finished taking off a block of bleeding flesh and dumped it in a dish that sat on a clean table. "What do you think?"

All he got was a piercing cry.

"Hmm. I agree." He took another gulp of Three Flags whiskey and dropped the empty bottle. The next incision he made was on her thigh and the scalpel shook in his hands, going too deep. "Oops. Anyway, if he really is angry I don't understand why."

Chris cried and cried until she was too tired to feel it and passed out. Harry had everything he needed but Chris could still survive and well, that's not good. He took the slippery scalpel in his dirty hand and slit her throat, letting the blood ooze out into the drain under her.

* * * * *

Now that he thinks about it, parked outside the studio where Louis attends dance classes, he was quite ill-mannered in that first apology. That's exactly why he tried again, and this time Louis spoke.

Harry had showed up at Louis' place of work, the pet shop, and ignored Delilah completely at the cash register when he cornered Louis by the pedigree dog food.

"Listen to me." Harry hasn't used his barking voice of order with Louis since he received such a deathly glare that day.

"What do you want?" Louis crossed his arms and waited. "Look at me." He needed Louis - with eyes as blue as two Mediterranean oceans - to notice he was actually there.

"I'm busy." Louis weakly shoved his arm and got nowhere with that. "Leave me alone."

"No." Harry took Louis' hands and held them against his own chest, Louis didn't struggle. "I'm sorry."

"I heard you." Louis snaps. "And I don't care."

"Why are you so angry with me?"

The dark look that overcame Louis' blue, blue eyes made Harry excited and curious. "Because you're a jerk, that's why!" Louis punched Harry's chest. "And I want you to leave me alone."

Harry was surprised Louis had such fire inside him, it was entrancing and intoxicating. He was forced to pin Louis' body with all of his.

"Get off!" Louis punched his shoulder when Harry almost squashed him, fisting his shirt in the other hand.

"Stop it." Harry murmurs sweet as honey. "Calm down, Lou."

Louis was livid. "You bastard. I'm not a game, you can't decide when you want to play or not! I
hate you, Harry."

That made Harry back up in spite of it being a total lie. Louis apparently wasn't done, and slapped Harry when he tried to talk. Harry felt nothing but he wanted to.

"Find someone who isn't me to do this with you, because I am not what you want clearly. I don't care whose life you threaten because I have no one and nothing to lose so do whatever you want to get the Hell over me." He spoke while gathering his things and Harry stood frozen. With that, Louis left the store in his uniform and was granted the rest of the evening off. Harry had no voice in his head, no serpent telling him to do anything. There hadn't been one since Harry decided to apologise pathetically the first time.

Louis did cry that night because he was allowed to be weak every once in a while. He felt raw with guilt, even though he shouldn't. He'd made the decision about Chicago the same day as the brochure from a college there arrived. He had enough money invested to rent a flat there and live simply enough.

Then why did feel like he'd be leaving something behind? Someone behind, more importantly. Half of his reason for not forgiving Harry was that he would just leave and it's better if there wasn't an actual attachment. It wasn't like Harry loved him and Louis knew that because looking into a person's eyes can tell you a lot. He saw everytime they spoke how hard Harry fought to stay nonchalant and equiped with zero emotion.

Harry didn't swallow a drop of gin or Scotch when he took the kitchen knife from the collection and sat on the stairs whilst carving things into his body.

He ended up with a savage scar down his abdomen that needed bandaging, but it wasn't a suicide attempt. He just wanted to *feel pain* the way he head did, his metaphorical heart did. He put several L’s on his shoulder and watched the blood drip onto the basin and stain the porcelain until his vision dimmed.

He untidied his mind and skewered all the focus he had. He threw everything around and let out all the steam he's been harbouring for days now. There was no point because he still felt bloated but empty.

Without realising it, Harry brought thoughts of Louis' time with him to the forefront of his mind. It just popped into his line of attention and made him stop trashing his room to sit on the floor. First was the memory of Louis that day at school when Harry dropped Gemma off. He looked so reserved that Harry stopped walking just to look at this fine creature.

Then it was the polaroid line-up of all Louis' expressions since they started 'hanging out' first. Eventually Harry smiled and didn't feel like a stressed line of rope being snapped. It was final that he needed Louis in his life everyday. He didn't know what it was, but it didn’t have to be the notorious emotion of love. Harry knew now that Louis soothed his ego at its worst times and that's all he needed. Louis was his favorite person and he was going to make it known. Harry's third attempt at apologising had made progress because they both got over fits of heated emotion at each other, and learned to control their composes.

Harry learned of Louis' dance lessons on Wednesday and parked outside, waiting. Two hours passed before Louis opened the polished door and stepped onto the sidewalk in joggers, *Love Me Like You Do* T-Shirt and a satchel.

The shirt made him stop and think before Harry squeezed the door handle. It took him the chorus of *Thinking Out Loud* to decide it was too early for such thoughts, and Louis probably
would never actually love a man like him. He was fucked up in a thousand and one ways, leaving no room for recovery. Harry would definitely try to make Louis feel something for him as he would feel for Louis. That's the only way he'd get to keep Louis to himself.

Harry's been researching hardships in friendships and relationships, because he's never been through this and just wants it to stop. Roses turned out to be a reliable route so Harry visited a florist with a lovely old lady playing owner and bought a single white rose every day for the past three days. He gave those roses to Louis on two different occasions - today is the third. The first time he left it on Louis' doorstep, where it stayed even after Louis saw it. Harry sighed and punched a wall when he got home to an empty house. The second time he left it on Louis' windowsill with a funny picture he'd stolen off Google and printed. Louis kept that one.

Each day was harder for Harry because he's never tried so hard but still failed at attaining something. This third time would almost seal the deal, when Harry visited Louis' dance studio while he worked.

It is Sunday and Louis was alone in the studio since he stayed in after class. He's gotten so many mistakes done that his Madam demanded he work harder or just leave, because this wasn't a joke. He really wanted to try and excel at this, so Harry watched Louis stretch with a slight wince.

It was a wonderful sight to behold, Louis commanding his body the way he did. Nobody would have guessed he skipped six years of ballet school with the gracious movements he conducted in the dim light of the afternoon. Harry admired every feature in Louis, memorised every facet of physical detail and that tiny rhythm in his chest beat louder. The L's engraved in his skin burned bright and loud as Louis hooked one leg over the bar and spread his other to stretch his straddle. Harry didn't make a sound, not wanting to taint this image with his goriness. He's never felt himself be so dirty before.

Sucking up a silent breath Harry strode over to where Louis' back was to him, and circled Louis' little ankle in his hand. Louis yelped and almost got himself hurt by falling with a risen leg, but Harry caught him and held him close enough for their faces to be the breath of a hair apart. Louis squirmed when Harry substitute the bar for himself, and when he tried pulling his leg back Harry held on tighter before tugging Louis' body forward. He put Louis' leg onto his shoulder so the straddle was stronger, and held Louis around the waist.

Deciding to go with it and not argue with the complacent demon in Harry's eyes, Louis sighs and continues his routine. The boy only pulled away when it began to hurt and pulled back, keeping his leg in place.

Things got slower and Harry was a better partner to Louis than he'd expected. They never used words, and Harry followed Louis’ guiding hands to where he is meant to hold while Louis moved fluidly. Harry began to like doing this, and thought about asking Louis to let him help whenever there was the need. He squashed that hope when he remembered Louis will probably go back to hating him when this is over with.

Harry managed to support Louis' body weight completely and took advantage of this moment by just looking at Louis' body in all its vivid beauty. The outfit he wore hugged his curves and Harry could feel his hip bones under his fingertips.

There was no urgency this time, and neither of them spoke but held a singular gaze the entire time. Louis kept it up until he needed to go home, and pulled away from Harry. The warmth left them both in such a rush that Harry's mind grew fuzzy and he shook his head to clear it up. Harry figured that was progress because Louis took the rose from his hand this time, smiling
with his eyes and not his lips. He failed in his kiss when Louis gasped and turned away. It wasn't fair to Harry that Louis kept doing this, but Louis was a coward under all his bravado. He cleared his throat and scurried out of the studio.

Harry's never had anything given to him, he stood accused of not being born with a silver spoon in his mouth. He's been through tough work, and had the callouses to show for it, but this accomplishment meant more to him. It paled in comparison to what he would feel like after Louis' entirely handed over his trust.

Louis had all the roses kept in his mother's worst vase - he loved it the most because of the memory of him dropping it and re-gluing it back untidily - and slotted this one beside the rest. "Hi Bolg." Louis greeted the wandering turtle in his kitchen.

Bolg bumps Louis' foot as he strolls by, making Louis giggle and pick him up. He thinks more pets would be a lovely idea so Bolg isn't lonely during the day.

Hedgehogs would be lovely. There were three at the pet shop, one named Bundy who is an Albino hedgehog with white spike and skin and red eyes. Nobody really wanted him but Louis named him - after the infamous Ted Bundy - and would take him home one day, preferably tomorrow. He leaves for Chicago on Wednesday on a train to the airport.

The tights were growing uncomfortable for Louis and he went to shower so he could take them off. He stood under the pleasant spray of the water and felt terrible about himself. Someone took a genuine interest in him, that stood to this day and he was throwing it away. Beneath his strong personality there was a lot Louis desired, but all the emotional gifts won't come from Harry.

In his *Star Wars* onesie - he wore it only when he wanted to mope - he went to answer the door after someone knocked twice and ignored his call of answering shortly.

It was a mad flash immediately after unlatching the door and swinging it open.

Someone had him pinned and the door slammed shut behind this person. Louis stiffened and had his mouth covered by a familiar large hand so he wouldn't scream, but after recognising the hand he didn't want to anymore. When the obstruction moved, Louis opened his mouth to speak but was smothered by another pair of lips and a tongue prodding at his own.

It was Harry and Louis knew where this was going, so he held Harry's shirt tightly and allowed their kiss to heat up until it was dirty and urgent. Harry bit Louis' lip and made it swell to a pretty shade of red, bucking his hips into Louis' at the same time to demonstrate his hard on. Louis gasps and thinks about how long Harry's been that way, thinking about this.

Harry pulls the zip of Louis' outfit down and pried it off him, groaning at the sight of a naked Louis underneath. He slid his arms around Louis' waist and started working on flourishing love bites on his neck. He made sure it hurt enough for Louis to always remember they were there, and tugged on Louis' hair so more skin was revealed.

He licked his lips and one hand glided down to Louis' behind, groping and kneading the flesh until it was pink from a good shower and excellent contact. Harry growled as Louis' body slackened and slipped a finger between his thighs, seeking where he would penetrate.

Louis' knees buckled when Harry's fingertip wiggled past his rim, and gripped Harry's shoulders with all his might until the older of the two hoisted him onto the doorway desk at the entry. Louis had to stop this.
"Spread your legs." Harry instructed.

Louis did so obediently.

"Wider." Harry bit his lip at the view he had and pushed Louis back onto the desk. Harry stripped off his shirt and ignored Louis' sudden inhale, definitely having noticed the scars now. He expects disgust but Louis' small hands unbuckle his belt in record timing instead. He bends and nipped at Louis' thighs, moaning at Louis' sweet taste on his tongue and becoming more hungry for him.

Louis arches his back against the sticky wood and shudders at Harry's mouth doing wicked things between his legs. Harry's not for patience this time though, and forces two fingers in at once for prep. Louis cries out his name and scratches the varnish on his furniture, accepting the stretch and rolling back against it.

"Look at me." Harry was all business when he loomed over Louis, positioning himself at his fluttering ring of muscle and sliding in.

"Harry, I'm leaving." Louis started out clear then his words turned to mush.

"What?" Harry continued getting deeper against Louis' nails on his arms.

"I'm...I'm leaving." Louis' toes and fingers curled with pleasure and he didn't flinch once, leaving his jaw to hang open as Harry rocked into him.

Harry didn't respond, and it could be because he didn't hear but the cloud that took over Harry's calm hung between them.

"Good?" Harry delivers a hard thrust that nudges Louis' prostrate just right and has him sputtering come across his chest.

Harry placed two flat palms on the moving table and started moving faster, snapping his hips and making Louis scream with his brutal pace. His hips met the inside of Louis' thighs and Louis saw white everywhere.

"Tell me!" Harry has a strange edge to his face. "Tell me if I make you feel good, Lou."

"Y-You do." Louis sounded a thousand miles away but he was right there lost to a world next to sub space. "So good, H-Harry."

"Who else makes you feel this way?" Harry grunted, creating bruises on Louis' hips and pounded him harder.

The sweat on Louis' skin made him move across the table and entire object shifted as Harry brutally thrusted deeper.

"Fucking answer me!" Harry took Louis' hardened nipple between his lips and sucked until the dusky nub was pink and sore.

"Y-You." Louis was breathless and breaking. "Just you, I-I pr-promise."

Harry was satisfied with that and came deep inside Louis' warm body, sinking his teeth into Louis' collarbone as he fucked their orgasms away.

"You're not leaving." Harry grits out with blown eyes and traces of a hot temper sticking
Louis’ legs hung tiredly by Harry’s sides and he propped himself up on his elbow. "Harry—"
"No." Harry barked, eyes still stained black and shaking his head. "Absolutely not."

"I'm sorry, Harry." Louis sat up but Harry moved away, pushing Louis’ hand away.

"Don't apologise because you're not *fucking going anywhere.*" Harry raked his fingers through his hair, pulling at it and willing himself to feel pain.

Louis sighed and couldn’t help regretting that he opened his mouth about this in the first place. *See what I meant? You didn't listen to me and now you're letting a fucking boy ruin us.*

Harry glowered inwardly at the vile reptile who spat out commands for him. He hadn't needed that voice all week and he'll throw it out the window like he did with his bedside lamp today. "Why did you want to leave?" Harry got into Louis’ space when the boy stood up, crowding him up against the wall. "Is it me? Because I'm pretty sure we've reconciled now." His fist comes down on the wall next to Louis' ear and he flinches. "I mean, I know you wouldn't have let me fuck you if you were just going to leave afterwards."

Louis felt like melting into the wall and disappearing forever because he knew this was a bad idea. Harry deserved to be angry, but why was he angry exactly? Maybe Harry had developed something for Louis, or maybe nobody else would get into bed with a psychopath fast enough. The latter option made Louis cringe.

"I want you *here.*" Harry cupped Louis' jaw gently and tilted his head up. "Where I am."

Louis opened his mouth but Harry kissed him hard, catching his lip between his teeth and pulling on it. Harry groaned against Louis' mouth, failing as he tried to convey a silent message.

When Harry let Louis breathe, the boy’s cheeks were stained with tear tracks and he looked helpless against Harry. He was scared and cold, torn by the needs of the heart and futuristic plan of his mind. It was so frightening and Harry didn't have a gentle enough manner to calm him down.

"It's okay." Harry cupped the sides of Louis' face and brushed his tears away. He kisses Louis' forehead. "I know you're sorry. It's fine, Lou."

Louis stared at the ceiling and felt the horrid pain in his throat from the stretch of his throat. He swallowed and Harry nuzzled his neck. He no longer felt guilty for when he leaves on Wednesday because who was he kidding when he thought Harry had become affectionate? He was a possession to Harry, and after years of studying men like Harry on the sidelines he's disgraced with himself.

He let himself fall into this hole with the hope that Harry would help him out, but all the man wanted was to keep him there for his personal entertainment.

"Can I have a kiss?" Harry traced Louis' lips with his fingertip.

Louis hesitated but the gleam in Harry's eye scared him into inching forward. "Yeah?" Harry's warm breath laced with mint leaned into him.

Louis nodded slowly and closes his eyes, hearing Harry smile and press their lips together. He forced his excitement and held Harry's hand with trembling fingers
the end of Chapter Five by ss98
Chapter Six

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

You're the light, you're the night. You're the colour of my blood. You're the cure, you're the pain. You're the only thing I wanna touch.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

When Monday came, Louis was forced into letting Harry take him to school. He was collecting his certificates today and was set on saying his farewells before Wednesday. He still hadn't come up with a plan for that day, but it had to be quick because his train was at twelve fifteen.

The students of his high school couldn't care less, but an uncomfortable feeling crept up Louis' spine as they pulled up in front of the entrance. Louis had asked if they could have the radio on so there was no need for a conversation, and it worked up until now.

"Have a good day at school." Harry unlocked the central locking and smiled with dimples at Louis. "Thank you." Louis nodded and offered back a smile but it didn't seem adequate because his fumbling gut feeling told him Harry was waiting for something.

Shoving that proposition down to the depths of blissful ignorance, Louis jumps down from the high-risen SUV and takes on the staircase two at a time. School was only three hours long today with no classes on their schedule, but Louis forgot to tell Harry that.

Oh well. He smiles at the ground and goes to his locker which needed to be emptied today. Another thing to make him giggle, is that students broke into the PA system room and started playing music through the intercom. Louis shakes his at DJ Infamous' Double Cup.

Checking the time so he knows when to report to his home-room and collect what he's hear for, Louis also gets pushed against the lockers suddenly. Not by bullies which is excellent, but this advancer might be more scary.

"Harry?" Louis has mastered the ability to keep his fear under the surface and feigned indifference when said man blocked his vision from everyone.

"You forgot something." Harry's warm breath is laced with those peppermints he kept in the glove compartment. It's a heady scent that makes Louis part his lips.

"Oh?"

When Harry's large hand slips something into Louis', his lips press against Louis'. There are no complaints against Harry's kisses because Louis quite liked them, they made him light-headed and tingly. It was confusing because human nature went against romantic passion head-on in that case. Louis knows Harry can be a real gentleman if he wanted to and tried hard enough, that's what kept Louis from going bezerk and maybe calling the police. He also did have feelings for Harry besides anger and rational fear; he'll just never admit it because anyone outside their circumstance would label him as loony.

"Thanks." Louis says for the second time that morning, smiling a little more genuinely.

"You're welcome, darling." Harry squeezes Louis' hand once before walking away.
When Louis looks down, he finds his iPod in his hand. He can't believe he forgot that.
Their relationship was unhealthy and a twisted form of forbidden. It also won't last beyond
Wednesday. That thought comforted the scared part of Louis, but irritated the portion that
appreciated Harry's 'differences'.

Louis quite liked the song being played by rebellious teenagers through their school's speakers but
his routine - however weak it is now - still mattered to him. His earphones got plugged back in, and
his trials and tribulations pushed out of his mind. A clear head for a new day.

Harry got back into the Range Rover feeling lighter than when he'd gotten off. He was worried
about Louis forgetting something then realising he needed it halfway through the day. Harry was
proud of himself for making sure that didn't happen today.

He drove around town with Louis' pet turtle in the passenger seat. Louis didn't want Bolg being
alone so Harry volunteered to watch him. Having collected his entire family's inheritance, he wasn't
looking into getting a job that would take up time.

Harry wanted to get Louis a gift to say thank you without using words. Words were never his friend
in apologies or gratification, so he got material things to convey the message for him.
A new store bought gift would mean less than a sentimental one so Harry decides to give Louis
something special to him.

The gratitude will be for Louis saying he wouldn't leave Harry behind, and choosing to stay for him.
Even though Louis looked at him with wide, unsure eyes Harry knew it was only a matter of time.
Even he didn't want Louis as a solid partner but after sleeping on it - with Louis curled up beside
him - Harry changed his mind.

Harry also hasn't felt the twitch of his fix in over a day, and only that is unnerving in itself. He's so
accustomed to the nagging demand of a serpent that he thinks something has gone wrong and needs
to do it anyway just to replenish the desire.

No bars were open yet, and all those who were worth Harry's evil eye were hungover in bed. He
was not breaking into any homes today and Louis would take up his time later so he doubts there'll
be a dosage to fix his craving. The thought annoys him enough to make him pull over at the sleazy
twenty-four hour pub and pull out his wallet.

It starts to rain at ten, dark grey clouds covering the sky and blocking out the glorious sun's rays.
The weather makes Louis smile but hate himself for not telling Harry to pick him up. Now he has to
walk to the pet shop, or take a bus. He could text Harry but he has no available minutes or data
either.

When their school rings the final bell, Louis tucks his special envelope into his bag with all his
other belongings and speed walks through the rain to the bus stop. He has a jacket with no hoodie
and stands under the given shelter regretting his life choices.

The pet shop is mostly empty so he uses Delilah's computer to surf the internet. He discovers the
case of the Yorkshire Ripper, a man who nabbed adolescents and slashed them in the country-like
region of England. Time flies by as he reads up on the Black Dahlia murder - still unsolved to the
day - and raises his eyebrow at the fact that there was only ever one suspect. Poor guy.

"Delilah?" Louis calls, not looking up from the screen, when the door bell jingles.
No answer. Sometimes Louis hates his boss.
"Can I......-" He trails off on himself when his eyes meet nobody needing assistance in the store. The place is empty. "Odd."

He glances at the clock and sees that his shift is over, and the night sky is deathly black. "Delilah, who's locking up tonight?" He tries again, shutting down the PC and unplugging it in case a storm arrives.

Still no answer. He sighs and gets to feet so he can stretch as a clap of thunder reigns in and the lights go out all at once. He shrieks in shock but remains perfectly still until he sees wandering flashlights across the street in the locksmith's place.

Louis puts his Samsung's flashlight on - prepared to lose the twenty percent battery life he has remaining - and hunts for their main power box. He sees that all the switches have been blown down and don't need him fiddling with it then. Carefully, he puts all the light switches off and locks the back door with his set of keys, cursing Delilah's incompetence as he went along. When no more lightning ensues, he puts on all the main switches and closes the lid.

The animals were spooked and he took a half hour trying to soothe them. By the end of it, his battery is drained and outside is pitch black. The payphones won't work so he can't do anything except play with Bundy and wait for the lights to come back on.

A bunch of rowdy kids are outside, as per usual, and Louis locks the front door to keep them out. Delilah can stand outside too if she shows up from wherever she went to.

The boys are shouting profanities outside, clearly drunk out of their minds, and not at all moving from Louis' block. The locksmith locked up and went to bed and it seems Louis' sitting on the floor for no reason.

Something moves to Louis' left and his head whips in that direction. He frowns as his eyes squint through the darkness and see the bag of bird seed that fell from a shelf. "Hello?" He had to, not because his horror movie tendencies kicked in but because the wind can't knock down a 500g bag of sunflower seeds.

There's no answer and he leaves the bag there to rest. Bundy smells his fingers and familiarises himself with Louis' scent through his spikes. The Albino hedgehog settles against Louis' arm peacefully and tries digging at his clothes. These creatures were nocturnal so that made sense.

Harry sat in front of Louis' television in a pair of jogging shorts and an empty mind. He stared at the time in the corner of the screen and became agitated when Louis didn't call or return after six in the afternoon. He grabbed his keys and headed out the door with trainers, saturated with worry.

Louis became hungry and listened to his stomach growl before remembering the fridge that probably still had food in it. He made his way to the staff room and tripped over something at the door.

"Shit!" He muttered and reached for the light switch. Obviously it didn't work and he mentally slapped himself for such stupidity.

He held Bundy in his left hand and fished out his iPod to use the faint light. After seeing the object, Louis screamed bloody murder and alerted everyone on the street with that sound. Harry screeched to a halt in front of the store and didn't stop to knock after he heard the scream. The door was locked and he smashed the glass with a brick from the street. No time to waste, was his motto and excuse for doing that.

"Lou?" Harry shouted after stepping over glass shards.
Louis was frozen in terror and didn't move or say anything. He's seen dead bodies before, plenty - for God's sake Harry was his stalker friend - but never someone who was close to him. He heard Harry and fought to relax but his eyes were locked on Delilah's open ones, that stared into space and looked glassy with no life.

"Louis?!" Harry burst through the swinging door and his eyes fell on Louis, then the body on the ground. "Fucking Hell."

Louis nodded, not knowing what else to do. He was still staring and Harry had to carry him out of the room to get him back.

"Here. Look at me." Harry focused Louis' vision on himself. "You're okay?"

Louis nodded slowly, eyes wide and fingers gripping Harry's waist. Why was he shirtless? "Sure?" Harry pulled Louis into a hug, knowing he needed the comfort and support.

"S-She-"

"Shh." Harry kisses his forehead.

"W-Was it-"

"No." Harry cuts him off again. "It wasn't me."

That seemed to terrify Louis even more because now there was a killer around that didn't have a personal attachment to him. That wasn't the best thing to say but the truth always stung a bit. "I'm gonna call the police, okay?" Harry needed to warm Louis up first. "Let's get you to the car."

Louis nodded again and clung to Harry where he felt safe. Harry wasn't better than the man who murdered Louis' boss, but Louis knew he'd live a little longer with Harry than that stranger. They got to the vehicle and Harry put Louis in the back seat with the heater on. Bolg was now at home but Bundy was crawling up Louis' chest for attention.

"You with me, darling?" Harry finished make the call and had to wait for officials to arrive. Louis didn't know if he wanted to be held or not because he doesn't think he's okay with that but Harry decides for him. Harry pulled Louis onto his lap - wet as it is - and kissed his forehead.

"She-She's dead." Louis shivered, fingers frozen in a crooked stance.

"I know." Harry breathes warmth down his neck. "Why are you so upset?"

"B-Because.......-" Louis was so tired.

"Because?"

"She's my....-" He yawns and closes his eyes. "-my boss."

It was just shock, it would definitely be gone by tomorrow morning after Louis' slept and eaten. He didn't seem like the kind to squeal over death, rather someone who saw all that Harry did and smiled afterwards. Maybe those times were gone.

Harry didn't allow anyone to wake Louis up to give his statement, and said that he'd be at the station tomorrow. He carried Louis into the house and laid him down on the bed after undressing him. Harry would have to give Louis his gift tomorrow then.

Overnight Louis had figured out his plan for Wednesday. The previous night is what he recovered
from and he was back to himself, just like when his parents died and all he needed was a good
sleep.

Harry wasn't going to let him go but that wouldn't happen if Louis gave him a reason to. If Harry
had a remarkable anything, it was his temper. Louis would push and prod until Harry hated him and
got over whatever infatuation lingered alongside him.

They went to the station and Louis didn't sit with Harry, he went to the vending machine to get soda
and chatted up the guy behind him. That made Harry come over and shove the new person back.

"Go away." Harry had snapped, arm around Louis who was wiggling to get free.
The male moved away and Harry pinched Louis' hip. Neither said anything because when Harry
opened his mouth, Louis left him standing alone.

After giving his statement, they left and Louis turned the radio on to drown out Harry's persistent
voice.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?" Harry put the music off and gripped the steering wheel.
Louis didn't say anything as he rolled down the window at a red light. The car next to them had a
group of youngsters that called Louis over the lane. That was the last straw for Harry and he got
them home impossibly fast to toss Louis onto the floor and get on top of him.

"What were you doing today, Lou?" Harry unfastened his belt and Louis' trackies. "You fucking
belong to me and you're talking to bastards out there?"

Louis didn't react or respond, but his heart was racing and he was terrified about having taken
things too far. What if Harry actually hurt him? Or killed him? Maybe when Harry got over a
person that's what he did?

It proved the opposite because Harry rolled them over and impaled Louis on him, watching the
boy's face scrunch up after two-finger preparation. It had to hurt but Louis followed Harry's barks of
order and rode him with vigour and dedicated focus.

Louis spent the remaining hours of Tuesday speaking with Mrs. Robinson across the street. She
agreed to watch his home while he was away, since it was paid off and needed no further deposits
but he put it in the classifieds of *The Middleston Daily* to rent. It didn't bother him that
strangers would be living in his home, not as much as it should anyway.

The moving van would come by to pick up Louis' belongings on Thursday, all boxed up and ready.
The items he won't be needing in Chicago have been dropped off in a storage warehouse.
Louis' more upset - call it anxious - about how or if Harry will see the trucks. He hopes not.
Wednesday morning came around with early rising birds and Louis awoke with a start. He saw
Harry sleeping next to him in the near nude and fell out of bed with a disbelieving shout.

"Louis?" Harry asked groggily.

"What did we do?" Louis stood tapping his bare foot on the carpet.
For once, Harry was lost. "What?"

"What did we do last night?"

"Uh...nothing." Harry understood what Louis was asking after taking in his semi-nude appearance.
Louis chewed his lip and went into the bathroom after a stiff nod. Harry frowned, not recalling why
the boy was so irritable, and stretched before slipping out from under the covers. He went into the
bathroom after Louis and caught the boy brushing his teeth.
"What's got you knotted up today?" Harry seized Louis' hips and spun him around from facing the mirror. "I don't think I like it."

Louis smiled around the frothing toothpaste. "What do you mean?"

Harry's eyes darkened with humour as he smirked. "Spit."

Louis did so and gargled his mouth with clean water. "I didn't do that for you."

"You need to be put in your place." Harry growled, slamming his palms down on the counter. "What happened to my Louis?"

Harry was only playing along, he was never going to hurt Louis. He liked all sides to the boy the way he thought he never could. It was refreshing.

"He already left."

Harry's never felt more clouded with heat before, and he tightens his jaw before turning Louis back around. He bites the boy's neck, hard enough for it to pass pleasure into pain.

"You're going to watch me fuck you." Harry leaned Louis forward and pulled his hips back. "And then you're going to apologise."

"I have nothing to be sorry about." Louis got his arms pinned and pants ripped off.

"You can't disrespect me, Lou." Harry dragged his teeth along Louis' shoulder blades.

Louis didn't know where all this brave energy was coming from, surging through his veins and making words spill out. "I have to leave, Harry."

"And go where?" Harry shoved two wet fingers into Louis and heard him groan. "Where will you go without me?"

"Far away from here." Louis threw his head back when Harry started scissoring his fingers. "Away from you."

Louis was digging his own grave. He was going to come out dead and Harry's clear rumble didn't say otherwise.

"Fuck, you never listen!" Harry hated that they were back to this. He pulled his fingers out and lubed up his length with lotion. "You're. Not. Going. Anywhere."

"You're not good for me." Louis gasped at Harry's entry and rolled his hips back for more.

"Fuck it." Harry sucked on his pulse point. "Fuck all of it. You're mine."

"I want you to hate me."

"Shut up." Harry sped up his hips to make Louis cry out and break the tips of nails by digging so hard into the tile. "Shut up! I don't hate you."

"You have to." Louis bit his lip and turned his head on Harry's shoulder, shuddering from the drag of Harry inside him.

"Do I feel good inside you, Louis?" Harry whispered in his ear, impaling Louis' body pleasurably.

"Yes." Louis' voice is a low hiss.
"You're going to give that up if you leave."

That solves Louis' dwindling assertion. "B-But I have to."

"No, darling." Harry brushed Louis' cheeks and neck, down his torso and made it all feel so gentle. "I'll take care of you here."

Louis knew he was losing, and it wasn't his fault because Harry was in the dominant position here. "You're staying." Harry kissed Louis' lips and brought them both to their climaxes.

Louis got to look in Harry's eyes for a moment, and melt at the emotion that was stored in them. It was a powerful, meaningful one and Louis had to make it stop. It was also fragile and in need of nurture and more love. Louis couldn't let it go to waste on him, he couldn't end up leaving with two hurt people's stories to tell. That wasn't fair to Harry or him.

"Louis, I-"

"No." Louis separated himself from Harry and stepped away quickly. "Stop."

"But-"

"I know what you want to say. Don't say it."

"Don't do this." Harry sighs and feels torn up inside for ever letting someone in.

"Please don't say it." Louis looked up with wet eyes and begged.

"I can't not say what I feel, Lou." Harry looked wounded and vulnerable. Louis' never seen anyone like this and only ever got to imagine with fiction novels.

"It's not real, Harry." Louis wanted to cry but he sucked it all in. "It isn't."

"It is!" Harry shouted, stepping forward. "Don't you dare tell me how to feel."

"We can't."

"We fucking can. We can do whatever the Hell we want." Harry was angry now and that was good for Louis because maybe he'll up and leave.

"Harry, it's not worth it." Louis was crying, softly and hardly clear but he was.

"There's no one to tell us that, Lou."

Harry was bordering on a raging fit. In less than two months he had found the solution to his lifelong issues, and wanted to keep it close now but it was running away. Leaving him.

He's wanted pain his entire life but never realised that he was up to his hair in emotional distress. He was lost and constantly regretting every decision, everything did hurt and he just never appreciated anything. He was in pain every day and a month and a half ago when he dropped his late sister off at school he spotted his painkiller.

His blue-eyed, brown feathery-haired painkiller who didn't flinch when he told him the whole truth about everything.

"Tell me what I'm doing wrong." Harry goes about a different approach. "I've never done this before I...I've never really wanted something- someone before and I don't know what to do. Louis,
I need-

Louis squeezed his eyelids and let a tear escape as he shook his head repeatedly. "Find someone else."

"I can't! Nobody's going to-

"You lived before me, Harry! You can do it again."

"That wasn't living!" Harry points to the left like his past stood their in a grey puff. "That wasn't even surviving."

"I know. I know, Harry. I wish it could be different and-

"You're not leaving me."

"Harry."

"No. Don't say it because you'll be lying."

Louis fishmouths for ten seconds before he steps back, suddenly aware of his nudity and Harry makes a grab at him.

"I'm going to say it and you're going to listen." Harry held Louis' arms behind his back and stopped his squirming with a bite to his shoulder that had Louis whining. Harry kissed a different spot of Louis' skin as he recited each word, slow and careful. "I love you, Louis Tomlinson."

The thunder clapped despite it being early morning and Louis remembered that the birds had shut up minutes ago. He slows his heart rate and stares at his reflection in the mirror, then the time on his alarm clock. 10h23.

"Say it back." Harry nudged Louis' jaw encouragingly. "Tell me you love me too."

Louis couldn't. He couldn't find his tongue and locate his voice. His gut was shrivelled up in a corner and his mind of goodwill was cowering. He didn't want to say it either, not because it wasn't the truth but because it would never go back in.

"Say it." Harry tightened his hold on Louis' back, almost crushing the smaller male.

"I-I....I can't."

Harry's nostrils flared and his blunt nails dug into Louis' soft skin. "Don't lie to me."

"I'm n-not."

"Look me in the eye and say it." Harry pulled him back and made green meet blue in a storm of inquisition. "Tell me you don't ever want to love me."

Harry was secretly praying under his harsh demeanour that Louis wouldn't say it. Just like everybody else, Louis will give up and leave him. He won't be able to cope no matter how much blood he spilt afterwards.

"Harry, stop." Louis tried getting Harry's hands off him.

"You love me, I know you do. I love you too, Lou. Say you-"
"I don't!" Louis spat, prying Harry's fingers off him by force. "I don't love you and you can't make me!"

Harry was taken aback by this outburst and blinked rapidly to see if he could rid himself of this falsity.

"You have no conscience, Harry. You're a murderer but it doesn't ever stop there for you, and I thought I understood you but you're just sadistic and cruel. I can't love you, and I don't think I ever will." Louis finishes with a deep breath and avoids Harry's fallen gaze at all costs. "Just leave me alone, Harry. Please."

Harry's never been more victimised, because nothing anyone has ever said affected him like this had. Because of it, Harry's mouth turns into a grim line and he storms past Louis out of the bathroom. Louis' shoulders sag when the front door slams shut and he wants to fall to his knees just to cry when the smooth kick of an engine starts. Then he thinks, Harry just left without clothes. Not thinking, Louis rushes to grab the packed duffel bag and get cages for Bolg and Bundy.

"We're going on a trip, guys." He tells the little crawlers through blurred vision.

He doesn't know if Harry will be back, but if he is he's bound to lash out at Louis. He said some awful things to the man, untrue and cut deep into them both like a slasher. He sniffed and blinked away his tears before pulling on some clothing. There's no noise outside as he gets into his parents' station wagon and opens the garage door.

Picking up his strong resolve, Louis takes a deep breath and drives away. Harry is a piece of Louis' past now, a secret dark part that will stay with him forever.

The train station is busy and Louis keeps an eye out for a navy Range Rover but none are present. With new-found courage, Louis unloads his belongings and enters them into the baggage department with his ticket details. He even smiles at the lady who ticks his entry off. His seat in the fourteenth cabin, where Bolg and Bundy will stay too.

The train is called Spudster Express and it makes Louis laugh under his breath before boarding calmly. He finds his seat and throws his bag into the overhead compartment. Bundy is asleep and Bolg is staring out of his little cubicle.

"Can't come out now, buddy." Louis tells the reptile. "Can't lose you too."

With a heavy sigh Louis curls up on his cushioned seat and greets his cabin partner. There were no beds here, and it reminded him of the Harry Potter train all too much. Maybe a lady with enchanted candy will come by too.

"Hi, I'm Georgia." The woman with bright red hair and green eyes - Louis doesn't linger on that aspect - holds out her hand.

"Hi. Louis." He responds, his voice unclear and croaky.

"Oh dear. Sore throat?"

Why would he respond if he did have a sore throat? "No." He shakes his head. "Where you heading?"

"Airport. Catching a flight to Chicago in a few hours."

"Me too." He smiles. "What for?"
"College." She beams. A wonderful girl, Louis decides. "And you?"

"Same."

"Are they yours?" She smiles at the sleeping creatures next to him on his seat, beside his ankles. "Ye-" Louis looks out the window once and stops breathing all at once. "No."

"What is it?" She follows his line of vision to see the brooding young man ripping through people's groups to get closer. "Know him?"

"Y-Yeah." Louis' fingers curl in his lap and he starts praying for the train to start moving.

"Nice lad." She nods, although confused about why Harry shoves two people apart and walks through them. "Regular at the bar I used to work at."

Well I broke his heart. Beat that.

Louis keeps staring at how close Harry's getting, a stricken side of him convinced Harry will turn into Hulk and just destroy everything. That doesn't happen but Harry does look up with a mixture of anger, desperation and sheer devastation in his eyes. Louis feels like he's the murderer.

The tracks begin to glide after a heavy steam release and the driver engages the electrical mode of driving. Harry doesn't run along the train like in a cliché movie, he spots something a bit further down and chases it like a madman. More people are shoved and a small boy cries from being pushed down to the ground.

Louis hopes it's over when Harry vanishes through an unmarked door, and a confectionery cart comes rolling by them.

Harry flings the controls room door open and comes to tower over the elderly man in the room. "Stop that train." He growls, pointing out the window to the Spudster.

"Can't do that, lad." The man shrugs.

Harry gets irritated when the man doesn't even look at him, and spins his roller chair around to get in his face with blown pupils and an array of severe emotions.

"Fucking get that train to stop right now." He sees a lazy ginger cat sitting with a twisted tail on the desk. "Or I will make you watch me gut your feline friend."

The elderly is trembling and probably about to wet his trousers, but Harry can't deal with slow people any longer. He grabs the cat by the skin of its neck and ignores the way it scratches him. "Don't believe me?" Harry is close to sweating, the train is almost completely gone.

He steps into the doorway again right beside the train's route and tosses the poor animal into its path. Nobody hears the cat's screech before it's squashed by an object a thousand times its size. The man in charge - not Harry - screams and curses Harry for such an act but the creature is crushed between metal and it's too late.

Harry doesn't bother traumatising the weeping oldie further, he slides down the door frame with one leg against his chest as he watches the train go on. He holds the key to his Range Rover and let's the steel cut his palm until the silver turns shiny red.

It doesn't matter anymore. He left Louis and now Louis left him. His blue-eyed, brown featheryhaired painkiller left him.
and thats the end of Chapter Six by ss98
Chapter Seven

No live organism can continue for long to exist sanely under conditions of absolute reality; even larks and katydids are supposed, by some, to dream.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Louis agrees that he is the worst possible tourist. He felt that since he would be living in Chicago for - it's very likely - the rest of his countable years, he doesn't need to buy food from vendors that will make him sick. That wasn't a high chance considering Chicago wasn't a North African country with no hygiene.

His university was a massive, public and popular one. He got a tour on the first day with all the other dorm-stayers - he decided to accept that fate and save his money. There was a football field that made Louis sweat by just looking at it, theatres isolated in at least three different buildings and scattered diners for meals. There was a rec-room in his dormitory with a flat screen and an assortment of indoor sporting equipment.

Against his wishes, a variety of fellow new-comers tried talking to him. Most gave up when they realised he only responded in single syllables. Most. His very energetic room-mate, Niall Horan, kept at it until Louis completed a sentence.

"Do you think the dining dollars they give us will be enough?" Niall had wandered off from the group and Louis was torn between leaving him or the others behind.

Louis chooses Niall, worried about the boy getting lost in this wonderland, and nods to answer his question.

"I don't think so." Niall puts his hands on his hips and gazes at the surrounding scenery. "If you got extra, know that I'll be borrowing your card."

Louis didn't see the harm in that, so he shrugged and waited. Georgia wasn't attending the same college, but they wished each other well after the plane trip here. It was thirteen hours of being thousands of feet above the ground, and Louis' body is screaming for sleep.

"Let's go back." Niall proposes and Louis laughs under his breath. "Race you?"

"No." Louis' eyes widen in their sockets.

"Why not?"

"I don't run."

Niall didn't react to Louis' response, not wanting the streak to end. "Well, you're my friend so now you do."

Louis shakes his head and takes off walking towards the others. "Come on, Lou." Niall drags out the nickname and pulls on Louis' arm. "It's a long way."

Louis sighs and gives in, much to Niall's delight. They sprint across the field back to where
everyone is admiring the statue of the college's founder, Greg McHillson. It looks like he's urinating but Louis' vision is unreliable right now. He beat Niall and the lucky Irishman - ironically from the other side of town - was heaving breaths by the end.

"Okay we're never running again, Turbo." Niall slaps Louis' back and they laugh together as Niall fights for air.

Louis gets bumped up to adequate tourist when he purchases two sets of college sweats - almost twice his size - and a corndog because Niall refuses to eat alone. The group is finally dispersed and everyone is ordered to do what they wish until the orientation at one and mini market the university organised at the start of every year.

"Are you really Irish, Niall?" Louis asks when they sit on the grass outside the English Literature building.

"Nah." Niall answers in a strong American accent. "Born in Ohio and my family moved here when my dad died."

"I'm sorry."

"Thanks." Niall lies back on the grass and tucks his arms under his head. "What about you?" Louis' breath hitches. "Moved from Middleton with my animals. Parents died with my sisters four years ago."

"I'm so sorry, man." Niall looks at Louis with pure empathy in his eyes.

"Doesn't bother me anymore." Louis waves him off. "Gotta move on."

Niall doesn't say anything and Louis sits staring at his shoes, thinking about all that he needs done. Bolg and Bundy are asleep in their locked dormitory, but they needed to unpack so something made sense in that place.

"We should go back." Louis patted Niall's shoulder. "I'm not living out of boxes."

"Fair enough." The boy takes his time standing up, dramatically stretching afterwards and making Louis shake his head with a chuckle.

"Move now."

"You're bossy." Niall trudged off in the wrong direction, realised that and came back to Louis. "Let's go then."

Giggling, Louis grabs his satchel and leads Niall towards their dormitory for real. Not much needs unpacking, but there are lots of boxes that slide under their beds in the end. They each get a small closet and short cupboard. There are two desks with chairs on either side of the room and Niall starts up on putting posters up before all else. Louis puts Bolg and Bundy's cages against the wall at the foot of his bed on a neat rug.

"How far are the showers?" Louis watches Niall decide between The Rolling Stones and The Beatles. The Beatles ends up on Louis' side of the room because he won't let them collect dust. "Down the hall. Thank fuck they're individual cubicles." Niall jumps off his bed as Louis sets about correcting his own bedsheets.

"I'm hungry." Louis flops down on his bed.
"Finally!" Niall screeches. "Been waiting for you to say that. Let's go."

"But."

"We'll lock the door and come back after the market. C'mon, up."
With a lazy sigh Louis gets up and locks the dorm door with the window cracked open. They stop at the college diner and order burgers with soda floats. Niall claims they're the best things on Planet Earth and makes Louis order one too. Louis' the kind to do whatever childish puzzle was on the menus and even asked for crayons to colour the tiger in. It looked so bland to him. Needless to say, his soda float came to him free because the waiter thinks he's autistic.

"Bastard." Niall looks stunned. "That's not fair."

"Ask for crayons, Niall." The tip of Louis' tongue pokes out between his lips as he concentrates. "Don't you think people will laugh at you?"

"They will, if they do. I don't care."

"Hallelujah." Niall mutters. "Waiter! Can I have some crayons?!"

Their orientation is long and boring. Niall falls asleep twice on Louis' shoulder and Louis doesn't have the heart to wake him the second time. He does take a photo to remember this moment. Niall and him had the same major - Communication & Journalism - so their lectures were the same starting at nine most mornings. Except when Louis went to Criminology class that was one lecture for him every weekday at 16h00 to 17h00.

With their first lecture scheduled for the next day, Louis finally shoved Niall to wake him up and together they went outside. Niall took all of two minutes cracking his knuckles and yawning before agreeing to spend fifteen minutes in the market.

A photographer catches several candids of them in the name of the university since they had a new brochure coming out and he's never seen more photogenic people in his thirty-five years. After not buying anything, Louis follows Niall up to their room where they fall asleep in their clothing.

Middleston has had a horrific strain of storms that started five days ago when Louis still lived here. Nothing could be done about the downpour but people still regularly attended the open bars around down, and Harry was able to mend his broken side with several doses of homicidal satisfaction. There was Veronica, the bartender at Pissing Pete's who willing went with Harry. He wished he could feel sorry for her, because her screams were the loudest ones.

Then came Ashley, the bimbo with too many cigarettes in her bra. She offered Harry entertainment that he didn't accept and beat on her until she understood he didn't want her.

After Ashley's mutilated body was found with a chunk of flesh and skin missing from her thigh where Harry filleted her, Delilah's killer was found and all the murders were pinned on him. Harry hated that, that another man got the credit for what he did himself for years, but had other things to worry about.

Now there was Jean, an attractive young brunette in eleventh grade. How she got into a bar was beyond Harry, but she did and now she was watching him intently. It unnerved him and he moved to exit through the back. Her brownish green eyes followed his back, before she slid off the stool and went after him.

She was easier than any other Harry's taken - not in a sexual way. She was drunk and bold, unseeing...
to danger and aggravated Harry with her loud behaviour. He drugged her in his apartment's doorway and let her drop like a carcus before stepping over her legs. For now, he'd missed seeing the colourful printed paper that fell out of her pocket.

Jean woke up with a heavy head and cursed herself for being wherever the Hell she was. She picked up her shoes and turned the doorknob, only to find that it is locked.

"Uh. Hello?" She stepped into the beautiful complex cautiously.

Harry watched wordlessly from the kitchen where a combo of shadows hid him from her vision. He spun the knife in his hand, digging the tip into his thumb.

"Anyone here?" She dug for her purse that Harry remembers she left at the bar. He shook his head at her.

Compliments of the storm, a loud burst of thunder ensued followed by a flash of lightning. Had she been looking at the kitchen, she'd have seen Harry standing there but the sudden shower outside spooked her.

"I want to leave." Her voice shook a little now and she was still bare foot. Harry hated that about other people, not wearing shoes in another person's home.

He decide's this game is over and speaks up without moving. "You shouldn't follow strangers."

She whipped around trying to find the voice but stopped to calm her rabbiting chest. "S-Sorry?"

"A bit late, don't you think?"

"N-Not really. I-"

"What?"

"Nothing." She stared out the window and when the second flash came, she saw a man several inches taller standing right behind her.

Jean opened her mouth to scream for help, but it was futile. Harry plunged the blade of his trusty knife into the pressure point in her neck. It would hurt like a bitch before going numb. Her body crumbled and Harry didn't catch her, tilting his head as her knees bent awkwardly when she caved. Beside her was a piece of paper, chucked out of her writhing hand Harry frowned before picking it up out of human curiosity.

*Chicago State University.*

He scanned the pamphlet, then stopped. When he did the room stopped spinning and the gnawing at his chest paused for a moment. That was a face he knew, beside one that he didn't know. In an effort to get to the couch in time, Harry kicked Jean's abdomen and she coughed up blood on his marble flooring. He didn't care because he was looking right at the cause and solution to his heartache. Harry picked up the phone and dialled the number at the bottom, all the while staring at one image of a beautiful familiar boy laughing as he pointed to a dream catcher.

"Chicago State University. How may I help you?" A sweet female voice answered.

"My name's Harry Styles." He spoke gruffly. "And I was wondering if it's already too late to enroll." Louis woke up screaming in the middle of the night and Niall's idea of comfort was throwing a pillow at him and threatening him with death. It's the fifth night in a row for Louis, and he refuses
to call it home sickness.

When Niall gets Louis up four hours later, he's panicked and already dragging Louis out of bed. "We're late! We're so fucking late."

"What?" Louis takes his arm back and rubs the drowsiness from his eyes.

"We're late! Wake the Hell up!" Niall hauls Louis to his feet. "My alarm didn't go off and our first lecture starts in ten minutes."

That gets Louis moving. They bolt down the hall to the bathrooms for a two minute shower, before racing back in bath towels.

"Think he'll mind if we show up in towels?" Niall asks as he quickly chooses clothing.

"Don't think so but I do." Louis pulled on black khakis and the school football jersey. He looked horrible.

"I'll make breakfast." Niall announces.

"There's no time, Niall!" But it's pointless because Niall never skips a meal and he's already gone. Louis sighs and takes the extra few seconds to comb his hair before bidding his turtle goodbye and locking the door. He jogs downstairs to an empty rec-room and could cry about how long Niall's taking.

"Niall!" He shouts, letting the edge ring in his voice.

"Here." Niall shoves a slice of toast covered in maple syrup at him and a mug of tea.

Louis taught Niall to make his tea, and in turn Louis learnt how Niall had his coffee.
"No travel mugs?" Louis enquires, blowing the tea to cool it and swallowing the toast.

"No. Now let's go."

Niall and he still had their mugs when they arrived for their lecture, but they weren't all that late and managed to grab seats in the middle of the theatre before the teacher entered. Louis played with his string teabag and paid as much attention as he could without yawning and tearing up.

Their Photojournalism lecturer is the most chilled teacher of them all, he believes in coming late to class so late-comers don't look bad. Louis applauds such an educator. His name is Mr. Glockenspeel and has now arrived to greet the class.

"Horan. Tomlinson. You're lucky I saw you sprinting down the hall and decided to check if my car was locked." Is the first thing he says afterwards.

The class laughs, as do they and Louis turns pink. The lecture goes on for eight minutes before the door opens on healthy hinges. Louis' trying to copy what the slide show says and never bothers diverting his attention. He's actually thankful this person showed up and gave him more time with Slide 3.

The lecturer clasps his hands together. "Why are you late, Mr.....?"

"Styles."
The end of chapter seven by ss98
chapter Eight

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Blood is really warm, it's like drinking hot chocolate but with more screaming.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

For a whole minute Louis loses himself to the other side, where motion slowed to nil and everything was frozen. He stared at his desk and his pencil stops scraping against his notebook. His chest beats harder than before, filling up with dread and innate curiosity that this voice sounds too familiar. Styles. Of course it was familiar. He entertains the pathetic hope that this person is a totally different Styles, like in that MTV show with werewolves.

He takes deep breaths and whispers a prayer or two before looking at the door, but his hand grip Niall's arm tightly when his eyes meet dark green orbs staring back at him. "Louis!" Niall hisses and frees his arm with a light shove that knocks Louis' fingers against the solid wood.

Louis brings his unfeeling hand onto his lap and Harry's eyes dart from Louis to Niall, but nothing in his gaze says his recognises either. Maybe that's a good thing. Maybe not.

In his distant mind travel, Louis finds himself gripping his scissors - where did that come from? - and blindly slicing the skin of four fingers across each other. Brilliant.

"Lou? You're bleeding." He curses when Niall points it out.

Nevertheless, the Earth tilts back onto its axis and Harry settles into a seat at the back of the room while Niall supplies four plasters.

"Always be prepared." Louis notices the strange lilt in Niall's voice.

"T-Thanks." Louis mumbles and gets back to the slide show, unable to ignore the burning of two eyes into his back.

Class lasts another forty minutes and Louis forces himself to fully catch at least thirty of that for his exams. The heat of a familiar stare doesn't wear off and in the end, Louis predicts his spiral into insanity is inevitable. Maybe Harry didn't even walk into class and he's just going mad at an early age.

A peek over his shoulder squashes that theory when his eyes greet Harry's staring back at him emptily. He was wearing regular male attire and maintained an impassive composure that drove Louis mad because what was he playing at? Why was he here? How did he find Louis? Was he angry? If so, what was Louis going to do to keep them apart now?

With all these questions still haunting him, Louis grabs his things and sprints out of the dull theatre before Niall even finishes his yawn. When the blonde youngster finishes up putting their mugs into his bag, he nods at the newbie with dark locks of hair whose watching the door where a silhouette of Louis' exiting form still hung.

He finds Louis waiting outside with a busy foot tapping the tiles, lip bitten raw and fingers drumming against the edges of his textbooks. The fresh pages were giving Louis paper cuts that he
hardly noticed.

"Are you bipolar and just forgot to tell me? Because that changes our entire room-mate agreement, mate." Niall throws an arm over Louis' shoulders and leads them towards the elevators.

"N-No." Louis seemed to think about the answer after saying it. "I'm fine. I'm good."

"Sure?"

Louis nods with an interval between goes, and presses the elevator button hard enough to attract the attention of the college shrink, Mrs. Gorgam. Niall waves at her, and pulls Louis' hand away from jabbing the poor button over twenty-seven times.

"One more lecture then we're free for an hour." Niall leans against the elevator mirror wall.

"Yeah."

Louis is staring at the ground, and when he looks up he gets to see Harry step into the hallway and glance his way. The elevator doors thankfully close before something disastrous can come into play. He was scared of Harry's intentions, not knowing what they are yet either. What if it was a sadistic revenge intent? Louis just didn't know and that terrified him.

He got through his second lecture of the day and managed to push Harry out of his mind for the entire hour. Said man didn't seem to have this class which did make Louis wonder but he didn't spend too much time on that. Niall promised him a proper breakfast after this and Louis' rumbling tummy was very excited to get going.

"I'm bored." Niall tells him suddenly.

Louis glances sidewards, not entirely willing to lose his place in this presentation. "And then?"

"Can I draw on your leg?"

Louis had to smother his burst of laughter with a painful cough and soft banging of his chest. "Sure."

Niall didn't mean literally drawing circles and clouds - Niall can't draw much else - with ink on Louis' skin but rather with pencil on his pants leg. Louis had to fold one leg under the other on his seat so his knee jutted out on his new best friend's side.

Fighting the ticklish sensations that arose with the brush and press of Niall's clutch pencil, Louis starts to actually pay attention again.

When the lecturer closes up, Louis has to stay put or risk Niall losing his marbles over the invisible masterpiece on his thigh.

"What is it?" Louis asks about the drawing.

"Anime." Niall answers him.

"Is it Pikachu?"

"No." Niall laughs. "It's Naruto. Let's go eat."

"It's the lunch rush now at the diner so we might not get seats." Louis reminds them. They've been lucky before but that line-up is bound to expire.
"Race you?" Niall warms up his hands - it's not that cold - by rubbing them together.

"Fine. Lemme just- Niall!" Louis was going to put his books safely away but Niall has taken off already. "Cheater!"

The practising Irishman cackles out loud and keeps on going until Louis starts to follow, easily dodging students with frowns on their foreheads. Louis wonders if years of college will do that to him too.

Once out of their building, Louis has lost sight of Niall but knows in which direction the diner is. Today is the final day of the week so he has an appointment with the dance studio at 15h30 and has to make a trip to the exotic pet shop for Bolg and Bundy's food. With a sigh, he starts running again. This time someone caught Louis' jacket and yanked him backwards with football-jock force and he fell on his butt with a thud. He thanks God his coccyx didn't fracture with the force of hitting outdoor tiles.

"What the Hell?" He looks up, a sinister part of his brain expecting it to be Harry who has turned into his personal bully, but the sun messes with his vision for a moment.

"Remember me, faggot?" A gruff - not attractive gruff like someone he already knows - and arrogant voice questions him.

Louis gets up and before he can lash out with angry words, he sees a smirking Trevor Goulding. Oh bloody Hell, he curses under his breath. Why is that wherever he went trouble followed like flies to rotten meat?

"What were you running from then?" Trevor looks over Louis' shoulder.

"We're not in high school, Trevor." Louis says, proud of the no shaking in his voice. "You need to grow up."

Trevor doesn't have minions this time, which adds to Louis' odds but Trevor is much bigger than Louis. "Do I?"

Nothing scares Louis more than people who make a grab at him all of a sudden, it's just the shock and fear that jolts through him. Trevor does it now and Louis jumps back to keep his distance, biting the inside of his cheek at the same time.

When Trevor's starved hand gets enough to Louis' shirt, another person stops him. Louis' stunned as he watches the third person grabs Trevor's wrist and bends it at an unnatural angle. It can only be one person who will defend Louis in a student body of over a thousand.

The shoulder-length dark brown hair is undeniable, the hunches shoulders and mighty height are dead giveaways. Harry.

Louis doesn't stick around to watch what happens, because Niall is jogging up to him and the innocent lad doesn't need to know about Harry and him. Feeling like he should at least thank Harry, Louis touches his arm and sucks in a quick breath at the shock that comes with the contact.

"What the fuck happened?" Niall raises both hands in the air.

"Nothing. Sorry, let's go." Louis pulls him in the direction of the caravan diner.

Harry felt the caress on his clothed arm and it reminded him that he had a point to prove here. He grabs Trevor's shirt collar and shoves him against the wall, hoping that with the constant pressure on
his spine the bastard was getting hurt.

"Let me make something very clear." Harry pressed his fist into Trevor's heaving chest. "If you lay a finger on my Louis again, for good or bad reason, I will gut you like a fish and hang you from the flagpole. Do we understand each other?"

Harry smirked at the horror evident in Trevor's stricken stare. The boy nods vigorously and Harry lets him go, watching him leave without dignity and silently laughing. When Harry looks around him, he doesn't see Louis but it's not like he expected him to wait for him. With a quick sigh, Harry stalks off in the general direction of the car park.

Louis orders his regular double cheeseburger and fries with a new milkshake each time; today's trial was banana.

"Does the bus go to Hillford street?" Louis asks Niall as he leans his thumping head against the cool window.

"Yeah. Why are you going there?"

"No reason. Just asking."

"Liar."

"You don't really care, Niall."

"We are not Philosophy students so cut the crap."

Louis smiles around his red milkshake straw. "Dance class."

"Really? I knew you were a dancer."

"How could you possibly guess that?"

"You just look like one. I didn't wanna think you were a stripper so it had to be dancer."

Louis looks at Niall with total shock and gets a chip thrown at him, further mock offending him. They finish eating and hand over their student cards with smiles, Louis getting his hair ruffled by their lovely female waiter while Niall plots hilarious revenge.

"One more lecture, Niall." Louis drags his room-mate back to their study hall building and go up to the second floor.

The professor is a funny one and Louis' known that since his first lecture with him. He can't help but notice that Harry isn't present for this class either, and doesn't know how to classify the blossoming emotion in his mind.

Niall goes back to doodling but this time on his notebook and not Louis' skin or clothing. "Horan!" The professor shouts despite everyone's ability to hear clearly.

"Huh?" Niall comes out of his imaginative inside world with a surprised bang.

"If you're not drawing naked women, then start paying attention!"

The class erupts in laughter but it dies down quickly as Niall rolls his eyes and closes his book, deciding that this teacher is worth listening to.
When class is over Louis has a little over two hours before his appointment at the busy dance studio. He planned to get some quality time with his pets before going, not liking that he left them alone all day with his and Niall's belongings in a locked room.

"There's a vending machine down the corridor and I want a Dr. Pepper." Niall confesses as he shoves his things into his bag.

"Isn't that the company who made a sexist commercial-"

"Shhh!" Niall covers Louis' mouth with his hand. "We don't like to talk about that."

Louis pinches Niall's wrist and gets him to remove his palm before scampering off out of the room. Chuckling softly Louis slots all his books into his backpack and notices that a pencil of his is reduced to a blunt, useless nub. He hates that, and uses a sealed sharpener to fix the dilemma immediately - just in case he forgot and came back tomorrow with the same depressing stationery item.

He bites his bottom lip - that's now gotten a bloody scab right in the middle - as he focuses and the tiny hairs on his neck and ears prickle at the sound of the door.

"That was quick." Louis tucks the pencil away along with the sharpener to look up at Niall. The page-size pencil case falls to the ground with a heavy thud that echoes across the empty theatre, Louis' fingers frozen mid-air and his visitor closes the door behind himself.

"H-H-" Louis loses his words for a minute. "Harry."

Indeed, the man looks up at the sound of his name from a voice so sweet and smiles in a lopsided manner. That exposes a dimple and Louis regains his non-frazzled composure. Harry locks the door and Louis' heart hammers loudly in his throat because how did Harry get a key? The thought is unsettling.

When Harry steps onto Louis' row, the boy shuffles backward while Harry moves forward. "Stop that." Harry barks, irritated about Louis constantly avoiding him. "Stand still and let me come to you."

Louis listens, analysing the situation as not in his favour and stays put for Harry to approach him. He looks up into distant green eyes and doesn't know what to do with himself, what Harry's going to do.

"Hello, darling." Harry smirks, reaching up to brush Louis' cheek with his fingertips.

"H-Hi." Louis' eyelids flutter and an eyelash falls into his eye, but he ignores the sting until it's gone.

"Did you miss me like I missed you?" Harry thumbs over Louis' lips, gauging every reaction from the boy.

Louis doesn't answer, lost in the uncertain feel of Harry's touch and trying to focus only on that. He needed to pay attention so he'd know if Harry was planning something.

"I'm real, love. You can answer me." Harry bends to press their lips together chastely, Louis' eyes finally opening but not kissing back.

"After saving you, I think I've earned a reward." Harry turns them around so Louis is pressed against the unmoving desk. "Get up on the desk for me, sweetheart."
Louis obeys, his brain shutting down with rushed blood flow and fear, leaving him alone to just listen and hopefully survive. Harry pats Louis' thighs and leans closer to whisper in his ear like they were trading secrets.

"Spread your legs for me, love." His silky voice chases the chills down Louis' well-curved back. Parting his knees, Louis makes room for Harry to stand between his thighs. He gazes up at Harry with an ocean of emotions and refrains from spewing out a chain of questions.

"You look lovely." Harry compliments, making Louis' quiet side preen with the praise. "Has anyone else seen you like this, Lou? Did you let someone else touch you?"
Louis immediately shook his head no and the honestly stood out with the piercing blue of his troubled eyes.

"Such a good boy for me, Lou." Harry hitches Louis' legs around his waist and his fingers ghost over Louis' ankles, commanding them to lock together.

Harry slips his ice cold hands under Louis' shirt and skin meets skin in a dizzy union. Where Harry's fingertips are calloused and tough, Louis' skin is smooth and supple to the touch. Surprised by the cold graze, Louis sucks in a quick breath and jerks away before settling down.

"I'm not angry." Harry noses at Louis' neck-shoulder junction. "I was but now I'm here and holding you. It's like we were never apart."

Louis couldn't agree more, but somehow his personal connotations of the statement are deeper and less loving. He still reciprocates anyway and gingerly brings Harry's face closer to his by wrapping his arms around the man's neck.

He stares into Harry's eyes, a motion that is openly returned as their heads tilted and lips grew closer. Louis' warm breath mingles with Harry's and his small fingers play with the untidy curls at the base of Harry's hairline above his nape. It feels so sweet, so innocent and they knew that to an outsider it probably was but within they saw past each other's facades.

Harry bumps Louis' forehead with his own and slides their lips together hastily. It wasn't a kiss for the ages, or something that would lead to something more heated and inappropriate for a classroom. That's why it's Louis' favourite kiss with Harry - he really shouldn't have a list.

It was just a celebratory reunion of two souls who never wanted each other but now can't walk properly without the other. It was rusty and Harry accidentally bit the cut part of Louis' lip, but when he didn't complain Harry slid his tongue over the thin scab to weaken it.

Louis inhaled deeply through his nose and pulled Harry closer, tightening his legs and opening his mouth to submit. If Harry asked, he would submit to him without missing a beat.

Harry pulled Louis' bottom lip when he drew back, licked over the thin red line of fresh blood and went back to kissing Louis breathless.

Tiny fingers threaded through Harry's hair and larger ones kept bring Louis closer to the edge of the desk, closer to Harry. Harry leaned on Louis and kept licking his lips to make sure the iron taste of Louis' bleeding lip was still there. When they finally separated, Harry couldn't go further than pulling his head back to breathe.

They matched each other with wide blown eyes and panting breaths, the air-conditioned room feeling small and stuffy. Harry thought of something.

"Why don't we have some rules, lovely?" Harry slid his hands into Louis' back pocket and didn't
miss how the boy's face turned a little pink.

Louis stayed quiet and waited for Harry to continue. What rules did Harry mean? Was it punishment for him?

"You're not in trouble, baby."

Harry reassuringly kissed Louis’ fingers when they overlapped onto his jaw from how close he was being held. Louis giggled and stopped himself from poking Harry’s dimple when it popped up. "Let's start simple, alright? I want you to be safe so you won't go anywhere outside campus without me."

Louis now understood what rules Harry meant and frowned. He didn't like being controlled in every respect and wanted independence. "I don't want rules."

"No?" Harry combed Louis' hair back. "I have a reason for each rule, darling. If you don't like a rule we'll compromise then, okay?"

Louis blinks up in awe at Harry, the man who learned to play fair and is finally adapting correctly. It made Louis smile.

"Second rule. No sharing. Don't take food, clothes, cigarettes, anything from anyone because when I kiss you I want to taste you and nothing else. Is that fine?"

Louis already doesn't accept things from other people so that won't be a problem. He nods. "I don't smoke."

Harry grins. "That was rule number three."

"How many rules do you have?" Louis couldn't help himself.

"One more." And Harry doesn't seem a great deal offended by him. "Every-"

"Louis!" The booming voice of interruption belongs to Niall. "Are you locked in again?!"

Harry is annoyed by the disturbance, and a sincere frown forms between his eyes. Also, he's concerned about the 'again' mentioned in this stranger's questioning accusation. How many times has Louis been locked in a theatre?

Louis is giggling and that's always a good thing but it's not Harry making Louis smile and that is definitely not an acceptable thing for him.

As a distraction, Harry starts mouthing at Louis' neck-shoulder junction and indiscreetly guided Louis' dainty hand towards his crotch. He was adamant on facing the boy's focus just at him, on him. Niall kept trying for another five minutes before giving up, during which Louis hand like a shivering snake approaching bigger prey - pun unintended of course - flattened against the zip of Harry's jeans. He flexed his fingers and pressed the heel of his palm into the growing bulge. He's never done this before and he's terrified of yet another thing. Twelve minutes ago Louis would have flown across Europe to avoid Harry, yet here he was now unbuttoning the man's pants hastily. It doesn't go below mid-thigh and Louis drops to his knees.

Louis peeks up through his thick eyelashes with an innocent expression that causes Harry's stare to darken. He kitten licks Harry's length, down the girth on one side and back up to the head on the other. He traces the slightly protruding vein with his thumb and Harry's short nails dig into the table behind him. Louis envelopes the tip in his mouth, and Harry's hips buck forward involuntarily as he enjoys the warmth and suction.
Taking as much of Harry as he can, Louis hollows his cheeks and sucks with enough force and lubrication to create an easy slide. Harry grabs his hair with one hand and fucks his throat until it's raw and he knows he'll have a broken voice for a few days. Louis has no gag reflex and that spurs Harry onward, thrusting into the wet heat and grunting softly from approval. Louis doesn't want to end up with wet trousers, so he lets himself be used and not entertain any other prospects. When Louis senses Harry's slowing down, he presses his tongue against the swollen slit and drags his teeth gently along the skin. A bitter-sweet taste explodes in his mouth and he tries to swallow but has to pull back in order to do so.

Louis wipes his mouth and stands, while Harry tucks himself back into his skin-tight jeans. Not knowing what to do with himself and what to make of what just happened, Louis decides to speak.

"You never told me your fourth rule." He keeps his gaze pinned to the carving on a chair, and turns bright pink when he hears the crack in his usual high pitch.

Harry hears it too and smirks proudly. He picks Louis' bag up for him - fallen pencil case and all - and hands the smaller package to Louis as a pointless peace offering. "Every weekend, I want you to spend with me."

Louis considers this but knows it's a terrible idea for more reasons than one. "I can't manage that. I'm sorry."

"Why not?" Harry's easy going composure gets clouded over, mist created with misunderstanding and a hatred for argument.

"Every Sunday, the boys have a...a thing and-"

"What thing?" Harry steps closer, Louis' bag on his tense shoulder.

"Movie Night." Louis jumps to answer fast enough. "And I have...rehearsals too."

"Dance?"

Louis nods.

Harry smiles calmly and cups the side of Louis' face, tilting his head up and meeting blazing orbs of blue ice. "When are your dance classes, my love?"

"Fridays and Saturdays. Both days at one."

"I will get you to your classes and as much as I despise the idea of you spending two hours every Sunday with thirty other boys, I'll have you back in time for Movie Night."

"I still can't Harry." Louis feels bad but he also feels uncomfortable spending every weekend with Harry. He'd like some time to just be by himself and with his pets.

"Be clear with me, Louis. What's wrong now?"

Anyone could hear the impatient edge in his voice. And for Louis, he isn't afraid to mentally admit he didn't like when Harry spoke to him without sweet endearments attached to the ends of his sentences.

"Well, I'd like some time to myself and I still have Bolg and Bundy at the dorm."
A little disapproval lifts from Harry's troubled expression as he processes this request. It wasn't a request, but they're not too sure where anything stands between them either. It's enough to make a person dizzy.

"Three weekends-" Harry doesn't blink as he delivers his compromise. "-you stay with me."
Louis sighs, but this would turn into a fruitless debate because he knows Harry and who's to say the man has changed at all? Suddenly Louis isn't sure of anything, because he saw what Harry was in their hometown so what if he's the same here? Chicago is bigger, more populated. He could get caught, and the possibility scares Louis.

On the other hand, if Louis put his best effort forward and tried to distract Harry everytime the homicidal urge arose it would do them both good. He could do that, only if Harry was honest with him and that started with Louis being honest with him.

This was enough to make Louis dizzy.

"Okay." Louis brings himself to respond, exhaling all the turmoil in his mind and nodding. This makes Harry very pleased, and he throws an arm across Louis' shoulders to bring him closer. Harry slings Louis' bag over his own shoulder, trying his hardest not to cringe away from the fact that he's doing something for someone else, that will in no way benefit him. It's not that hard because it's Louis who would happily take his bag back, but that alternative doesn't do it for Harry.

"Harry?"

"Hmm?"

"How did you get the theatre room key?"

Harry chuckles as he unlocks the door and holds it open to behold a bustling hallway. "I took your professor's key and copied it. I have a key for almost every room on campus."

This is fascinating and Louis opens his eyes wide from hearing it. "As in the dean's office and admin too?"

"I said almost, Lou." Harry doesn't know the protocol for walking next to a person so he just goes about it like he's alone. "I have your dorm house key card."

"How'd you manage that?"

"Slept with the head of house."

Nothing - Louis repeats, nothing - sobers up a conversation like the above because Louis looks at the ground with loss in his eyes. It was the typical wounded 'Oh' expression that people have seen before. It seems Louis was the only half of this - loosely termed - relationship who thought it was somewhat exclusive, and that stung.

Why would Harry sleep with someone else?

"I-" Louis starts to say he's going to find Niall but Harry cuts him off.

"It was a joke, Lou."

And for some reason, along with the worry of earlier and bothersome response, Louis' cheeks puff up with restrained laughter. "Really?"
Harry doesn't answer and Louis starts laughing silently as he pushes the elevator button. He tries to rein it in when Harry regards him with a stern sideway glance but fails miserably and his giggles take Harry pushing him against the elevator wall to stop.

There are two other female students present, who focus intently on the loose pages in their hands so they don't see Harry stick his tongue down Louis' hurting throat.

"You're gonna be punished for that, darling." Harry hitches Louis’ leg up on his hip and smiles as he says it, a less amused twinkle in his eye.

"I am?" Louis doesn't appear fazed or stubborn about it. "What kind of punishment?"

"Don't get ahead of yourself, baby. I never give anything away."

The elevator doors part ways and Harry pulls Louis out of the crowded space, leaving two stunned girls swathed in envy.

Chapter End Notes

and thats the end of Chapter eight of animal by SS98
Chapter Nine

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Louis got dropped off at his theatre door before Harry handed over his bag. There was no doubt they were still awkward around each other, both having never pushed themselves out into the world of romanticised relationships. They were stumbling and bound to take a while in the learning process too.

"I'll fetch you tomorrow then." Harry says decisively.

Louis nods and moves aside so another student can enter the theatre ahead of him. Niall is sure to arrive in a moment, when he will be heard ahead of being seen.

"Okay."

The corners of Louis' mouth twitch upwards and he takes in Harry's uncomfortable stance. He honestly didn't know why he kept at this if he wasn't happy.

He guesses this conversation is over and turns away to get inside, when Harry grabs his wrist to bring him back. A pair of wet, plump lips from a familiar person press against Louis' cheek and despite it being too quick to enjoy, it makes him smile anyway.

"Bye." That seems to have been Harry's treatment, because now he flashes Louis a smile - a true freaking phenomenon - before departing.

After coming back from that wonder, Louis realises that he's hour break was supposed to mean skipping across town to the dance studio then getting back for his final lecture of that week. Harry took up close to forty minutes of that break so leaving now would mean being late for both his rehearsal and his lecture.

* * * * *

Harry is really happy.

Ecstatic. Glad. Gleeful. Overjoyed. Excited. All those synonyms and all he feels is happy.

It's a strictly confusing emotion because it's so vague yet appealing. It's an emotion that makes Harry smile at the ground at times when he's supposed to be glowering.

It's an eccentric feeling that makes him feel wealthy and almost normal. He's never gotten through a period like this, where he didn't know why he wanted to help an old woman across the street - he didn't - or take a lost child to their parent - the opportunity never came.

He thinks about the gift he was meant to give Louis back in Middleton, and knows he still has it ready for parting. He mentally pats himself on the back for going with the occurrences of today and
not ruining the sliver of a chance he possessed.

It was just nice, an inexplicably warm feeling, to know he could go somewhere and have someone waiting for him. He could pick Louis up from class and walk out with him where everybody saw.

* * * * *

"Where the fuck have you been?" Niall strides up to him, glaring at Louis' stressed expression.

"Sorry. Niall, I have to get somewhere." Louis would bite his nail but that's disgusting and he has a bright blue plaster across four of his fingers.

"Where?"

"That dance studio I told you about."

"Oh yeah. Shit, man. Well, this class is just Media so you can go and I'll cover what happened with you later."

Louis could kiss Niall, instead he opts for: "Really? I owe you, Niall. Thanks."

"Yeah, yeah. I know. Now get out of my face." Niall waves him off.

"Love you!" Louis shouts to him when he's about three feet away and Niall groans outwardly at all the quizzical gazes coming his way.

Louis has a bag packed for dance so he drops his books off and grabs the light navy duffel before dashing out the door like a madman. He thanks his last lucky stars that the bus is just leaving when he comes to a halt by the stop, panting from the run.

Harry passes a tattoo and piercings parlour, momentarily imagining what he'd look like with a piece of metal stuck on him. Maybe the lip, because he knows it'll look weird on his eyebrow. He's especially not going to get one if Louis won't like it, what would be the point then?

On the bus, Louis remembers this is breaking one of Harry's rules already which can't go down well with the man if he finds out. He'll just have to not find out then because Louis likes to believe this 'relationship' doesn't mean just him following Harry's orders like a puppy princess or something. Having gotten no lectures for the rest of the day, Harry decided to let out some of this steam that was gathering in his gut and beating like feathers against his walls of security. He liked alcohol, loved its company more than anything - minus the obvious - and that's usually where he found his best targets.

Although today he felt adventurous and didn't want to stick to the cliché of hunting victims down in clubs and bars. Sleazy people with loud screams came from there. He could try the red light district but Harry's never wanted to be near prostitutes. They're fucking disgusting pieces of wasted energy who don't deserve a spot on this earth. Maybe he will drive by that district.

Louis' dance studio is tucked away between an old tailor's shop and a family convenient store called Reggys'. His instructor, Eve, is warmer and more open to suggestion than Louis' old teacher. She smiles and makes conversation during class, but the work always got done - or so he's told by the older pupils.

Eve was completely pleasant up until she saw Louis doing his straddle. He didn't know she was watching and got grief for the inadequacy.
"You straddle fully or you leave this class." She barked, standing over him with a thunderous, clear voice. "A straddle is a basic technique. I want to see yours perfected tomorrow. Understood, Tomlinson?"

He nods and takes his first breath since she started talking when she walks off to terrify another learner. Other than that, there are no mistakes on his part and he comes to particularly enjoy working with a partner. His is an also pupil, Stan, who gets them into trouble every two seconds. You're supposed to rely on your partner for the rest of the year, to learn and progress. Stan was serious when it came to his dancing as well, and Louis was extremely grateful this guy wasn't a joke all around.

Harry was right. It was just after three and with the happy sensation still tingling through his veins like an unfamiliar syrup he pulls up next to curb where women huddle together scantily dressed. One comes over to him and he vaguely thinks of Julia Roberts; this girl - maybe twenty two - has fiery red hair and purple nail polish. She is pretty but the way she smacks her gum makes Harry want to smack her.

He's usually methodical and knows what to do each time. It's always the same modus operandi but when the fake Julia holds his car door he thinks about taking her entire wrist off first. She smiles, exposing white teeth and Harry wonders what she'd do without a tongue. "How's it going, darlin'?" More loud gum smacking and every illusion of beauty is shattered by the shrill voice she has.

Harry clears his throat, irritated beyond reason by this girl already. "Name?"

"Agatha." She smirks, clearly lying to him. Harry doesn't care but at least he's serious about what to write on her corpse.

"Get in."

After dance class ends at 16h45, all everyone wants to do is shower because for a first day they were properly challenged in stamina. Louis is no different except maybe his bones have turned to Jell-O.

Not even bothering to change into his regular clothes, Louis walked out with Stan so they could catch the bus together.

"I used to go to Chicago State." Stan comes to hold the door open for them both.

"And?" Louis raises his eyebrow in question to Stan, but when the man answers the words are drowned out.

A maroon Dodge SUV is parked right outside crossing over two spaces, and Harry is leaning against the passenger door with his arms crossed. It's not hard to see what Harry's thinking, feeling even at this six meter distance. His expression is grave and furious if the black tint in his eyes is anything to go by. Louis can feel his anger and it's enough to come across as bitter and tangible.

It could be that the world stopped spinning for a moment or the blood rushed to Louis' brain in a wild stampede of cells that made him very conscious of the rule he'd broken. He's not so confident about that now.

"Louis?" Stan touches his arm to get him back to earth but all that does is get Harry to stand up straighter and open the passenger door wide enough for Louis to get the message.
"I'll....-" Louis looks away from Harry just for a moment. "-see you tomorrow, Stan."

"You okay?"

"Yeah. Fine."

"Alright." The response comes across wary. "Have a good night."

Louis smiles and mumbles a "You too." before walking over to the awaiting vehicle that seemed to get bigger with each nearing step.

"Hi." Louis takes a chance and hopes Harry doesn't lash out in public - or private.

Harry's jaw clenches visibly as he waits for Louis to get in, before shutting the door soundly. He's pissed that Louis didn't listen and now he's lost for a cause. What's he supposed to do now except be angry? He can't run on that forever.

Louis curls in on himself in the seat - hard leather and cold - and tries to coax a response from Harry, test the waters a bit. "Harry?"

Harry's eyes dart away from the road to glance at him quickly in recognition before going back.

"I'm sorry-"

"Don't apologise to me now." Harry snaps unintentionally.

"Harry, please." Louis looks at him earnestly. "I'm sorry but I had to."

"No, you didn't. You disobeyed me and broke the first rule we had. I don't want to ever hurt you but I've never been so annoyed."

That scares Louis, frightens him enough to gasp. "A-Are you going to-"

"I'm not going to hurt you, Louis." Harry cuts him off. "But you need to learn your lesson." Well what does that mean? Louis doesn't want to be punished, he never has been before and imagining the multitude of ways in which Harry can carry it out makes hs blood run cold.

"You're going to stay with me every weekend now." Harry turns onto a main road. Even though it's the least horrifying punishment, it still bothers Louis that he's being treated like an errant child. He appreciated the protection and was grateful for everything Harry wanted to do, it was even flattering to an extent but there was a line too.

"Harry, that's unfair!"

"What did you expect to get as punishment for breaking a rule about your own safety?"

Well, Louis didn't have an answer for the safety part. "Why do we even need rules?"

They stop at a red light and Harry takes this opportunity to regard Louis with his full attention. "Because I fucking love control and I like knowing that there won't be any mistakes."

"It's a give and take relationship, Harry. You don't control me."

"Of course not. You are able to do whatever you want as long as I'm okay with it."

"What if you're not?"
"You don't do it."

"But that's not your decision."

"I'd like to think that it is."

"Don't you think this is going too far? I'm an adult and I've survived nineteen years of the twentyfirst century."
Harry gives Louis a small smile that reveals bits of his pearly white perfect teeth. "And that's been long enough. I'm going to take care of you now."

As impressive and extremely sweet as it was, Louis still felt like he needed to reiterate the fact that he's an individual with his own limbs and mind. Harry wanted to take care of him, and feel the pride that came with protecting a person. He could give him that and more because even with it being as hard to admit as it is, Louis knows Harry's gotten under his skin and made a home.

"I love that you're doing that, Harry. I do." Louis doesn't miss - he could never - the way Harry brighten at the L-word. "But you can't hope to control me."

"I don't want to." Harry confirms with a shake of his head.

"Okay." Louis exhales. "Can we go please?"

"To my place." When Louis opens his mouth to protest Harry argues first. "You still broke my rule and I won't ever stand for that. I have rules so that you are safe and if you won't listen, now you know I will punish you."

"Harry." Louis groans aggravatedly. "Why can't we just do simple?"

"Because I don't know anything-" Harry's quick to admit and doesn't bother with embarrassment. "- and if you want me to get there you need to bear with me now."
Louis appreciated the honesty in Harry's answer, and realised it was a step closer to mutual respect and dependence.
As Louis listened to Harry's gravely voice that ran out like verbal honey, he turned on his side just to look at Harry.

Louis wonders what it would be like to have Harry rely on him too. He imagines that something like that might be fantastic, but Harry will take a long while getting there. It's just one of those complex things about Harry, among many others.

The man was focusing on the road but could sense Louis staring, not made uncomfortable but rather curious. He was always curious with Louis.

"What is it?" Harry asks, frankly uneasy by the eyes on him.

"Nothing."

"Don't bother lying to me, darling."

"You are a very complicated man, Harry Styles." Louis conveys his thoughts. "I have no doubt about that."

"I am." Harry smirks at the windshield. "I have killed more people than you have been acquainted with."
That was a statistic Louis didn't need, but he isn't surprised or troubled in the least. He, deep down, wasn't expecting anything else to come from Harry.

"You're very proud of that." Louis observes as Harry comes to a halt outside an expensive apartment lodge with glass walls all around and everything that shouts 'Modernised Elegance'.

"I won't hesitate to kill a hundred more." Harry uses an applicator key to open a particular gate in the garage with enough space within for the Dodge.

"Why do you do it?"

"You've already asked too many questions for today, princess." Harry deflects the enquiry with practised skill. "Let's go inside."

"I'm hungry." Louis looks around him with his hand on the door handle.

Harry sighs and gets out of the SUV, before coming around to Louis' side - he was child-locked in - and yanking the door open. He pushes Louis back by his hips when he tries sliding off the seat. "My apartment is new and still empty." He looks at Louis with a dead serious expression. "You can't go anywhere besides the kitchen, living room and my bedroom. Don't touch anything and you're still going to be punished, so don't waste time trying to get out of it. Understood?"

Louis nods, biting his lip in less anxiety and more nervousness. He wasn't all that eager to go up there and just let Harry have his way with him in every respect. He didn't mind most things, but he didn't know what the punishment was.

"Use your words, baby." Harry always pinches Louis' waist and brings him back to reality.

"O-Okay."

"Okay what?"

Louis was sweating with nerves piling on top of each other. "Yes, Harry."

"I meant-" Harry roars with laughter. "]-what are you saying okay for?"

"Oh." Louis blushes bright red. "I-I understand."

"No need to be nervous." Harry backs up so Louis can jump down. "I won't get angry unless you ignore my rules, and I don't think you want to do that again. Do you, princess?"

Louis shakes his head, after confirming that he's about eighty percent sure that's the correct answer.

"Come on now." Harry closes the door behind Louis and locks the garage slot.

They're both silent on the way up using the elevator. Louis' body has turned to chocolate pudding and after a day of using his legs, he just wants to do nothing for a little while. Niall's going to panic and blow up Louis' phone if he doesn't contact the lad soon, so Louis sends him a text immediately. Louis' also pretty sure he doesn't smell his best and is in dire need of a shower. He refrains from smelling himself to confirm anything.

When the elevator doors part again there's a single door before them, in plain white and Harry unlocks it with a little silver key. The room is dark until Harry flips the light switch and a room with a few boxes is illuminated. It's open plan with a kitchen to the left and living room to the left. In the corner of the lounge was an open door that's the bedroom.
"The out of bounds areas would have to be the closed door on the opposite end of the lounge. "Give me your bag." Harry holds his hand out, not even bucking under the weight when Louis gives it to him. "Phone?"

"Why?" Louis frowns. He wasn't giving up his phone.

"Because you're easily distracted and we don't need your phone making it worse."

*Lunatic*, Louis thinks with a secretive smirk. He hands over his phone after it's locked - with a number password.

"Don't move." Harry says with no room for responding before going into restricted area. Louis shrugs and looks around the spacious living area, admiring it's design and hoping he'll be able to afford something like this one day. As far as he knows, Harry hasn't been past high school and yet here the man is living it up.

Intrigued once more, Louis steps towards the panoramic window that spans across the entire room and serves as a wall. He can see the street they arrived using, the people across from them and pedestrians running to get errands completed.

"You have a knack for ignoring instructions." Harry cuts his reverie when he returns soundlessly. Louis jumps back from the shock and watches his fingerprints fade from the polished glass. "Sorry."

"You can use my shower." Harry holds out his hand and Louis knows he's meant to take it. "Okay." Louis forces Harry's fingers apart to slip his through the gaps, making it effectively more intimate. "Thank you."

Harry is still reeling from the way their hands are locked together - he only ever wrapped his larger around Louis' when he initiated it - and can only nod when Louis speaks.

"Go." Harry wishes he could kiss Louis without feeling the shorter lad go tense against him. "The sooner I handle your punishment the sooner we can eat."

Louis shivers at the reminder. "What's m-my punishment?"

Harry smirks and let's the cold draft break their warm bodies apart. "I'm giving you fifteen minutes before I come in there. Don't try to leave, and don't put any clothes on."

This second shiver is more exciting, but the chill has made a house in the back of his mind. Louis' only just gotten introduced to the wondrous world of sex and he can't handle much with the developing stamina he has.

Other than that, it wasn't even in Louis' train of thought to try escaping. Louis investigates the shower before using it, making a mental check list of everything he will want to use. He's used three minutes of his time by the time he actually strips and gets under the luke warm spray of water.

He's grateful Harry uses anti-bacterial shower gel instead of those macho smelling ones that offer no incentive for personal hygiene. His joy lasts thirty seconds until he spots a Brute bottle next to the shampoo and sighs.

He turns away from the closed door and studies this familiar third tap on the dial. It's identical to the one he saw in Middleton, and the untidy plumbing work says that someone was in a hurry to get it done. Louis traces his fingers around the circular knob and wonders why Harry does it, how he doesn't feel remorse and guilt. What goads him on in the first place? Is it irrational anger,
premeditated motive?

"I haven't filled the tank yet." Comes a clear voice from behind him.

Louis gets spooked for the second - maybe more than that - time that day and backs away from the tap. He doesn't turn around but looks over his shoulder at Harry holding a towel. "Here." Harry drapes the towel over a hook on the wall. "You have six minutes left."

When Harry leaves, Louis is left to ponder alone over the many frightening things in Harry's statement. He didn't fill the tank which means he intends to make sure that it's at capacity. Also, he said yet which means it won't be long before the city of Chicago has a new interest. Following instructions as asked, Louis dries himself off with the soft black towel and doesn't dress himself in anything. Harry's life is still in boxes, some clothing scattered around in the walk-in closet and besides the necessities in the bathroom, nothing else is opened.

Harry walks into the room, shirtless and bare foot. There's something in his left hand, balled up in his fist and cannot be seen clearly. "Lie down." He nudges his chin in the direction of the bed.

There was no endearment in that command, and Louis frowns before considering obeying. He flops onto the brand new, unsurprisingly soft mattress with a luxurious feel of sinking into soft springs. Harry crawls up his body, gaze unwavering from being locked with Louis'. "Spread your legs, princess." Harry's jean clad legs brush uncomfortably against Louis' sensitized, damp skin.

Louis eagerly parts them and welcomes Harry when he settles between them. "You like me calling you that, beautiful?" Harry supports himself on his forearms on either side of Louis' head after placing the new objects on the box next to the bed.

Louis' legs come up to bend at the knees and stand caging Harry's hips with muscular thighs. "I think you do."

Harry presses and holds their lips together in a smothering kiss. Louis' dick twitches in interest and it doesn't appreciate the risk Harry's jeans zip present. His arms wrap around Harry's shoulders to help deepen the kiss and he moans greedily against Harry's mouth.

"Oh no." Harry pulls back, removing Louis' arms easily. "No touching, okay?"

"Myself or you?" Louis forces himself to ask.

"Both."

Louis nods, slightly disappointed but he could live with this one rule for a bit. A short bit. Harry taps Louis' right knee and the boy drops it flat onto the soft bundled sheets, spreading his legs obscenely because he knew that's what Harry wanted him to do.

After some shuffling, Harry has his head between Louis' thighs and reaches for something Louis doesn't see from the side.

"It might hurt a bit, baby." Harry kisses the inside of Louis' thigh and the very top where the skin was extra sensitive and made Louis shudder.

"O-Okay." Louis stutters. He wasn't so much scared, as he was baffled and greatly intrigued. The look on Harry's face was of pure concentration and he snapped the blade of his Swiss Army knife open with a smooth flick of his thumb. Louis hears the click and tries to look but Harry stops
"I don't want to blindfold and gag you." Harry peers up at him with dark green eyes. "Behave for me, precious."

Louis feels like everytime Harry uses a sweet pet name it puts him under where he couldn't fight and chose to just float into submissiveness. It was nice, _heavenly even_, after a lifetime of being on guard and constantly trying not to drift off to peace.

With a soft sigh to himself, Louis allows himself to relax completely when Harry kisses a spot of pale, hairless skin.

Harry presses the blade to Louis' skin, starting where he pressed his lips. Louis' other leg slams against his side and almost causes a cut too deep.

"Louis." Harry warns. "I don't want to hurt you but if you do that again I can't stop it."

"What are you d-doing?" Louis swallows hard.

"I'm making sure nobody else thinks they can touch you. Open your legs and lie still."

Louis falls back against the pillows and bites down painfully on his bottom lip, letting tears escape as the sharp pricks of Harry's blade got bolder. The 'H' was finished but Harry still had the rest of his name to go, and he watched mesmerised as blood trickled onto his bed.

Closing in, Harry kisses the neat mark and licks his lips clean of the blood that stains it. He does this for the rest of his name, by the end of which Louis is squirming and shaking from over exertion.

The pain shot right up his spine and made it arch from discomfort. He kept his groans and noises bottled up, using Harry's gentle pecks as comforting gestures.

When the time of the 'R' came around, Louis was saturated in the frustrating itch of pain. It was making him sweat and triggering moans of confusion. Harry held the little blade like a professional and pinned Louis' leg to the mattress. He dug the knife into Louis' flesh deep enough for it to scar permanently but not injure him.

"H-Harry!" Louis was gone by the 'Y' and started squirming relentlessly to escape the agony. "I-It hurt's."

"Almost done, darling." Harry kisses Louis' tummy. "You'll be good for the last bit, won't you?"

Louis nods, shoved into a cubicle of submission and wanting to do everything Harry said. Harry finished his name and smiled proudly at how amazing it looked, a reasonably sized 'HARRY' carved into Louis' delicate skin.

"I'll finish it, Lou." He praises, coming up to kiss Louis' puffy lips once. When Louis leans closer to elongate the period, Harry draws back.

The cuts were still bleeding and it would continue to do so until it was bandaged. Louis stayed still but let out a moan through blinking away his foggy tears.

Louis knew he had, and he never expected himself to. He's always worked well with pain but felt as if he might thrash about for this. His mind was foggy and unclear, each thought floating away to make room for exhaustion. He closed his eyes, ignoring the ticklish feel of sweat rolling down from his clavicle.

"What do you want, angel?" Harry brushes Louis' cheekbone with his thumb, smearing blood over his cheek intentionally. It felt like another stake of claim. "Want me to pleasure you?"
Louis' eyes fluttered open to take in the sight of Harry looming over him, awaiting an answer from him. Harry smiled at him, glad that he was allowed to put his name on Louis' body forever. Louis' blue, blue eyes were red rimmed and absolutely gorgeous, like portals to a world of stray innocence and all the sweet things Louis hailed from. Louis smiled back up at Harry with a pink tint to his cheeks because nobody's ever wanted to put their name on him, with a Sharpie or a knife.

Harry brings his spidery fingers up to his own mouth and sucks on them to remove the cold, drying blood plus lube them up. Louis' lips part as he gets the idea and willingly shifts his knees apart again to give his consent. As much as his member was filling with blood, the arousal inexplicably created a simultaneous throbbing where Harry would enter him.

When his three longest fingers were wet enough, Harry lowered them to between their packed bodies and circled Louis' rim. The boy keened and wrapped his legs around Harry's waist without permission to make the angle easier. This would be the sealing of the deal, and they wanted it to be perfect.

Harry slipped one finger in, and Louis gasped. Their eyes stayed connected and stared at each other like nothing else on this planet existed.

Harry stretched Louis open enough, thriving on the pants that fill the air and Louis' broken breaths. Impatiently, Harry lubes himself with what moisture remains on his hand - not enough at all - and presses against the swollen ring of pink muscle fluttering at the attention. "I love you." Harry whispers to him in a voice so Louis wouldn't have heard it if he wasn't looking at Harry so intently.

A perfect 'O' forms on Louis' lips when Harry bottoms out, used to and appreciative of the subtle sting that accompanied the burn of stretching. Harry pushed his hips flush against Louis', grinding in merciless circular motions that keep Louis' lips parted in a silent gasp. The fresh wound on Louis' thigh rubs blood on Harry's side and starts to feel cold.

Louis drops his leg, bending his knee to keep it straight and Harry pushes down on it as he starts to thrust.

"You did so well, baby." Harry compliments as he retracts himself and slams back in, causing a high-pitched scream from Louis.

"Took your punishment so well." He nibbles on Louis' ear lobe when maintaining eye contact become too difficult.

The soft and warm drag of Louis' walls against Harry inside him was a sensory overload and had him grunting from pleasure. The precome dripping from the head of his dick was lubing up his thrusts and emphasised the satisfaction. Louis threw his head back and curled his fingers into the sheet, completely taken with Harry above him.

Harry speeds up and gets greedy for the feeling he knows only Louis can give him. He pries Louis' legs off him and presses them into the mattress, his palm applying pressure to Louis' newest marking and starting up a chain of pleas and screams.

Harry pounded into Louis to get deeper and go harder, the topping of pain spiralling up Louis' spine was providing black spots in his vision. He knew he wasn't allowed to touch, and so kept his limbs to himself now but it was a painful battle. He cried out for Harry, clenching and milking Harry's orgasm from him. Harry's objective was for Louis to finish first, and made certain to make brush against Louis special bundle of nerve ends on all his thrusts.
"Shit. Fucking Hell, you're incredible." Harry sinks his teeth into the warm skin of Louis' neck. "So warm and tight around me, baby."

Louis was fuelled by the words that caressed his ego, and forced himself to act quickly. He held Harry's shoulders and rolled them over with all the strength he could muster, feeling on the edge of his climax. He was going to burst with the smooth pleasure and ecstasy, it was all so sweet and overwhelming that Louis wanted to share it.

Harry's brows knitted together as he frowned up at Louis. He tried sitting up but Louis pushed him down again. He was impaled deeper on Harry and started rolling his hips in circles, making them both groan in unison.

"Louis." Harry held Louis' hips and silently ordered him to go harder.
"Shh." Louis picked himself up on his knees and dropped back down, enjoying the deeper intrusion and manipulating it.

He scratched down Harry's inked chest, digging his nails into Harry's torso as he got the hang of it and started up riding him desperately. Harry laid back and tried to feel the pain he's supposed to be experiencing with Louis' nails being so harsh on his skin. Nothing. He sighed and turned to focus on the epiphereal boy sitting on him like it was his job.

"So good to me, Lou." Harry started fucking up into Louis', holding the boy still and ruining his composure. "You like being on top, huh? Like riding me like a good boy?"

Louis mewled against Harry's lips and nodded. He did like it, loved hearing praises and having someone enjoy his body so much. "I like making you feel nice."

"You're so good at that, princess." Harry ran his hands along Louis' back, squeezing the globes of his bum. "Come for me now, darling. But scream my name first, let everyone hear you."

Louis did as told, and when his end arrived it wasn't the least bit forced. He screamed Harry's name with a hoarse voice and felt Harry release inside him. Louis' boneless body falls onto Harry's chest and closes his eyes.

"My special boy." Harry pulls out and kisses Louis' cheek to recompense for the whine the boy releases at being empty. "Tired now, baby?"

Louis nods lazily.

Harry got up and unrolled enough of the bandage strip from the bedside box. He tore off a bit of cotton wool, before dipping it in anti-septic medication. Using the remnants of his energy supply, he cleans the wound and wraps the bandage all around Louis' thigh before cutting it.

"Are you still hungry?" He asks, purposely ignoring the chance to clean the blood that's smeared across their skin.

Louis grumbled a weak 'No' and yawned, positively out of energy resources since and just wanting to sleep now.

"You need to eat." Harry pressed the cold tip of his nose to Louis' jaw and tried to wake him. Louis was at the point of irritation whenever his sleep was roused, and he weakly shoved Harry's shoulder before rolling onto his side under him.

Giving up, Harry gets off the bed and starts to leave Louis alone in his bedroom but the boy looks up at him strangely from the bed.
Chapter End Notes

And thats the end of chapter nine by ss98
Chapter Ten

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

*I've been bleeding in your silence, I feel safer in your violence.* knows it's coming from the restricted part of the flat, and is most likely not caused by a shifty window.

He tenses under the comforter for a minute, wide awake and staring at the floor before the thud happens again and he decides to investigate.

It's not a great task getting out of bed since Harry made no attempt to hold Louis like normal couples would. Louis felt the depressing notion that they'd never work up to the cuddling and typical cliché romance stage.

The bedroom is easy enough to escape and tread lightly into the living room, where the thud is louder and now less frequent. Although it's louder, whatever's causing it has gotten tired. The building across from them casts a monstrous shadow in the living room against the dim moonlight. Harry had all the apartment lights off when he slept and Louis doesn't know why, because in a place like this the atmosphere bleeds spooky.

Louis avoids dropping boxes as he skips over to the closed and banned door, taking a deep breath to let the air around him settle so he can hear clearly.

Outside the neighbours' dogs are howling at the moon or at each other; cats fall from trash cans and night workers hurry to get going. The street is asleep, and the same goes for the man in the bedroom who's finally getting a good rest after years of not being able to.

Louis exhales and grabs the brass doorknob of the broad white door, praying to the Gods that it doesn't squeak. The thud is off now, stopped finally but there's a sort of *scratching* on the other side of this barrier.

Harry rolled over in bed towards Louis' side - previously Harry's side - in the hopes of throwing an arm across the boy's petite frame and blame it on his slumber tomorrow morning. The bed is warm but empty. He sits up and groggily rubs his eyes before checking the time.

Louis hears shuffling and stops moving, breathing and thinking. Harry's awake and he's going to find Louis snooping around. The thought of repercussions make Louis dizzy.

Harry throws the covers off and gets up, annoyed by this circumstance. Louis wasn't in the bathroom and he wasn't in the closet. As much as Harry is worried if the boy is hurt, he's losing his will to lid his temper at the options of Louis having *run away and left him* or worse.

He goes into the passage and pauses to flip the light on, blinking away the fogginess and stopping short.

"What are you doing?" He asks, curt and aggravated.

"Warming milk." Louis is at the stove, and glances over his shoulder to answer Harry. "Would you-" "Why did you leave?" Harry approaches the kitchen and looks at the still locked forbidden door before stepping behind the counter.
"I couldn't sleep." Louis pours enough milk for two glasses into a stainless steel pot.

"Why?"

"Just restless." The boy shrugs.

Harry's eyes trail down the length of Louis' body, memorising where his tanned skin dimpled and curved. The bandage was not soiled yet, and stood out nicely against Louis' natural complexion. Harry couldn't wait to have it taken out completely to show off.

When Louis is done adding a bit of cinnamon and sugar, he gets drawn back by strong hands on his hips. He gasps and almost drops the bag of essence when Harry pins their bodies together back-to-chest.

"You don't have to convince me-" Louis' heart races from his previous risk-taking and now this. "I'd happily give you milk."

Harry is smirking against Louis' neck, biting down a bit to leave his mark behind. He snakes a hand into Louis' hair and tugs, yanking his head back to provide him more room to work. He gets off on the breathless noises Louis makes, scrunching his eyebrows as he becomes more desperate.

Louis' scent permeates, adding a light touch to the air and driving Harry mad inside his head. He's that rare drink that Harry craves, any alcoholic wants in their private collection. He wanted to take photographs of Louis' every feature, then draw it by hand with a pencil so he had the contours of such beauty committed to memory.

There was nothing special about Louis' face, no remarkable glint that would make a passer-by stop and stare. He was just Louis Tomlinson to the world but to Harry, he was the world.

"I want to take pictures of you." Harry made an ordinary sentence sensual and silky against Louis' ear.

"You can." Louis grants his permission in a breathy voice - still cracking a little.

"Tomorrow."

Louis nods. "Okay."

He wonders why Harry wants to take pictures of him and what he'll do with them afterwards, but the reminder of milk boiling on the stove has him attentive again. He stirs the pot once and pours the warm milk into two mugs, handing one to Harry with a sheepish smile before sliding onto a stool.

"You didn't get up for milk, did you?" Harry keeps his eyes on the stove and doesn't seem the least bit upset.

_A man with a mask_, Louis thinks.

"No." Louis admits, sipping his beverage and wishing it would swallow him back. Harry looks down at his slender fingers embracing the heated cup and bites his upper lip. "I'm not angry."

"I expected you to be."

"I could still be, depends on what you woke up for." Louis swallows and takes a second sip, listening to the barks give away and strangers below walk slower.
"I was curious." He examines the side profile of Harry's face.

Harry sighs and sets down his cup, Louis squirms uncomfortably in his seat because he can sense what's coming.
"It was locked, wasn't it?" Is all Harry says.

Louis nods, realises Harry can't see him and then answers. "Y-Yes."
"If you want to go in, I will show you."

Louis' eyes bulge in their sockets and he has to remind himself to close his mouth. "But you said-
"I know what I said, love." Harry turns toward him. "But falling asleep-" He glances at the clock sitting on a table against the wall. "-two hours ago gave me the best sleep I've had since I was eleven years old. Do you know what that means to me?"

*Oh.* Louis can't help the smile that teases his lips and the dash of pink tinting his cheeks and ears. "No, I don't."

"It means.....-" Harry reaches his free out nervously to touch Louis' cheek. "It means you make me happy. That's something I have been without for twenty-six years."

"How old are you?" Louis knew it was a socially unacceptable question but he was lucky to be half of a rebellious pairing.

"Twenty-six."

It's not worse than Louis thought, not that he would have gotten up and left if Harry was over thirty. There was more to a person than their age. The first emotion to strike Louis is sympathy because Harry spent *twenty-six years* around people but always alone.

"I'm sorry." Louis felt he needed to apologise, share in this pitiful past.

"It's no fault of yours, baby." Harry hauls Louis off his stool to stand between his legs. "I have you now, don't I?"

The corner of Louis' mouth quirs as his arms settle on Harry's shoulders. Beside the muscle present, Harry's shoulder are always tense and loaded with knots beneath the skin. *Twenty-six years* of being anti-social in a town full of gossipers. Louis had to consistently isolate himself so he wouldn't become overwhelmed.

Maybe that's why Harry started hurting people? It would make sense.
"You have me." Louis rested his chin on Harry's stiff shoulder and got roped into a tight hug. It was bound to be a little awkward at first, considering they've never hugged before. Harry buries his face in Louis' neck and his arms encircle Louis' hips until it overlaps.

"You're my soft spot, princess."

Harry hums approvingly at the feeling of Louis scratching his scalp with short nails. He knows if it was hurting he wouldn't feel anything so it must be a soothing gesture.

Louis smiles to himself. "I'm deeply honoured."

He feels Harry's calloused fingertips pinch the bare skin of his hip and giggles into the man's naked clavicle.

"What does pain feel like?" Harry asks, his question muffled by how hard he's trying a burrow a
home in Louis' neck for himself.

"Hmm?"

"Pain. What's it like?" Harry tightens his thighs around Louis, covering all bases in case the boy decided to run because of this weird trait of his.

Louis doesn't hesitate or make a judgmental expression. "Pain is like electricity, bright white electricity that just...shocks. It cracks and stings like lightning; or it's steady and controlled. It's beautiful to some people, it makes them feel human."

"I can't feel pain." Harry nips at the spot of skin closest to him.

"I know."

Harry feels at ease hearing that. He sighs and pulls Louis' face away from hiding, secures both sides of his face with gentle hands and kisses Louis' forehead. It was a feather light touch that made Louis smile.

"Let's go to bed." Harry stands up and when Louis steps away, he locks their hands together. Harry feels content with the small smile Louis gives him and he thinks that he wants to feel like this everyday. It's so much easier than always fighting people and their stupid mob mentality. It's easier to be with Louis alone and not face what's outside ready to tear them apart.

Harry's doesn't even feel a twitch from his serpent voice or the lingering fix he always needs. They weren't lost because twenty-six years of growing up with them would persevere over knowing Louis for three months.

Louis yawns and Harry ushers him along faster, not spearing the grin that spreads across his face when Louis drops onto the mattress comically. He crawls over the boy's curvaceous form and kisses the side of his face that isn't smashed against a pillow.

"Goodnight, princess."

Louis grunts in response and Harry slides in next to him, not opening his eyes or shifting his body to signal coherence.

Harry tried again after letting out a disapproving sigh. This time, he took a chance and replicated what he'd seen on TV once; with a deadly nervous arm he reached out hoping to hold the boy close in sleep.

Once the hairs of Louis' arm could be felt under Harry's fingertips he withdrew and flopped onto his other side. It was too soon for that.

This all felt alien and unclear. Harry didn't like to think about being confused, and attempted to dissect this feeling right down to the core. He made a mental checklist as Louis rolled onto his front and stayed asleep.

First, Louis didn't judge or misunderstand him. He loved that about his boy because Louis didn't try to change him and go with the usual societal conduct. Louis put Harry first in that respect, as Harry put Louis first in every respect.

Was hat true though? Did Louis really not want to change him? Maybe he just didn't care for Harry? Love him enough? It's been three months so surely he'd have made a difference by now. Secondly, where did Louis and Harry stand? He wasn't sure of that answer but didn't rank it very
Did Louis have the same intentions as Harry? Or was he playing along? Harry didn't want the latter, nor would he need such treatment given his history.

Thirdly, Harry was not willing to change. He's been this way for longer than he could possibly remember. It would be cruel to ask him to change his methods.

He's had a somewhat frustrating early life and when the time came for needing a means of coping, Harry was eleven years old and strangled the neighbour's cat. Nobody missed that hairless fucker anyway.

Harry never felt the stupidity behind the need to love your love. They loved him, and when they'd died in a car crash in the state next to Middleton, it was a weight off Harry's shoulders. Of course, Gemma had lived but he chose to ignore her. He didn't have to 'love' them anymore for anyone's benefit and he got the family inheritance to last him seven lifetimes.

Okay it wasn't that much but six English estates and a several shares in the stock exchange count for something, right?

He was fourteen when his family perished, and advanced to drowning animals. He bought a pet every two weeks just to fill a bowl with water and strap them down. There was no feeling like that of a life slipping out through your fingers right there. Nothing more fascinating; nothing more beautiful.

As much as Harry was not going to change he was more than willing to make sure nobody else got to the boy with blue, blue eyes. Now he had him and had a million things to share with him, but no way of doing it.

Louis knew about his murderous intent and abilities, also trusted him enough to be this close and not get hurt. Louis didn't frown at him. Given, Louis didn't know Harry did more than just end a person's life.

When he came to Chicago State, he took Photography and Art as his major. His minors were widely spread in the hopes that he'd clash with Louis somewhere.

Harry felt it twitch, the impulse that he's gotten used to ignoring stirs from the depths of his subconscious. It's been days since he took a life, held it in his hands and mocked the fragility of the defenceless. Even more days since he devoured that life, or some part of it that became a part of him like a photo to a scrap book.

The girl he'd knocked out cold with chloroform was still alive and would serve the purpose of filling his special shower tank.

Louis grumbles in his sleep and punches the side of the pillow until it cradles his head correctly. Harry feels that has a metaphorical meaning in the act alone.

It's the scariest thing Harry's done, opening up to an individual who could up and leave him so suddenly. He doesn't think Louis will, not again. He likes to think they've connected now and it just needs to grow for a little while.

The thudding exhausted until it was just a mere whisp in the breeze of night noises. Louis slept through it, but Harry stayed up staring at the bland white ceiling. He could still hear it, build a rhythm from it until it drove him to action.

With a soft curse, Harry got out of the comfort of a new bed to deal with this problem. What if that
wretched noise woke Louis up again?

He uses the key from behind a picture frame hooked on the wall beside the locked door, and entered the dark space. It was meant to be a studio, and it most certainly will be when Harry cleans up after tonight. It wasn't meant to be tonight at first, but plans change all the time.

Harry locks the door behind him, knowing all too well how excellent Louis is at moving around unnoticed. He stands in the shadows as he watches Agatha panic from a new entry, chest heaving and teeth clenching around a strip of leather gagging her. Blood from a cut forehead, saliva and snot from a period of crying sessions all stain her skin and shirt.

Harry can't believe he even let such a whore near his car.

"You're doing one of two things." He speaks softly but the silence and emptiness of the room causes his voice to echo.

Agatha squirms and wriggles about, having fallen on her side from physical exertion. Her brow starts to sweat and he fingernails have been chipped to uneven ridges.

"You're trying to get someone to notice you're here." Harry steps into the light given to him through the window. "Or you're trying to kill yourself."

Agatha screams against the material in her mouth, and Harry hates the high pitch more than anything.

"You've succeeded in the first-" Harry says, referring to Louis' snooping. ",-and you'd be an even bigger coward than the guy I killed from a supermarket once, if it's the latter of the two." Harry sighs and takes single strides over to her, before crouching down to her level with his knees spread and able to crush her ribs if he dropped one.

"Do you have family?" Harry brushes the cold tip of his nose with a finger. "I'd call you by your name but you disgust me."

Agatha shakes her head, crying some more.

"Neither do I."

Harry gets up and goes to put gloves on. As much as he'll gloat about having a life helpless in your palms, he doesn't want prostitute blood on him.

"Come to think of it, Bob really is better than you." Harry takes a pair of scissors and a large plastic sheet from his work table - an ordinary wooden table - and makes his way back to Agatha.

"Bob was a fucking frustrating cashier at a supermarket." Harry explains, spreading the plastic out on the floor away from any walls. "He flirted with my Louis."

"I doubt you know anything about relationships." Harry sighs with his closed fists on his hips. "So I'll spare you the details."

"Now-" Harry walks over the plastic, the tense demeanour of his stance is very commanding. "-you know why you're here, yes?"

Agatha shakes her head profusely, her badly tanned skin blotchy and red from sweat and oily from grime. Harry bets a hundred bucks her cut forehead is already infected.
"I have a belief." Harry clears his throat, treading across the room and back a predator on the unsuspecting prowl. "There are people this world doesn't need. Prostitutes are in my Top Five." Harry starts ticking off all the negatives on his fingers. "You don't contribute to society or the economy positively. You spread diseases like proper bitches. You bring innocent children into this world into living conditions they don't deserve. You're lazy to actually make something of yourself and decide to be a whore for some sort of fucked up comfort."

Harry rakes those same fingers through his hair and realises something. "You know what? This will be painless. I don't want your blood or flesh."

He's decided he needs a clean specimen to fill his tank and a lowly prostitute's obviously not good enough. He really didn't want her blood spilling or splattering where it shouldn't, which is anywhere. However, this must get done and by his hand.

In the midst of this, Harry tries to think if he's ever done this before and whether he should get tested to ensure his health.

"No blood, so how about-" Harry really didn't want to touch her but he needed to put her on the plastic. "-something old school?"

Agatha has no emotion in her eyes but fear. It's a clear-cut and precise fear that she's never experienced before. Every night of hers - and some days - were individual horrors and part of her was glad it would finally be over.

"Have you ever read The Merchant of Venice?" Harry sucked up his resolve and darkened his eyes at the will of a blade.

He cackled to himself as he shook his head. "Look who I'm asking. Of course you didn't read that. Whores don't read anything."

Agatha was all cried out and fought the instinct to scream again. She had read that particular Shakespearean play, back in high school when it was her set work for tenth grade.

"Well, there's a character named Shylock." Harry twists the knife in his hand to watch light bounce off it. "And he has a bond with a trader named Antonio. When Antonio doesn't get to pay his debt, Shylock is entitled to one pound of his flesh."

Harry hears the plastic crinkle and his nearly black eyes dart to where Agatha is staring at him in disgust. He looks back at the knife to admire its sleek, totally able body.

"I've been cutting flesh for years. How many tries do you think it will take me to get a pound of flesh, no more and no less?"

**

Louis rolled onto something sticky and cringed, pushing it away absentmindedly. It didn't move and the mass was warm, slightly damp. It felt like skin, familiar skin.

"'arry?" He blinks away the eight o'clock sun light and corrects his fuzzy vision. "What are you-oh shit."

Louis sat up and shuffled backward so he was a good distance away from him. "Harry?" Louis knew he was awake, hands on his bloodied up to the wrists and Louis knew that wasn't a disastrous paper cut. "Whose blood is this?"

Harry heard him and internally smiled at the use of 'this' and not 'that' in Louis' question. It
reminded him that they're together, and Louis didn't isolate Harry in this. Louis took note of every area stained in dried maroon blood, sighing softly before sliding off the bed in a sleepy haze and approaching Harry's side.

"C'mon." Louis held Harry's biceps and - with effort - motivated the man to stand. "We're going to wash up." Louis explained when those ever-present worry lines started forming above Harry's eyebrows.

The creases relaxed and Harry seemed drugged, doped up on some form of high as he followed Louis to the adjacent bathroom like a puppy. His mind was empty and his hands shook, leaving him at the mercy of a feeling he's gotten sucked into after a killing.

"Hands?" Louis waited expectantly at the white porcelain basin.

Harry stood behind Louis, crowding the smaller lad against the sink in a back-to-chest connection. He held his hands out and Louis turned on the warm water, knowing that cold water had no effect on dried blood.

Louis used the liquid soap in a bottle to thoroughly lather Harry's hands, grateful to his routine of clipping his own nails regularly so there was no space for any dirt to gather. Harry rested his chin on Louis' shoulder and his eyes followed every hand motion. Sometimes he'd curl his hands together with Louis' and Louis would have a hard time escaping him.

"Harry." Louis whined when Harry got stubborn about rinsing his hands. "Stop that."

Harry sighed and his shoulders slumped, curving around Louis' straight back and shoulder blades. It was an almost perfect fit. Almost.

When Harry got bored, he was tempted by the luscious curve of Louis' neck where the skin was supple and the baby hairs were oh so soft. He knew that from experience and he licked his lips once before plastering them on the perfect spot below Louis' jaw.

Louis stopped cleaning the ridges of skin at Harry's knuckles to gasp and blush, resuming the action shortly.

"Wanna tell me what happened?" Louis managed to control his voice and keep the light whimper out of it when Harry started on a neat love-bite.

"It doesn't matter." Harry mumbled, getting his hands washed up to his elbows by Louis' dainty hands.

"Yes it does, Harry." Louis rinsed that foam off and grabbed a small towel from the rack.

Honesty, Harry remembers. He was going to be honest with Louis - to an extent. "Some prostitute's blood." Harry answers Louis earlier question. "I cleaned up, don't worry."

Louis was going to drop it for now, since it's hardly a proper hour of the morning and he hasn't gotten up fully yet. "Later."

Harry didn't like the sound of that, the hint of exasperation in Louis' tone, but he went with it anyway. He nods and doesn't move an inch away from Louis.

"Do you have a spare toothbrush?" Louis asks, only to have Harry nuzzle his shoulder and shrug.

"I'll use yours then?"
"No." Harry immediately answers, Louis' ears take the hit with a ring. "I'll find one for you."
Louis was puzzled by the man's reaction but decided to keep it to himself. He stared at Harry's transparent toothbrush like it held the key to the country. Harry returns moments later with a sealed Colgate toothbrush and happily hands Louis that one.

"Do you mind?" Harry questions, tightening his arms around Louis' middle and making the boy very conscious of his own nudity.
Louis shakes his head, not trusting his voice, and wets his toothbrush with toothpaste on it. "Your scent is calming." Harry's moist lips glide across Louis' tingling skin.
The toothbrush feels new on his teeth - still a few milk ones in there - and he gurgles with Harry wrapped around him. It made everything all the more awkward but Louis wasn't going to deny the man something innocently intended.

"What do I smell like that's so calming?" Louis wipes his mouth and stays put in Harry's arms. "Spice." Comes his reply. "Warm spice and vanilla."

"Must be the shampoo." Louis jokes. "Let's eat something."

When Louis moves, about eighty percent conscious now, he feels a thick crustiness on the inside of his thigh and hisses at the pinch. He glances down, spotting the smears of his own blood across the skin, and covers his face with both hands.

"What's wrong?" Harry turns him around.
"I need a shower." Louis yawns, looking at Harry's hip and identifying the same markings. "So do you."

Harry nods and bites his upper lip, looking around him for something. He leaves Louis standing there, giving the boy time to turn the water on since he already has no clothes on. When Harry returns, he has two towels that smell of styrofoam and Louis tries to keep his smile under wraps.

"Water's warm." Louis informs him.

There's a mild smirk playing on Harry's lips as he steps into the shower section, not minding the immediate spray of hot water. His skin turns to a healthy pink when he reaches out to grab Louis' hips and haul him into the shower. Louis squeals at the surprise of being lifted then lowered. Harry's done a fair amount of research, and he's seen this in the form of Netflix movies many times. He's sure he's supposed to wash Louis in this case, but he isn't certain Louis wants that.
"Can I?" Harry squeezes the sponge against Louis' shoulder to motion his gesture of washing.
Louis' eyes are fully awake, bright from a restful sleep and whirlwind of new information. He nods slowly, smiling at the end.

Hiding his deep breath, Harry starts with the lathered body gel. It's a disinfectant and he watches it slide down Louis' virgin skin in pure white suds. When his thighs come, Harry kneels to be thorough in cleaning the blood off.

He unwraps Louis' bandage and tosses it into the bin. The carvings are scabbed and the skin around it is a deep pink, still very sensitive. Pressing too hard would make them bleed again. Louis watches Harry clean the dried blood off, then the scabs. In the process it peels off due to the moisture, and Harry's name begins to bleed again. Louis hisses and tries moving away from the sting of the soap but Harry holds him firmly.

"I'm sorry it burns." Harry apologises like it's his fault Louis can feel pain at all. He kisses the top of Louis' thigh where only he's explored.
"It's okay." Louis combs Harry's hair away from his face, slowly becoming uncomfortable with the pregnant silence between them. "How about giving me my turn, Styles?"

Harry stands to his full height and unleashes a thousand watt smile, bordering on a grin that Louis' stunned to witness. He's never seen Harry smile so freely, so widely. He doubts anyone has. "No." Harry states, reaching over Louis to grab another item from the small metal stand. "Close your eyes, princess."

Louis does so, awaiting the verdict impatiently. Harry used his own shampoo - not having any other one as yet - to massage Louis' scalp and he chuckled at the boy's pout. "What is it, darling?" Harry let's Louis rest his hands on his waist, easing out of the tense fit.

"I hate this shampoo." Louis admits.

"I'm sorry, baby." Harry attaches a kiss to Louis' lips at the end of that. "What shampoo do you like?"

"TRESemmé brand." Louis answers accurately, before blushing. "The apple scented one."

Harry raises a suspicious eyebrow and Louis giggles, getting soapy water in his mouth. "You're going to get it in your eyes." Harry sighs. "Close 'em."

Louis listens and Harry finishes up, letting Louis stand under the water to rinse off. He'd be lying if he said he ran his hands along Louis' body just to help the rinsing process.

"My turn?" Louis' eyes were hopeful.

"Your turn." Harry relents.

Louis does a good job with his turn, and the bleeding by his thigh has ceased so the water can wash off any excess blood. Harry is tense under Louis' fingertips, and Louis feels guilty because he doesn't want to pressure him if this genuinely makes him uncomfortable. He wasn't going to touch Harry if he didn't want it.

"Hey." Louis realises Harry's eyes are closed, squeezed shut and part of that hurts him. "I'll stop."

"No. Why?" Harry grabs Louis' wrist when he draws back, unintentionally squeezing the sponge. "You're uncomfortable." Louis shrugged. "I'm not going to-"

"I'm fine."

"Your eyes were closed."

"I'm just not used to it. But I'm fine."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Okay."

Louis exhales and continues, smiling secretly at the released tension in Harry's shoulders. They were still stiff with knots.

"You need a massage." Louis comments. "It's not good to have this many knots."
"I don't want a stranger touching me." Harry blinks away the water around his eyes and gazes at Louis with clear mossy eyes. "Will you do it?"

"I will." Louis quips. "I can't reach your hair, Harry."

"Oh. Do you want me to kneel again?"

"Not if it makes you uncomfortable."

"It's fine."

"Then please."

Harry nods, a smirk on his face, and gets on his knees so he's at an appropriate height for Louis to wash his hair. Thinking Harry was going to turn around, Louis waits, but Harry just brings his hands to Louis' hips and presses the tip of his nose to Louis' belly button.

Louis massaged Harry's scalp with gentle fingers and his interest piques at the slight noise Harry makes. He bites the inside of his cheek and becomes more brave in his actions, resulting in tighter arms around him and Harry nudging his hands whenever he paused.

So Harry liked having his hair played with, Louis stores that information away with the other tiny details he has.

Eventually he has to stop and he brings Harry back up to his feet, letting the heavily scented shampoo get washed off. It's almost a blur after that and Louis' not all that sure how he ended up pinned against the wall, face pressed against the cool tile and hips jutting out behind him. "We're made for each other, you know." Harry slips his hands between them to knead Louis' behind as he nibbles on a love bite.

"Y-Yeah?" Louis' scared to admit it and although he enjoyed Harry's hands anywhere on his body, when they fondled his bum it was the best.

"Definitely." Harry heard Louis whimper and he got impatient. "Listen to yourself, baby."

Louis pushed back against Harry desperately, wanting moremoremore attention. Nobody's given him this before, this inexplicable feeling of lust and need. It was tangible between Harry and him, striking them like strong charges.

It's not like Louis' not tried the dating pool, he's just not had any luck ever. Now he knows why. "Harry." Louis moans, arching his back when Harry spreads his cheeks and prods at his entrance. "I'm here, darling." Harry kisses up his neck, shoving three fingers into Louis' clenching hole and making the boy cry out. "You enjoy the pain. Don't you, baby? Answer me." Louis nods vigorously, feeling like that's what he's supposed to say. He did enjoy the pain to an extent and pushed back on Harry's hand, mewling helplessly.

"Not just anyone can make you feel this good, love." Harry pumps his fingers in and out, drinking up Louis' breathless sounds.

"J-Just you." Louis stammers, spreading his legs wider.

"Good boy." Harry pulls out and slaps Louis' left cheek hard when the boy whines. "No get greedy, princess. Just have to be patient."

Louis nods blindly again and holds back his groans.
"Going to behave?"

"Y-Yes."

Harry seems satisfied and buries himself in Louis with one thrust, holding the boy's hips still as he bottoms out. He pushes Louis forward and draws his hips back to make it deeper. Louis keens and fogs up the grey tiles with heavy breaths.

Starting to thrust, Harry begins with a brutal pace because he needed that release only Louis could give him. Louis pushed back against Harry, clenching and moaning all beautifully. Harry grunts and pounds him harder until Louis' skin is red and the water's run cold around them. Harry spilled into Louis and Louis let go into the water flow. He was panting and sore, his knees weak from standing this whole time.

"Longest shower I've had." Louis smartly remarks. He gets another slap on the bum when Harry turns him around after pulling out.

"Best shower of my life." Harry presses his lips to Louis' forehead. "We need to get you a plug."

"What?"

"Don't like you leaking." Harry frowns, but helps Louis clean himself up anyway. "Want you to stay full of me."

"We can do that." Louis was red with nerves.

They settled in for breakfast at the kitchen counter with paper plates and throwaway cups. Harry didn't pack dishes in the mad hurry he was in to feet here, so he'd have to go shopping for all those essentials soon.

Then Louis realised there were no ingredients for any form of batter and groaned.

"We need food in this kitchen." Louis says.

"I have food."

"You have eggs, milk, bottled water which is enough to hand out at homeless shelters, bread that's almost stale and leftover pizza."

"Warm up the pizza then."

"You don't have a microwave."

Harry groans and Louis laughs behind his hand. "We can go shopping today. I have a few hours before I need to be at the studio."

"Do you want to go?"

"I don't mind going with you." Louis closes the fridge door.

"We can buy your shampoo."

"That's not necessary."

"Yes it is. You'll be living here every weekend."
Louis had forgotten about his 'punishment' and how he'd messed up his own compromise. "Can we talk now? About..what happened with the blood."

Harry looks at him speculatively but nods once.

"What was that?" Louis presses his hands into the counter. "Why do you do it?"

Those were the questions Harry hated, and certainly didn't expect them from Louis. Maybe Louis is trying to change him, and that was his plan all along. From Middleton he had Harry hooked and knew he'd be followed to Chicago. Maybe Louis' a phoney and just used Harry.

"I...I do worry about you." Louis continues. "I'd never want you to get caught and taken away from me but....-

Harry didn't catch the rest because he heard 'from me' and stopped listening. So Louis is genuine about this and Harry's irrational nature was making him pick apart the one good thing he has going.

"I love you." Harry blurts.

"...and I don't want you getting hurt so- What? Louis stopped his rambling to stare dumbfoundedly at Harry.

"I love you, Louis."

Louis looked from him to the counter. "Harry, stop."

"What?"
"Stop saying that. You don't know me well enough and nor do I know you. We don't understand."

"Don't trivialise my feelings for you, Louis." Harry snapped, a strange gleam in his eye. "Don't tell me I can't love. I'm not begging you to say it back, I'm giving you time to get there. I flew almost across the world to find you, if you don't feel that's something akin to love then you are lying."

With every sentence Harry got closer, standing from his stool and stepping around the counter to confront Louis. The boy peered up, leaning towards intrigue, as the man spoke.

"I'm not an adolescent." Harry's black pupils dilate. "I've been around for twenty-six years and I know what feelings are. And this one? Love? I only experienced it for the first time when I walked into your classroom after the first night we spent together."

Louis couldn't find his voice after it shrivelled up into a prune and hid. He moulded to Harry's movements just to make sure he was doing the right thing. Harry stepped forward, Louis stayed still. Harry cupped the side of Louis' face and Louis peered up at him silently. It wasn't disconcerting and it wasn't humiliating for either party. Harry brought out Louis' submissiveness, the part of him that wanted somebody else to control him, and not shoving Louis into it forcefully.

"I asked and you told me what pain feels like." Harry studies Louis' expression and kisses the boy's lips in a light peck. "Let me tell you what love feels like to me."

Louis closed his eyes and let Harry lock their fingers tightly together, ready to listen.
"I've never felt it before. Not for family and not for any friend. I hated everything because everything seemed to hate me. The day I saw you in the parking lot, watching me as I you, I felt like
a man whose heart beat once for the first time in a quarter of a century." Harry nosed at Louis' pulse point.

"People say it's a spark but I didn't feel that, this felt warmer-" He tugged on Louis' bottom lip. "-and it annoyed me at first because I liked the way I was. Then I followed you and learnt about you. You became my best friend in some manner, and my lover. You left and it broke me. Do you know what that feels like?"

Louis did know what that felt like because he was the one who left, the one who had been experiencing this horrific emotion for longer. "It feels like drowning."

"Yes." Harry agrees, pressing their foreheads together. "And when I walked into your lecture, like I had when I realised I couldn't leave you alone, it-"

"Was the first breath." Louis offered.

"That's right, darling." Harry pushed Louis' hair away from his eyes and bent down to his level. "That's why I won't ever be lying when I say my heart beats for you."

Louis felt like smiling and crying at the same time, so overwhelmed by the confession of a man who saw himself as previously irreparable. Louis' never been through this, hardly ever seen it on TV and now he's sure about actors never really conveying the true emotion.

He's thrilled that someone wants him just as much as he needs them, and it blinds him to all Harry's faults and flaws.

Chapter End Notes

And thats the end of chapter ten by ss98
I envy people that know love. They have someone who takes them as they are.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

"You are the worst person to shop with, Harold." Louis supplies as the first thing said between them in the frozen pizza and pie isle.

Harry doesn't respond, save for a small shrug, and continues to push the plastic trolley cart whilst tapping away on his phone. He never once raised his head to make conversation when Louis tried to, and it was long past annoying.

Louis would like some sign of interest or at the very least, gumsion in Harry's movements. The trolley was half full and every item it housed belonged to the least concerned half of this pairing.

"Harry!"

Louis didn't like bringing attention to himself but that anxious part of him smothered those tendencies in favour of making Harry listen to him.

Said man glances up with a slightly annoyed frown creased between his eyebrows. Louis couldn't care less about his irritation when there was his own to work on. Harry's head hangs between his pectorals again, shutting Louis out.

Having had enough of this offence, Louis decides on drastic measures. He grabs Harry's phone from under his nose and locks it with a swift press.

"What the fuck?" Harry straightens his back and glowers at Louis.

"I'd like your undivided attention please."

"Give it back, Louis." There were no endearments, no heartfelt breath lingering between Harry's cloaked eyes and that always scared Louis a little bit more each time.

"So you can ignore me for the rest of the day?"

Harry scowls at him, eyes narrowed and he steps around the trolley to lean over Louis. There was always the unfortunate height difference that left Harry at a good few inches prouder than Louis.

"Let's get something straight, princess."

Harry disregards the people shopping for family dinners in this isle, and pushes Louis against a freezer until his shoulder blades press painfully against the frozen glass. Any harder and Harry's iPhone's screen will crack under the pressure between Louis' fingers.

"You never get to tell me what to do." Harry placed a hand on either side of Louis' face and crowded his space to levels of suffocation. "You will listen to me because I am after your best interests, but I don't take orders from anyone."
"I don't know what you see this relationship as, Harry." Louis keeps a soft, gentle tone as Harry had. "But it's a mutual one. If you want me to respect you, I want respect too."

There was a sudden, deep noise from Harry's chest. It made Louis bite his lip hard to keep from screwing his eyes shut. If Louis studied Harry's array of emotions ducking behind the sharp thorns of the sensationally dark cloud over the foresty green, he'd pick up on one prominent emotion. Discomfort.

To many it was a passing word for adjectival purposes. To Harry it was bigger because all this, all these new aspects that just wouldn't curve when it told him to, was forcing him into a new state of mind. Something akin to insanity.

Harry, not knowing how else to react, pushes off the fridge and takes the phone from Louis. He makes it the subject of their dilemma in his mind, so there isn't any other issues that would call for a shrink on the surface.

He just doesn't like people touching his things. Yes, that would work.

In the process of uncurling Louis' fingers - ones more fragile than his own - he cracks the knuckles that Louis never does on his own. It hurts but Harry refuses to let up, throw in the towel in this argument because Louis' being dramatic.

He retrieves his phone and storms off, shoving the trolley away and into an already rickety shelf for good measure.

There's a loud crash and the trolley knocks several things off the shelf it collided with. Louis sighs and starts picking them up because even as a child he never left anything that was his fault alone. He's just about done when the murmuring of the pair of sisters down the row stops and heavy footing against the waxed tiles returns.

"Are you not done yelling yet?" Louis asks without looking up from where he's crouched on the floor.

"What are you doing?" There is no denying that Harry's speaking, although his tone has now registered as one that's a lot calmer.

"Picking up after you. Did you know these people are packing-"

"I love you."

"-the older stuff in the front so we gotta dig in the back for anything good." Louis stacks the sauce cans back where they belong nonchalantly.

"Louis."

"Maybe it's not even the manager's fault." Louis ponders, pulling the trolley away from the dented metallic racks.

"Lou? Did you hear me?"

"It could be a type of conspiracy, you know. I'm not into sensationalism but maybe that stuff is real."
"Stop ignoring me." Harry's lost the poker of disgruntled manner in his eye. "Baby?"

Louis scoffs at this, at him. "Yeah? Sucks, doesn't it? I know you hate it. I do too."

Harry's face falls when he starts to think about whether he's really damaged something so good with his aggressive arrogance. He's worried about Louis really leaving him for someone who won't cause a scene in supermarkets to prove a point. It scares him nearly to death to imagine Louis leaving him alone, ignoring him.

"Baby, I'm sorry." Harry's always willing to apologise to Louis if it will get him the desired results quicker. "I love you, Lou."

When Harry tries touching Louis, needing to share a caress that will put his frantic mind at ease, Louis steps closer and pushes his hand away.

"There are two people in this relationship, Harry." Louis looks up into Harry's troubled eyes and softens his harsh tone. "That means two out of those two people deserve respect and have their feelings considered. Understand?"

Harry nods. "Okay."

"And there are things I won't allow you to control about me."

"I'm-"

"No, listen. I let you do as you please with my body when we're in private, and so outside of that I need attention too. Just because I've said yes to you does not mean you stop trying."

Harry understands this too and nods once again, smiling in the end when Louis let's himself be held around his middle by the man.

"We can- um....We can have safe words." Harry proposes, a little unsure about his own idea.

"I like that idea."

Harry smiles and his eyes dart to Louis' thin pink lips, silently asking for permission to kiss him. Louis stretches up on his tiptoes and Harry holds him close so he can't flatten his feet on the ground too soon. Their lips slide into place together and Louis finds his smaller hands holding Harry's supporting biceps as he subtly licks into Harry's mouth.

His eyebrows knit together at the taste of something unexpected, Harry's exhalation into Louis' mouth enters with a whiff of smoke intake. He doesn't mind the nicotine traces now that he knows it will be there.

"Did you leave to smoke?" Louis raises a brow.

"Only got through a quarter of it because I couldn't stay away from you that long."

Rolling his eyes, Louis sets his shoes back down on the ground and removes Harry's arms from around him.

"I think this supermarket has seen more than enough of our personal lives. Please, let's go."

Harry chuckles and nods in agreement, taking Louis' hand in his when he bends to kiss his forehead affectionately.

"You're still pushing the trolley, Styles."
"I was thinking." Harry interrupts their hour of silence that's only commenced twenty minutes ago. "Yes?" Louis' not sure why his dance instructor said his technique wasn't clear because rehearsing it now with Harry as a straddle bar, it seems perfect.

"It wasn't...." Harry frowns as he fumbles to gather the right wording. "-right for me to just embarrass you like that earlier in the supermarket."

Louis smiles understandingly, lowering his leg from Harry's shoulder where the ankle was propped effortlessly. He didn't have anything to say although he felt as if Harry was awaiting an interruption. "So I want to take you somewhere nice later." Harry proposes, following Louis' hands to the boy's waist. He played the support mechanism in almost all of Louis' routines.

"Don't feel obligated, Harry." Louis bends backwards, quite literally folding himself in half for the stretch.

"No." Harry shakes his head. "No, I don't. I want to."

Louis hums, considering this offer as he altered his position by lifting his upper body and clasping Harry's shoulder with his right hand for a stable balance. He raised his left leg as he rose and curved the muscle until it formed an O on his back.

"Out of choice." Harry reiterates, thinking that Louis had forgotten what he said in a mere sixty seconds.

"Where will we go?" Louis wishes he had on more clothing than one of Harry's T-shirts and boxers. "I booked us a table at Alinea." Harry smiles, but it's reluctant to read his eyes.

Louis pauses and mirrors Harry in posture, dropping his leg to the cold wooden floor again. "It's so expensive there."

"Doesn't matter." Harry states with a familiar smirk. "We have until eight."

"My class finishes at three but I don't have any clothes here."

"We'll buy you some."

Louis all but chokes on a healthy dose of air. "Fond of flaunting your money, Styles?"

It's the only thing I know how to do that won't get me arrested, Harry thinks but keeps the deep truth to himself.

"Of course." He smiles and his dimples pop up, adorable indents on his cheeks. "But just for us."

Louis rolls his eyes for the umpteenth time that day, turning on his heel to leave Harry's bedroom that they'd been occupying. He was previously intent on practising for a full hour but the airconditioning was off during their absence, which led to a near suffocating temperature settled throughout the loft.

"So do I have a yes?" Harry captures Louis' hand in his, holding him back.

"That depends."

Harry waits silently for the conditions.

"Is this your way of asking me out a date?"
"By definition, it will be a date."

"Fine, but you're not buying me clothes." Louis says firmly.

He wasn't about to throw out his morals - that he's had the nasty chance to develop all by his lonesome through his life - and resolve for Harry. His intentions may be clear but so were Louis'. Harry seems stricken by this and frowns deeply, reforming the creases of his forehead that age him faster than anything can.

"Okay." He finally answers. "That means you'll have to fetch clothes from your dorm before we go. We can go after I-"

"Shh." Louis giggles and succumbs to the unsuppressable urge to kiss away Harry's racing lips so that he relaxed. "One hour at a time, yes?"

"No." Harry frowns again, only his lips are moist and his hands secure Louis' waist under the shirt.

"Yes."

"But-"

"Yes. No arguments."

Louis steps back and Harry grabs his hand to follow. It seemed like he always wanted to hold Louis at any region, either he was leading or being led but the adored the simplicity of such a fond action. He was still working his way up to the more affectionate ones.

"May I?" Louis asks, pointing to the little white box on the passage wall.

Harry nods and he puts the thermostat on to monitor the apartment's temperature. "You have forty minutes left to practise."

Louis nods and decides there's no avoiding this. He truly loves dance, and the message it broadcasted in the skill it took to convey silent messages through acts of entertainment. He would spend majority of his time dancing, if such a thing could be a reality.

He also knew he was a bit rusty in his physical shape department and needed to enroll at a gym this week to keep healthy. He'd have to sit with his work schedule as soon as he has a free minute or two.

Harry offers - offering being defined as insistence - to push the still plastic-covered couch back and use the thick, soft carpet instead.

"Your feet will start to hurt, princess." Harry remarked intelligently.

"I've had the worst blisters because of dance, Harry." Louis replies softly. "A few more won't make a difference."

But of course Harry hadn't gone down without the last say, and eventually convinced - convinced being defined as forcing - Louis into just taking it easy. He also learnt, as they danced, that Louis had fractured his foot, sprained his wrist and ankle whilst attending ballet and contemporary dance lessons.

"Were you careful?" Harry realises that he likes making Louis spin, loves watching how the boy picked and dropped his body so gracefully.
Harry also wasn't pleased when he imagined Louis as a young boy with bruises and bandages limping around. He would have been open prey to big bullies, jackasses. "Can't tell you now. I was twelve and hardly remember." Louis shrugs.

"I remember being twelve."

"Oh yeah?"

Harry captures his upper lip between his teeth. He remembers what he'd done that year, after being eleven and strangling birds. He advanced to domestic animals. It was three years away from his first human kill.

After Louis' done reassuring himself that he's prepared for today, Harry gets him water to keep him hydrated. All Harry's done is destroy, ruin and taint. Louis let him care, cherish and love. At twelve thirty Harry ushered Louis out of the apartment to be in time for his dance lesson. Louis wore his jeans to go there with a T-shirt of Harry's that billowed in the wind and created goosebumps on his skin, although he'd asked for a pair of sweat pants and another cut-off shirt for the actual dancing.

"I'll be here at two forty-five." Harry informs him, not letting Louis out of the monstrous SUV until he's heard everything.

"Okay." Louis felt a kiss on the cheek was dismissal enough but Harry clearly wasn't done.

"You know the rules, Lou. I trust that you won't purposely try to evade them." Harry raises a speculative brow at the boy.

Louis giggles, glad deep down that Harry hasn't taken the misconduct to heart and remained angry about the situation.

He hears the car's central locking unlatch and reaches for the handle. "Alright. Bye."

"I love you."

Louis pauses a moment with the door wide open, turns back to smile sweetly at Harry since he could do more as an offering, and jumps down.

He hears Harry pull away and sighs, taking his first loud and ragged breath. It's not that he was always uptight around the man, Harry made him more comfortable than most people combined if anything. However, there was a lot of humility to be desired with Harry, a lot of unkempt free will.

The biggest issue with Harry stared at Louis and the man both when they looked in a mirror. Each one dismissed it, writing overkill off as a side effect to a troubled, loveless youth.

Louis manages to remain concentrated for the rest of his class without slipping or pissing off the instructor further. She adjusts their positions many times during the frozen frame of a contemporary routine, and Louis' afraid that he hurt himself again. He relaxes when nothing stings or burns. "Well done, Louis." She compliments with a kind smile.

"Thank you, ma'am." He does a short, quick bow as he gathered his - Harry's - belongings. It was 16h09 because after class everyone just dramatically dropped to the ground and wasted time getting clean. Now, Louis was late.

"I hope you didn't all night with your straddle. That could have hurt you."
Everyone was gone by then, even Stan who made ridiculous faces at Louis from behind their instructor's back. One more time the door opened, and Harry entered with a cross expression directed at Louis. He didn't even soften at the sight of the teacher holding Louis up.

"Oh no," Louis laughs distractedly. "I got someone to help."

"That's nice." She nods. "I-"

"Louis." Harry was standing behind Eve, hands shoved deep into his jeans' pockets. "Ready to go?" There were no endearments again and Louis doesn't get whether Harry just won't call him any in public or now he's really angry.

"Oh." Eve is spooked by the sudden voice from behind her. "Hi."

Harry was never expected to have the best manners, but when Eve speaks he doesn't even glance at her. His gaze stays pinned on Louis, jaw tight in a way that made Louis weak and nervous.

"Sorry, Eve. We have to go." Louis rushes to explain.

She bids them adieu and leaves without further judgment. Harry takes Louis' bag from his shoulder, seeing the boy hunch with the weight.

"I'm not angry." Harry says after they're in the safety of his Dodge. Louis doesn't know why that reassurance was such a relief; he's never, ever been one to live on what another person thought of him.

Instead of hinting that Louis was allowed to do what he wanted outside the apartment and college, he slides down his window and mutters: "You aren't?"

"Wasn't your fault, was it?" Harry shrugs and brakes at a red light.

They drive back to Harry's place in silence that doesn't run Harry up a wall, but throttles Louis with a bitter tangibility.

Wanting to shower first, Louis opens his mouth to ask once they're inside the flat but Harry speaks first, dumping Louis' bag next to the door.

"Come here." The man extends his arm and curls it around Louis' waist to bring him closer. "I want to fulfil my promise."

"What did you promise me?" Louis clears his throat and follows Harry out of the open-plan kitchen where he filled a glass of water for himself.

"I have included you in a secret I've kept for twenty-six years; showing you this room is hardly anything in comparison."

"Again, don't feel obligated."

Harry shakes his head and frowns in the midst of the motion, already deeming the matter urgent enough to start dragging Louis towards his forbidden studio. Forbidden to everyone but them now.

Louis watches Harry remove a silver key the size of his own pinky finger, and slip into the well-maintained lock of the closed door in the corner of the living room. Inside is dark because the dark purple curtains are drawn and the light's off. Louis gets bombarded with a variety of smells, some intoxicating and some plain foul. He can identify paint and old wood, something more potent like wet metal rusting has made the room stuffy and irritable.
Harry and Louis find themselves in a standard art studio, with plastic on the floor, a drain in the middle of the room, and a stash of artistic instruments on tables along the wall. There are two windows, one with a small balcony.

"Blades of all sorts but a hidden collection of books." Louis steps further into the room, Harry trailing behind him cautiously. "What did you expect?" Harry had been a good distance away from him, but now he sounded too close to Louis' ear.

Harry can't make sense of that answer and chuckles as he shakes his head. "Blacksmith's home?"

Louis shakes his head, learning everything about the room as he moves around. "A knight."

Nodding, Harry stays behind Louis as he walks. "I want to draw you."

Louis looks at him over his shoulder, unscrewing the cap on the yellow oil paint tube. "Why?"

"Because you're beautiful." Harry would say that every hour to Louis, to the world if he could. "And I want to memorise your body."

Lowering the paint, Louis turns around so his back is pressed against the table's edge. He gasps when he realises how close Harry is, annihilating his personal space and holding his waist. "I'd draw you for my assignments-" Harry brushes Louis' cheek in a sweet caress. "-but I don't want anyone else seeing you the way I do."

Louis' cheeks turn pink with his ears, tempting Harry to blind his senses with a hard kiss. Louis jerks backwards with the force and groans into Harry's mouth, his arms winding around the man's broadly curved shoulders.

Harry's mouth moves from Louis' lips to his jaw then his throat, sucking deep bruises around his Adam's Apple. Louis' fingers get lost in Harry's soft ringlets, his lips parting to make way for air and his eyes squeezing shut. It was always such a rush of want and desire with Harry.

The passion filtered into their bodies from charges particles in the air, burning their skin in the best possible way and setting every touch on fire.

"Up." Harry kneads Louis' behind, bringing him closer and squeezing the firm flesh possessively. Louis starts to obey, but Harry hastily dumps him on the desk after shoving everything against the wall.

"On your stomach, legs on the ground." Harry changes his mind, already having stripped Louis of his pants and underwear. "Wanna fuck you like an animal."

Louis whimpers and hurriedly does as told, eager to please and be pleased. He even spreads his legs the way he noticed Harry likes, back arched slightly to show off the smooth tenderness of his skin. "Showing off there, darling?" Harry bends over, pressing Louis against the table top, and whispers in Louis' ear. "To me, yes? Just me?"
Louis nods vigorously, his cheek sliding against the table. He whines and pushes back against where he can feel the bugle outlining Harry's jeans. He gets a loud smack to the left side of his behind, making him mewl and mumble a string of apologies.

"Don't get greedy, princess." Harry reprimands. "I always give you what you want, don't I?" Louis nods again, and clutches his fists as Harry kneels. He knows what's coming but he's just not ready for it, his fingers and toes curl in anticipation. When a wet, fat stripe is licked across his perineum he mewls helplessly. He wants more, so much more but it looks like Harry's going to make him wait.

Harry prods at Louis' fluttering muscle with inquisitive thumbs, slipping one in at a time and using them to allow his tongue space to slip in. Louis shudders and his knees almost buckle, his mind turning to mush and fog.

"You're so tight, baby." Harry slips in a third finger that's lubricated in saliva, fucking them into Louis to get him used to the sensation. "Have to make sure you're open enough."
"I-I am." Louis speaks his first words since they started.

The smack to his left cheek echoes through the empty room, and Louis' skin turns bright red as he cries out and comes onto the table leg.

"I said don't get greedy." Harry snaps, standing up and unbuckling his pants. "And I didn't say you could come. Did I, princess?"

Louis' tears dampen the table surface and he shakes his head slowly. "I'm s-sorry. P-Please, Harry."
"You don't beg unless I ask you to." Harry says through gritted teeth, focussing on teasing Louis with circling his rim with his length.

Louis reaches behind him and grab Harry's hip or something and Harry snatches his wrist, pinning it to his back.

"So stubborn today." Harry remarks. "I thought you were my good boy, Lou."
"I-I am." Louis wiggles and bites his lip until it gets teeth imprints that bleed from the excitement coursing through his body, worked up and getting no relief.

"You are?" Harry presses the head of his member against Louis' hole and pushes it in dry. Louis shrieks and forgets about his own full heavy length to concentrate on the burn. It was painful but still gentler than their very first time.

"I thought you said you were my good boy. Can't you take it, Lou?" Harry slowly glides in, precome alone easing the path.

"I-I....it hurts, Harry." Louis sobs, body shuddering and hips stuttering.

"Want me to pull out?" Harry holds Louis' cheeks apart to get deeper, rolling in figure eights that makes Louis scream out censored curses. "Want me to leave you like this?"

Louis shakes his head multiple times, not knowing how many will be enough.

"Then you'll take it, won't you?"

"Y-Yes."

Harry brushes Louis' prostrate several times, applying pressure to it and pulling out shallowly before slamming back in. He kept up a steady rhythm, bucking his slim hips and pounding Louis'
special spot buried deep inside his tight body, providing him with bursts of pleasure. Harry grunts and starts swivelling his hips as well, after delivering a precise thrust.

"G-Go sl-slow." Louis tries, feeling his socks slipping on the smooth flooring.
"No." Harry curts, snapping his hips harder until Louis' at the point of breaking.

Harry pushes the backs of Louis' thighs so he stayed upright, fucking him harder to make their climaxes arrive faster. Louis keens and throws his head back, a look of bliss on his face as he comes hard enough to lose sight for a moment. Harry comes deep inside Louis, filling him up and searing his insides with warm come.

Louis pushes at Harry's chest where the man collapsed on him, his lower half going dead with numbness. Harry pulls out, flips Louis onto his back and pushes back in. Surprised, Louis' breath hitches and he scratches Harry's back from the relentless pressure. Harry's nestled against his prostrate and it's driving his sensitivity through the roof, making him squirm and squeeze Harry's waist.

His panting picks up again, and Harry still doesn't react. The man tucked his face into Louis' neck and wrapped his arms around Louis' wriggling body.

"Har-Harry- Oh God- Harry!" Louis feels his orgasm building but doesn't know if he wants it yet, his body is spent and another time would hurt.

"Wanna come again, darling?" Harry peppers sweet kisses to Louis' sweaty skin. Louis' back curves into an attractive 'C' and his elbows press against the table, his fingers tugging on Harry's hair desperately. "Y-Yes!"

"Okay, princess." Harry draws back to push back in roughly, making Louis hiss from the sting and stretch. "Like that, angel?"

Louis nods continuously until Harry smothers him with a kiss. "S-So big, Harry. F-Filling me so-so well."

"Yeah?" Harry smirks. "I'll fuck you again, princess. Want me to ravish you, baby? I know you like it when I'm rough and hard."

Louis' own length is pressed tightly between them, getting too much friction but not enough. "Will you let me remember this time? Take some photos of us?" Harry pressed deeper, more against Louis' prostrate as he asked that question.

Louis nodded blindly again and didn't know what he was agreeing to. He felt Harry pull out completely and when he didn't slam back in, Louis sat up panicked.

"Harry?" He reached out for the man walking away from him, his bottom lip quivering because wasn't he good?

"I'm here, darling. I'm not leaving you."

Harry fetches something from the other side of the room before returning. He sees Louis' worried expression and softens immediately, his hand cupping Louis' cheek. "I'm here, baby. I love you so much." Harry kisses Louis deeply, stealing the air from around them. "Gonna take care of my baby."

Louis smiles and locks his arms around Harry's neck, satisfied with the return answer he got. Harry chuckles and kisses Louis' nose so the boy would giggle.
"What are you doing?" Louis wrapped his legs around Harry, upset that he wasn't getting all of Harry's attention when he was clearly desperate and willing.

"Wanna take good pictures." Harry sets the camera down on the window sill with an orange light flashing.

Louis didn't mind a camera since he knew Harry would never spread those images of them purposely. He reached between them, grabbing Harry's red erection and slipping it back into him making them both moan and cling to each other tighter.

"So good, Lou." Harry breathlessly whispers, jerking Louis forward on the desk and lifting his thighs for a better angle.

The first flash goes off and Louis startles, ending in a weak whimper from Harry slamming his prostrate. Harry pushes Louis back onto the table and they ignore the following flashes to just enjoy the moment. Harry's length dragging inside Louis' tight, wet heat makes the raw pleasure ten times more intense. Harry's rhythm is perfectly stable and Louis' sure he's scratched the table up well.

"Be loud, angel." Harry encourages. "Scream my name for me, baby."


Harry had forgotten about the bandage on Louis' thigh and now stretches Louis' legs in a wide spread to get a good view. There are slight hints of red and Harry knew that it still hurt for Louis to walk with his legs together and sit properly, but it would heal after a week and anyone who dare gets close enough to Louis' body will see a permanent carving of his name. Louis orgasms for the third time and his body gives up supporting itself. He sags against the table, spent and exhausted. He breathes heavily, letting himself be used by Harry and his enthusiastic fucking to get off. He feels sore and exposed, his most private region is gaping from Harry's girth and it feels like he's split in two.

Harry uses a rag that's meant for a canvas to clean Louis' chest. He's adamant of taking care of his boy, knowing that Louis needed that in all aspects.

"Tired, Lou?" Harry kisses Louis' cheek. "Wanna go to bed for a while?"

"Hmm." Louis hums, eyes closed and fingers barely holding Harry's forearms. "M tired."

"Shh." Harry kisses Louis' forehead next. "I'll carry you."

Louis helps enough by curling himself around Harry's accepting body, the T-shirt that never came off bundled up by his tummy and pressing skin to skin. Harry whispers in Louis' ear, sweet nothings that he knows Louis likes to hear.

"Lie down." Harry removes the damp shirt and lays Louis down under the covers. Louis starts shifting and grumbling after two seconds and Harry frowns. "Baby?"

"M leaking." Louis groans, evidently irritable and crabby that he can't sleep but wants to.

"Want me to clean you or get your plug?"

Harry confessed to Louis in the car earlier about sneakily ordering a custom plug that he picked up after storming out of the supermarket. He claimed it was a good surprise.

"Plug." Louis exhaled, throwing back the covers messily and rolling slowly onto his back to spread his legs.
Harry retrieves the object from where he'd dumped it in the closet, and comes back to Louis' side. He sits on the bed and lubricates the black plug with flavourless lube from the box/temporary night stand. Sliding it into Louis is almost too easy, since the boy had a hard time avoiding his gaping result. Harry had to first slip two fingers in so the bruised ring of muscle closed, making Louis whine in a high pitch, before inserting the plug.

"Better, doll?"

Louis hums and smiles against the pillow. "Thank you."

Harry rewards him with a chaste shoulder kiss before covering Louis up and leaving the room with the door open. He had to be ready if Louis needed him again.

Going back to his studio, Harry wonders why he was so reluctant to show this room to Louis initially. He, at the time, wanted something for just himself but when the opportunity presented itself he was more keen to share everything.

Harry checks on the camera and cleans his desk, wanting to keep busy because he hated naps during the day. He'd never be able to sleep at night otherwise. Eventually, he decides to work on the painting assessment he has due in six weeks.

His professor had asked everyone to present to him a piece that "embodied the destruction of a stereotype" with no restrictions on the art itself. After today, Harry had the perfect idea.

He was caught up with a blank standard door size canvas flipped onto the landscape side, for over two hours. He'd sit on a stool from the kitchen, or he'd hover around the wooden stand with an empty mind. He forgot about not having a shirt and just boxer briefs on, occasionally wiping his hands on his body to rid them of excess paint.

He checked the time to create a mental time line with everything he needed to get done before seven marked off. At five o'clock he checked on Louis, found the boy curled up on his side still asleep, and went back to working. He uploaded all the photos from his Nikon SLR to his Macbook, saving them all with grey and light filters so the most intimate moments were frozen and intensified on his computer.

He didn't want to leave Louis alone in the apartment while he went back to get some clothes, so he occupied himself with unpacking some boxes and ordering dishes online. He would probably survive with paper plates and disposable utensils but he's certain Louis - the only guest he plans on having - won't stand for that forever.

He hears the first shuffle at around six o'clock and shut his laptop off to go into the bedroom. Exempting the courtesy of knocking, Harry walks into his room to find Louis sitting up against the headboard.

There was a measure of certainty that Harry noticed when he saw Louis in his room. It gave him a feeling of swelling pride and driven anticipation.

"Did you sleep well?" Harry sits next to the lump of sheets that hide Louis' legs. Louis yawns and nods at the same time. "What were you up to?"

"Nothing interesting." Harry answered truthfully. "Wanna go get some clothes for you from the dorm?"

Louis had many reasons for going back eagerly. He needed to tell Niall why he'd left without word, leaving the poor lad with the responsibility of Bolg and Bundy. He missed his pets and he knows
they miss him too; exotic creatures grew attached slowly but for life.

"Yes please." He threw the covers off and grumbled incoherently as he slid off the bed.

"What's wrong?" Harry stood with him.

"M sore." Louis waves him off with tinted cheeks. "Can I use your bathroom to shower?"

"You can shower when we get back."

Louis shrugs, still slipping in and out of a world riddled with dreams. He pulls the shirt he borrowed from Harry’s closet of boxes down to guard his modesty.

"The towels..." Harry mutters awkwardly. "They're on the rack by the basin, if you want."

"Thanks." Louis smiles gratefully, just as nervous and moves towards the bathroom.

"And!"

"Hmm?" Louis giggles, tilting his head just an inch.

"And-" Harry continues. "You can- uh....wear my clothes, when you come out."

"Oh." Louis picks at the hem of the shirt by his thighs. "Maybe just a shirt or something. Thanks, again."

Harry leaves Louis to get ready on his own, with the bathroom and bedroom to himself. Louis laughs softly to himself when Harry leaves, wondering where that nervous, awkward Harry had been hiding. It was cute to Louis, endearing even to have a person at least respond to him like that. Louis showers thoroughly, hissing under the spray of luke warm water when he has to remove the plug himself as well as get clean. His body was flushed pink from the steam, and his face from the embarrassment.

Whilst in the shower and already having developed pruney finger buds, Louis twists the third uniquely positioned shower tap and waits. Nothing happens and the hot water continues to fall freely against his skin. No blood.

Somehow this was more unsettling than if the tank had been filled. Of course Louis didn't know Harry - on occasion - snacked on the flesh of fellow human beings, and so couldn’t piece together the puzzle of this special tank. He found Harry with a prostitutes blood on his hands, what was that about? Fun?

The door rattled with a heavy knock and Louis almost slipped on the gathering foam at the drain.

"Y-Yes?"

"We're going to be late, Lou." Comes Harry's stern reply.

"Oh. Sorry, I'm coming!" He calls back over the shower's volume.

He dressed in Harry's cable knit sweater and a pair of un-ironed, faded grey sweat pants that needed to be folded at his ankle or he’d be leading around a train and trip on everything. "Don't you lock up?" Louis asks when Harry fails to do so after they leave.

"Why should I? Nobody's going to steal from me." Harry answers cryptically.

Louis drops the subject and they drive in an empty silence to Chicago State. The security guard positioned at the gate they enter through gazes quizzically at the pair, only after Harry produces his
student identification are they let through.

Louis' dormitory stood behind all the others, just like the brothers of the house preferred. Harry parks in a dead lot - everyone else was in the middle of frantic, messy parties that would end with ugly results - and they exit the vehicle.

"Will anyone be here?" Harry asks, throwing an arm over Louis' thin shoulders when a group of drunk college boys stumble onto their pavement.

"Probably." Louis mindlessly shrugs, unaware of their audience.

Harry knows the world today doesn't abide by any primal civilisation and won't conform to the basic norms of respect. He still kisses Louis' temple over his fringe and glares at the oncoming people.

Someone whistles in the catcall kind of way that makes Louis frown and speed up his steps, the door to his dormitory not very far away. Harry however, was not going to run and held Louis in pace with him.

"Harry." Louis warned.

"Shh." He kisses Louis' cheek and squeezes his shoulder reassuringly. "I've got you, princess."

"Princess?!" One of the six obnoxious individuals bursts into a fit of wet laughter. "Sorry mate, but he's got as much of a dick as you do."

"Maybe half though." Another adds.

Harry stiffens around Louis, his muscles tensing with the burning red to just end them.

Louis is calmer, less deterred and tries to distract him.

"C'mon, Harry." Louis tugs Harry's wrist on his waist.

"You should get him inside, pal." The loudest and most idiotic of the posse steps up. "Princesses have a curfew."

It's pretty much a black moment from then on, because Harry releases Louis while simultaneously shoving the offender back. He collides with the red brick wall and groans, still grinning.

"Harry, stop." Louis grabs Harry's arms with all his might. "It's not- they're not worth the trouble."

"What trouble?" Harry removes Louis' fingers from his bicep and cracks his neck. "They won't tell." Louis didn't understand what this stood for in Harry's mind. It was his plaque of accomplishment, something that would remain achieved and completed in his life. If he let's them off, he'll remember this day twenty years from now and still regret.

Harry dodges a blow that comes at him from his opponent, Louis steps back from the shock and gasps. He hates fighting, this specific violence scared him.

Thinking again, the stranger with no respect lunges at Harry only to end up face down in the dirt before Harry steps on his flattened back with one leg.

Louis knows this isn't good, that if they're spotted there'll be too much trouble to smother with a wave of a wad of cash. Too many reputations to throw into a spinning turbine of ruin.
"Har-"

"Go inside." Harry cuts him off, the edge in his voice is not to be argued with.

Usually Louis would have stood his ground but tonight, with a forsaken headache arising and no constructive words to throw out his argument, he nods and runs off into his building. Upon reaching the door, he pauses to listen to the sounds.

They're horrific and he finds himself flinching at each one, the drumming inside his head causing a dull pain but an emotional response. Louis hated pain and it made him weak, too responsive to everything around him. A tear slips from the corner of his eye as the dread fills his body, his mind. He grips the door handle, holding it like it's his anchor to this world as he cries. Harry saw beauty in the mess he'd made. Maybe he could take a photo and filter it later. It would be such a sweet sight to sadistic minds.

It wasn't sadism or masochism, it was free will.

Having only taken one life, playing the warning card to the rest of those barbarians, Harry planned to derive all the fun he could from this trivial victory.

"Good enough for you?" Harry had tilted his head, slight grin on his face, as he spoke to the five remaining hooligans. "Whisper a word of this to anyone, and I'll not hesitate to repeat what happened here tonight."

He tossed the lifeless corpse aside, having gripped the boy by his neck before inserting the blade. With a smug expression, confident smirk and proud twinkle against the black night, Harry chuckled darkly. "Boo."

They sprinted, tripping on untied shoelaces and one even cried. Harry hated men who built themselves up as fearless then cried at the sight of blood.

Shaking his head, Harry looked to make sure Louis was actually not watching the entire attack from behind a pillar - he wasn't - he dragged the body to his car and dumped it in the back seat. "Lou?" Niall called, looking up from the book in his lap when he heard their door open.

"H-Hey." Louis had just made a trip to the bathrooms to throw up painfully, so his voice and hands shook slightly.

"Bloody Hell." Niall muttered, rising to close the door behind Louis and hug him unexpectedly.

"Where the devil were you?"

"U-Um...." Louis accepts the embrace, comforted by the innocent presence.

"Are you cold?"

"Little bit."

"What are you wearing?" Niall held Louis an arm's length away and inspected the clothing. "You didn't climb a beanstalk, did ya?"

Louis smiled, actually humoured by such lame banter. "No, sorry."

"Get in bed. You're not leaving this room until you can answer in more than two syllables."

"I-I can't. I-"
"You look like you've returned from a war, shaking like a leaf and all." Niall tutted, ushering Louis under the covers of his bed.

He wasn't kidding. Louis' eyes were wide saucers of trepidation, worry and horrific guilt. He was drowning in his attire and it made him look anorexic, deeply unhealthy.

"Bolg nearly chewed my toe off missing you." Niall laughs.

Just like that, a switch was flipped and Louis forgot. Forgot about outside in the parking lot, forgot about Harry, forgot about the oversized clothing he was wearing. This ability was a curse and a gift at moments like this.

"W-Where are-

"Jesus fucking Christ." Niall curses while looking out their only window.

"What?" Louis sits up and throws his legs over the side of the bed.

Something was glowing orange, bright and even Niall's skin reflected the strong blaze.

Louis stands and goes to stand beside his friend, hands buried inside Harry's T-shirt and bare feet ignoring the bite of the cold tiles. He stops suddenly when he sees the fire, breath getting caught in a loud gasp that he covers up with a small hand.

Across the field, where the water fountain of their university's founder and a tree older than her, hung a burning body.

Chapter End Notes

thats the end of chapter 11 by ss98 and so much more to come
Chapter Twelve

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

_I said I would not come near you and in spite of such temptation as never before fell to mortal man, I'll keep my word._

*NARRATOR'S POV*

"Oh shit." Louis muttered distractedly.

By the end of the time Niall takes to realise what's Louis' connection to the body on fire in their courtyard, Louis' already halfway out the building's door.

He can clearly see the orange glowing banner of death from here and wants to slap Harry for his sloppiness. Taking off in a sprint across the lot, Louis misses many bunches of rowdy youngsters and their parties that thankfully distract them enough with booze.

Louis arrives at the tree, a good portion of which is already charred black and crusty by powerful flames. He can smell gas on the body, and can't see Harry. The person in question is unidentifiable but Louis has a solid idea of where he comes from.

His body freezes over, driven and influenced by panic. It was akin to paralysis, Louis' sure, because once his eyes are fixated upon the focus he can't move or look away. His bare feet are blistered and cut by the harsh stones of their parking lot, Louis is indifferent to the pain. The cold wind, feeding this fire its nourishment, gives him goosebumps.

He knows this is a big mistake. A huge error that he will pay for later in the form of police affidavits.

Somehow the smell of burning flesh, and bone turning to ash, is not as grand as films make it out to be. It's rancid and wretched. Louis understands why people throw up right after.

"Don't breathe that in, Lou." Harry's voice - however real - sounds right next to his ear. Louis is numb and when he tries to move his hand, it doesn't even wriggle. Harry sighs and throws Louis' arm over his shoulders before picking up the boy's dead weight.

When they're away from the burning mass attached to a rickety branch, Harry speaks with his lips held against Louis' cold jaw. "You okay, princess?"

Louis seems to be fine now that there's distance between him and that disaster. "Y-Yeah. I......I think so."

Harry encourages Louis to relax more and rest his head on his shoulder, as Harry kicked open the front door.

"It can't stay there. People.....they'll see, Harry." Louis knows he should be panicking but recently, many of his underlying emotions have been smothered.

"That's the point." Harry enters the building's warm interior and makes headway towards the staircase.
"But what if the police-"

"We're okay, baby." Harry assures. "You don't have to worry."

Louis frowned at each step Harry took. He had to be showing off that he could walk up two floors without fault while Louis made every excuse to take the elevator.

"I love you, okay?" Harry kisses Louis' forehead when they reach the correct floor. Louis doesn't think about how Harry knew which is the right one. "I'm gonna protect you."

Louis' staring at the floor as he listens - he's always never been good at listening while directing his gaze at the speaker - and closes his eyes when Harry kisses his cheek, letting a tear slip out. All that gas and smoke from outside had irritated his eyes.

"Let's clean you up." Harry proposes.

Louis expects Niall to be in their room when they find that the door is unlocked. Their dorm room is empty and Bolg is front and center. Smiling at that, Louis tries to detach himself from Harry's arms but only ends up being held closer.

"Hold on a second." Harry sets Louis down on the correct bed - again, Louis won't think about it too long. "Do you have a First Aid kit?"

"Um..I think Niall does in his backpack." Louis answers, watching Bolg crawl closer to his hand. "You don't have one?" Harry frowns, returning from rummaging through Niall's bag through Louis' instructive directions.

"Never got hurt." Louis sits with his back against the wall and Bolg in his lap.

Harry slides a pillow between Louis' back and the wall so that the chill of the concrete won't cause any damage to his spine, before seating himself on the single mattress under Louis' legs. The boy smiles shyly at him before going back to trying to locate Bundy.

"This might sting." Harry warns before dabbing a cotton ball soaked with clinical alcohol on his fresh cuts.

Harry cleans the cuts that are actually much less in number than he expected and presses strips of cotton wool with merbromin across the length of under Louis' feet. He doesn't want to bandage it but Niall doesn't have the correct tape and he certainly will not regular tape on Louis' skin. He relents and wraps a single dressing of bandages around each foot.

"How will I shower now?" Louis curls his legs up to his chest once Harry's done. "When we go back, you can use the tub in the guest bathroom."

"Back?" Louis stretches over the bed's back place Bolg in his cage, also finding Bundy running on his wheel in his own home.

"It's only Saturday, princess." Harry reminds him. "We're going back to mine."

Louis' body sagged - deflated - at this news. "Why?"

"Why?" Harry chuckles, mocking Louis' disgruntled question. "Because, darling-" He surprises Louis by clasping his ankles with icy fingers and pulling his legs apart. "-it's only Saturday and regardless of what happened you are still going to stay with me."
"But Harry......-" Louis trails off when Harry's hands settle on his thighs, pushing down very slightly as he brought their faces - their lips - closer together.

"Hmm?" Harry bites his lip, causing the soft hum that leaves his warm breath fanning Louis' own.

Louis pries his eyes away from Harry's lips and nervously closes his legs around Harry's back. "YYou can stay here......with me?"

Harry thinks about it and a very sane, biased portion of his conscious refuses to give in. But he'll also admit lying on a tiny bed where Louis and he would have be squashed together, was very tempting.

"Alright." Harry withdrew completely, leaving Louis' lips pouted and skin flushed of its warmth. He almost wanted to huff in annoyance and cross his arms like a stubborn, errant child. Well, that's almost the way Harry treated him with the constant flow of pet names, rules and punishments. He also found out that he didn't mind any of it because sometimes a person likes to feel small and insecure on purpose. During those times, they need a person from the outside world who will look after them.

Louis knew for certain that picking Harry - not to say that he had a choice at all - was scary at first, especially given Harry's particular set of skills and hobbies, to put it lightly. Louis was okay with it, as long as he knew - and it was for certain - that Harry wouldn't hurt Louis as such. He watched Harry shrug off his jacket and slid further down the bed when Harry removed his shirt. It was a habit of his to sleep in the nude, since it's the most comfortable way to sleep.

Harry follows Louis and slides under the covers, dragging Louis by his waist onto himself. Louis faces the wall, curled up on Harry's bare chest with his legs kicked out from under the duvet. "Do you have to cancel our reservation?" Louis asks after Harry's settled. "They'll figure it out." Harry runs his fingers down Louis' sides.

Louis starts to squirm from the delightful little sparks of ticklish sensations along the surface of his skin. He closes his eyes for only a few seconds before it gets too much and he let's out a soft giggle against one of Harry's sparrows.

"Can't sleep, baby?" Harry slips his hand under Louis' shirt and squeezes his hip.

"I can sleep." Louis' voice is small, much like the curve of his body, and soft like the way he feels when he's vulnerable and - in the past - all alone.

"Am I keeping you up?" Harry stops the tickling to rub small circles into Louis' back.

Louis shakes his head, feeling Harry's sharp chin in his hair, and closes his eyes again. "Can we talk?"

"About what, love?"

"You said we could have safe words, if we go too far." Louis picks his head up, neck straining from the lift because he isn't sure Harry will be okay with his chin pressing his chest.

"Hmm." Harry's hands glide up and down Louis' back, skipping his behind and reaching the back of his thighs. "What word do you want?"

Louis bites his lip and falls forward when Harry jerks him downward. He blushes deeply and braces an arm on either side of Harry's head. "Black."

"Black?" Harry's smirking.
"Your tattoo." Louis can't touch it to indicate what he means. "17Black."

"Oh." Harry picks his knees up high enough to support Louis' leaning weight. "Black it is then."

"So what will it mean?" Louis thoughtfully chews on his bottom lip. "If I say it."

"It will mean-" Harry pats Louis' bum and gets him to relax above him. "-that I'll stop whatever it is that I'll be doing. We should have a set of colours, in fact, so I'll know if it's getting too much at times."

"Okay." Louis refuses to call it snuggling, so he just lays his head on Harry's beating heart - at least that's where it's supposed to be - and tries not to slide off. "White. Orange. Black."

"Interesting choices." Harry pulls the cover back up, since Louis shuffled so much and kicked it away.

He whines and pushes it away again, feeling too hot under the soft insulation.

"Lou, it's cold." Harry warns.

"I'm feeling hot." Louis replies dryly.

"Are you okay?" He reaches out to touch Louis' forehead, and his victim bats his hand away.

"I don't have a fever, Harry." Louis fails to keep himself uplifted and rolls onto his side, pressed between the wall and Harry.

Harry notices the flickering of lights that change from blue to red, with no sirens but the buzz of a growing crowd outside. Half the campus must be present there around the tree, all questioning what a poor delinquent did to deserve such a demise. Harry held the answer obviously, and someone will knock on the door soon enough to get it from him.

"What's tha- Are the police here?" Louis sees it too and sits up immediately to try and get out of bed.

"Yes and what are you planning to do, Lou?" Harry traps his waist and keeps him on the mattress.

"I don't know but don't they need witness statements or something?" Louis' more frantic than good hearted and he's scared of hiding a truth that will ruin him later.

"All you're doing is staying here." Harry says carefully. "I will handle everything in the morning but I'm tired and you are too."

Louis considers the alternative of irrationally dotting around outside and answering fifty versions of the same question. He decides against going. "Okay but I'm not tired yet."

"That's because you had a nap." Harry holds Louis' body flush against his, chest meeting chest.

"What do you want to do?"

"Well, I have work I should probably get done." Louis suggests, vaguely remembering the tasks granted for completion during the week. He had approximately two essays and a report to do for Photojournalism.

"You want to do that now?" Harry holds Louis' wrist in his hand when the boy tries to rise.
"Better than procrastinating."

Harry nods and releases him so he can get up. "Wait."

"What?" Louis' just about to stand.

"Your feet." Harry quirks his eyebrow. "You can't stand."

"I can." Louis argues but Harry's already pinning him to the mattress and getting up.

"You can do it there." Harry roughly gestures towards the bed where Louis' currently seated.

"Harry." He whines, and it's admittedly an annoying sound what with his voice containing a natural high pitch already.

"I could just dump everything on you."

"I'm not injured, it's a few...scrapes."

"Scrapes or third-degree burns, Louis." Harry takes a single stride to tower over the bed and Louis again intimidatingly. "You aren't doing anything for yourself."

It should be flattering and a pleasant thing to hear, however the way in which Harry carried out this favour made him feel like he's losing his independence. It's taken Louis all of nineteen years and a few months to develop that self-esteem.

"I appreciate everything you're trying to do." Louis kneels so he's able to more-or-less be on Harry's eye level. He reaches up to clasp the back of Harry's neck. "Really. Nobody's cared enough to do this for me. I like space too though."

"Space?" Harry's brows knit together as he sounds out this foreign word. "Like, I should go away?"

"Not entirely, Haz." Louis shakes his head. "Just sometimes I like to just be alone. Please understand, I've been alone my entire life and to adapt to being with someone this close is a little......scary."

"I understand." He draws back from Louis, but not forgetting to kiss the boy's forehead beforehand. Louis smiles thankfully and moves to get out from under the covers again. This time he's successful and although his feet are alight with flowering stings, he bites his lip and doesn't wobble. Harry watches him closely, with hawk-like skill, as Louis shuffles across the room.

Realising where Louis is going only after he reaches there, Harry frowns deeply and follows him to the window.

"What is there to see?" Harry tries to pull him away.

There are three police cars outside, having burst into their courtyard through the biggest gate. The ambulance is futile but still creating an unnecessary racket with its siren. People have crowded the tree and the body - now laid out on a gurney and being covered - to gasp and pry.

"How can anyone be as calm as you?" Louis lets himself be drawn away and the window shut soundly.

"It won't do me good to panic." Harry crouches and sweeps Louis up into his arms again, finding that Louis' own pace of walking was too slow. "Besides, nothing will happen to me."

"Why are you so sure?" They sit together at Louis' table - inevitably by the window - with the taller
of the two holding Louis firmly in his lap.

"I have to be." Harry's lips press against Louis' temple. "How are you not shaken up?"
"I don't know." Louis bows his head, wringing his fingers.

"It can be a good thing." He gets another kiss closer to his lips. "Don't be ashamed, princess."
The chair was small but Harry's body practically overflowed, adding to the seat's surface with his
thighs and knees. He brings Louis' legs up to fold on his lap so the cold tiles don't give him chills
and later, internal pain from the exposure.

"Now you can do your work." Harry drags the chair forward so Louis can lean over the desk.

"Thanks."

Harry noses at Louis' neck just below the jaw, making him giggle uncontrollably and smudge the
correction ink he'd used on the first essay he tackled.

"Harry!"
"Yes?"

"Look what you did." Louis groans, trying to scrape the white paint off the side of his hand.

"I did that?"
"Yes!"

"Hey." Harry lightly slaps Louis' behind, taking his ear lobe between his teeth simultaneously.

"Don't raise your voice at me, princess."

Louis worries his bottom lip to keep the whine he's ready with from coming out, dropping his head
back onto Harry's shoulder.

"Are you sorry?" Harry encircles his waist, sucking a bright mark into Louis' shoulder.

Nodding vigorously, Louis tries moving backwards to give Harry more access to his body. "I-I'm sorry."

"Good boy." Harry pinches Louis' pudge and nudges his head aside. "You need to finish your work, baby."

But Louis' eyes are closed, his body awakened and libido running again. "N-No."

"No?"

"I want you."

"Yeah?"

Louis nods eagerly, snapping his head up and down. He whines without a care when Harry slips a
hand under the waistband of his boxers.

"Work first, angel."

Louis turns fussy and wriggles around in Harry's lap until he's facing him, whimpering when Harry
shoves his legs apart and lines up their crotches.
"Y-You said-" Louis stops to tug on Harry's hair and roll his hips against Harry's. "-you'll always give me what I want."

"I also said don't get greedy. You already got pleasure today, darling." Harry stops grinding and Louis grumbles, trying to be enticing again.

"But-"

"Behave now, love."

Huffing, Louis turns back around and sets his focus back on his voice. He plots revenge in his mind somehow but he doubts he'll go through with it if he had to deny Harry sex.

"Maybe I'll reward you if you finish this."

Harry kisses Louis' throat and cheek but only gets ignored by the boy sitting on his lap.

"Are you upset now?"

Louis stays quiet, continuing to jot things down on his notepad. It's mostly rubbish now.

"If you're stubborn I'll have to punish you again."

Bravely, Louis doesn't answer in spite of the voice in his head shouting at him to stop being an idiot. Who knew how far Harry took his punishment. Louis was determined to find that out.

Harry's tone is hard and annoyed when he speaks again. "Suit yourself."

He's suddenly being lifted out of Harry's lap and flung across the room. Given, the distance was short and he landed with precision on his own bed, but Louis isn't too sure that was the original target. He isn't sure of much these days.

"Take those off and spread your legs." Harry instructs, all the familiarity and softness from before has drained out of his voice. He's cold and dominant now.

Louis hurries to do as told, also slightly afraid because there's no way he's suddenly getting what he wanted. Harry's unbuckling his pants and climbs over him before Louis can kick off his boxers. Adam's Apple clearly defined in his throat, caution in his eyes and with a shuddering body, Louis lets his hands be tied above his head with Harry's belt.

"You make a sound and I will fuck you with every object in this room until you bleed."

Louis gulps at that, eyes gone wide with fright and a budging protest getting tied in his throat. He nods.

Harry grunts in acknowledgement of his consent, and drops his boxer briefs to his knees to reveal a hard-on. Louis starts breathing heavy with panic. He didn't know how Harry got so hard when he's just at a semi. Was this getting him off? Some twisted shade of sadism, maybe.

There's so stretching and no wonderful foreplay. Harry shoves two fingers into Louis' mouth at the same time that he forces his length past his clenching entrance. The pain shoots up Louis' back and his body arches uncomfortably, desperate to scream and sob out loud. He sucks on Harry's fingers, tasting the metal of his rings and gagging when they curled.

Harry places his free hand on one side of his head, prying Louis' knees apart and thrusting harder. It's excruciating but Louis loves it. There's no lube besides Harry's spit, and Louis can feel every ridge, shift of skin and drop of pre cum in his lower tummy. There's a bump there from where Harry is nestled.

His orgasm comes crashing down after a short while and Harry's is impending from the noises he's
making. Except, when Louis' teeth bite down on Harry's fingers and his body's ready to be overwhelmed, Harry pulls out and tightens his grip at the base of Louis' length. His orgasm fades away painfully.

Louis wants to shout at the top of his lungs, in love with the white pleasure he's not allowed to have. By total accident, a soft whimper escapes his lips. Harry pauses and kneels over him. "You're particularly disobedient tonight." Harry's warm breath is gone and Louis refuses to open his eyes, a tear running down to his pillow.

*LOUIS' POV*

Black. Black. Please Black.

I lie there, exposed and trembling from a ruined orgasm, not hoping for anything but expecting the worst. I want to cry but there's a lump where my trachea should be. My voice has gotten lost in the panic of my mind.

"This should do fine." Harry settles back on the bed, the mattress sinks from his mass. When I try sitting up, my wrists are almost cut by how tight the leather belt is binding them. Harry presses my back down against the pillows and something comes down over my eyes. It feels like his shirt.

I'm abruptly prodded at, between my legs where nothing inanimate should be. My hips stutter and nails dig into the belt, lip already bitten raw and bleeding.

I don't ever get to see what that object is but it was smooth and cylindrical, thin enough that it didn't hurt. Harry was still rough and used it to fuck into me with deep thrusts that had starting slipping onto the wrong side of painful. I don't moan or groan from the sensations spiralling up my nervous system.

The bed creaks and I try wrapping my legs around him, only to have them shoved aside and further brutally invaded. The object makes sharp jabs at my special spot, bruising it and making it swell from the pressure. It's yanked out of me and replaced by Harry's erection, still stiff and angry by the feel of it. I throw my head back, grinding against the mattress and keeping my jaw agape. I think he's going to finally let me come when I'm on the verge of a climax but he comes first and cuts me off. I squeeze my eyes shut and my tears soak his shirt. My hands struggle to be free of the belt, and I'm certain they're bloody now with all the shifting.
His come drips out of me when he pulls out completely for a minute. The hovering burn of having my body abused like this was only slightly pleasurable now, and my mind has turned into a blank sheet so as not to hurt myself further. If I tried to get free, it could end badly.

I let him do as he pleased with my rag doll form, building me up right to the edge of something glorious before retracting. The pain burns through me bright red, and the stress on my conscious exhausts me beyond normal circumstances.

When Harry uses the mysterious object again as well as himself, I muffle my scream by biting his shirt. My mind is left empty and body broken after nearly five rounds of denial. If I'm bleeding, I don't feel anything. If something is hurt then I don't notice it. My eyes close from how heavy they feel, my back sags and when I'm untied I'm too tired to move my hands.

"Louis?" Harry's rubbing my wrists gently. Why is he doing that? I look at him, probably red-eyed and breathless.

"Fuck, Lou."

He suddenly stops - I enjoyed the gesture - and hauls me into his lap. What's happening? "Baby, look at me." He combs my hair back and tilts my chin up. My legs are splayed out, too tired to move, and hands crushed between us.

*I am looking at you.*

"Did I hurt you?"

He brushes my cheek and it's so soft, warm and light. I want to wrap myself up in his gentle strokes and fall asleep.

"You have to talk to me. What's wrong, princess?"

_You fucked me like a lunatic, that's what's wrong._ I never thought I'd love someone calling me feminine names but "princess" felt nice to hear.

"Come on. Come back to me." Harry coaxes, voice like honey and silk. "I'm right here, waiting for you. I love you, Lou."

Slowly it began to slip away and I wanted to crawl back into its depths but a gate slammed between us and I lost the wonderland. I blinked a few times before relaxing into my regular stature. "There you are." Harry pecks my lips, eyes and forehead. "Are you okay?"
"I don't like that punishment." I manage to force out, my voice hoarse. "It hurts too much."
"I'm sorry, angel." He wraps his broad arms around me and my hands lock behind his head. He
kisses my neck. "I love you."

I hum and smile against the crook of his shoulder, inhaling his bare scent of damp skin and
cologne. He smelt like sex. I wasn't even hard anymore - not that I expected to be - because the exertion on
my sex drive has exhausted every bit of me.

"Is that form of punishment....not okay with you?" Harry lifts my head so he can see into my eyes.
His were full of hesitation but the embarrassment still stuck to the gold flecks in the green
forest of his eyes.

I shake my head. "I don't want to ever do that again."

"Alright then. Well, you must behave for me when I ask you to, okay? I don't want to hurt you again."

"Okay." I hardly recognise the small, almost baby-like voice of mine.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

"Good." Harry keeps an arm securely around Louis' back as he lowers himself. "I need you to sleep
now, get all that energy back."

"Hmm, 'mkay." Louis tries to find a position that's comfortable for him to sleep in, and eventually
just lands up sprawled across Harry's chest.

"We can go for breakfast tomorrow morning too." Harry kisses Louis' hair. "You did well tonight,
princess. I'm so proud of you."

For some reason, Louis' lost mind - the quieter half that clung to the alternate world where everything was warm and fuzzy - preens at the compliment and smiles gratefully.

Niall stumbles into the dorm room, red in the face and watery-eyed from running around trying to
find Louis, only to discover that his room-mate is asleep with the new kid. He makes a note to grill
Louis about this tomorrow and if it was a one night thing, well then he's taken a photo for
safekeeping.

Harry sleeps for a full twelve hours and awakens at a little past nine in the morning. Louis'
still asleep, drooling slightly on his chest, but looking so small and vulnerable against Harry's black and multicoloured ink that it's too precious to disturb.

He heard unfamiliar breathing, a third person who is probably belonging to this room as well. Harry doesn't understand how Louis survives with a room-mate.

The boy has blond hair with dark roots, his curved back facing them and heavy snoring interrupting the early morning's peace. Harry can't fall asleep again, so he works out which diners are suitable for a greasy breakfast.

Louis stirs when the clock goes past half nine, clenching his hands into tiny fists before relaxing them on Harry's pectoral. He mumbles something, heavy breathing blocking his words, and his back slumps again. Harry trails his fingers down Louis' sides and back, moving the duvet dangerously low to allow him access.

He admires the contrast of Louis' clean, perfectly tanned and hairless skin against the array of designs littering his own arm from the wrist. It was especially kind when his arm cuddled Louis' lower back. His muscles bulged, veins standing out under the mosaic of tattoos. Louis had curves in the right places, like God felt he'd be plain without some soft and feminine features. Harry admires the way Louis' eyelashes frame his cheeks, feats that already have the perfect structural balance.

The second time Louis stirs Harry has to roll them onto their sides carefully so he doesn't fall off the bed. Louis lets out a soft moan at being shifted and in his sleepy mode, shifts away from Harry's body. Harry follows.

An alarm goes off somewhere in the room and Harry knows he can't move to turn it off or Louis will land on the ground. It annoys him that the blaring sound is bound to wake all the room's occupants up, including Louis. Harry wanted him to sleep for as long as he wanted without being disturbed.

"I'm up!" Niall gets up first, shooting into an upright position and rubbing his eyes. Harry thinks they're the most piercing blue shade, but Louis' were more beautiful. Niall leaves after that to visit
the bathroom.

Louis wakes up at the sound of Niall playing rooster. He yawns and absentmindedly cuddles into
the end of the duvet, taking Harry's arm with him. Harry closes his eyes, not wanting to make conversation with Niall, and pretends to sleep.

"Morning." Louis' voice suddenly intervenes, his hips wiggling until he's facing Harry again. "Good morning." Harry smiles with his eyes closed. Had they been open, they'd have been bright
and innocent like any ignorant person should be.

"What makes it good?" He shimmies his shoulders, nudging Harry's torso until he got the message
and pulled him away from the edge. "Nothing's happened yet."

"But there's plenty of possibility." Harry reopens his eyes one at a time. "Like if I were to do this-"
He brings his face closer so his lips are close to Louis'. "-I could end up getting a well-deserved good morning kiss."

"What makes you think you deserve it?"

"You think I don't?"

"I never said that. You can't have my kisses though."

"And why not?"

"Because they're-"

Louis squeals, shrieking when Harry tackles him and tries to press their lips together. He giggles loudly, throwing his head back and moving every which way to avoid Harry's mouth.
"Harry!"

"I could just steal one." Harry leans in, and Louis draws back on his pillow again.

"No!" Louis gasps and covers his mouth.

"Come on, princess." Harry flattens Louis' body with his own. "Just one?"

"No kisses for you." Louis turns his head and Harry ends up kissing his jaw.

"No?"

"No."

"Sure?"

"No." Louis chuckles and gets cut off abruptly when Harry's mouth crashes down on his, hard and
"C'mon, beautiful, up." Harry separates their lips, needing to breathe, and stands up. "I promised you an unhealthy diner breakfast, didn't I?"

Louis' brilliant blue eyes - almost grey with the sunlight exposure - light up at that. "You were serious?"

"Of course."

Grinning, Louis hops out of the bed and snatches up the closest available item of clothing to hide himself. It ends up being Harry's scrunched up, wrinkled T-shirt with faded print. He tugs it over his head and locates him shower bag.

"Niall just went. Wait a bit." Harry lies on his back, staring back at the empty ceiling. "For him to come back?"

"I don't like you showering with other people."

Louis rolls his eyes at Harry's confession and climbs onto his hips, astride his sides. "I showered with you."

"Indeed." Harry tilts his head to the side. "And I spend a lot of my time hating those bastards who share one here with you."

"Well, there are individual stalls after all." Louis shrugs gradually and Harry chuckles, very lightly slapping Louis' bum.

"Let's go back to mine instead?"

"After breakfast." Louis rocks his hips persuasively. "I'm hungry."

Harry allows himself to be swayed in his decision just a little, and Louis gets to shower at the dormitory where he can put on fresh clothing. Harry stands guard and denies anyone access to the bathroom while he lit up two Camel cigarettes. When Louis exited the bathroom, he was shocked to see a queue of the dorm mates standing outside.

"Sorry boys." He apologised quickly when the last boy had completed his glare and strolled into the showers. "That was mean."

"Oh no, princess. Mean-" Harry shakes his head, bending to pick Louis up by the backs of his damp thighs and wrap them around his waist. "-would have been letting them in then having to
kill them."

Louis looks over his shoulders, arms tightly wound around Harry's neck, to see where they're going.
He's still just in his towel.

"Where are you taking me?" He squeezes the handle of his toiletry bag.

"To my castle in the woods where nobody will find us."

"Or hear my screams."

There's a brief moment where Harry's expression darkens to one of memorable fierceness, then becomes unreadable.

Before they reach Louis' door, Harry spins them around and presses Louis' back against a cold wall.
The pressure hurts at first, mainly due to shock, then lessens when he looks into Harry's eyes.
They're green but more shocking, stunningly occupied. So many thoughts, every possible human emotion racing through.

"You can still love me, yeah?" Harry's lips bruise Louis' first, the nicotine taste gets shared between them passionately before he pulls away.

"Harry, what kind of a question-"

"A simple one." Harry sighs, moving when Louis tries to touch him. "I'm trying. I keep trying so hard for you to just....."

"Just what?"

"To love me!" Harry barks. "To forgive me, forgive whatever massively gruesome monster you see when you look at me. I need you to submit to me. Give yourself to me, Louis, the way I will to you."

Harry reaches up to brush Louis' flushed cheeks, feeling the warm skin under his calloused fingers and rubbing his thumbs in odd circles on Louis' throat.

"I need a constant in my life, Louis. Someone to be devoted to and protect forever. No one's wanted me and I've punished them all when they couldn't see past my actions, who I was outside. But you." Harry kisses Louis' lips twice, leaving a string as thin as gossamer between them to fall. "Jesus fuck, you're the most remarkable person I've ever known. You see me, me as who I am even when I don't want to be that. I don't want anything. Skill or art, glory or fame. Air to
breathe. I want none of it if I can't share it with you."

Louis held back his breathe, feeling the ache in his lungs and swelling in his chest. Harry's emotions ran red and deep, into the depths and bowels of a soul so dark and full of illusion that everyone thought was hollow. When Louis spoke next, he’d made his choice after deliberating.

"I'm sorry, Harry."

Chapter End Notes

And thats the end of chapter twelve by ss98.
Chapter Thirteen

It is an absolute human certainty that no one can know his own beauty or perceive a sense of his own worth until it has been reflected back to him in the mirror of another loving, caring human being.

Louis held back his breathe, feeling the ache in his lungs and swelling in his chest. Harry's emotions ran red and deep, into the depths and bowels of a soul so dark and full of illusion that everyone thought was hollow. When Louis spoke next, he'd made his choice after deliberating.

"I'm sorry, Harry."

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Harry's head hangs low against Louis' shoulder, sharing the extra body heat from a shower session and filling his heart with regret. Louis' apology made no sense to him. Was he leaving? He can't do that to Harry. It would be criminal, after having been through everything they have.

"I'm sorry no one gave you the chance to prove yourself, that nobody cared." Louis combs Harry's hair, slim fingers brushing the silky locks in comfort. "It must have been a hard life and nobody understands that better than me."

Louis knows for certain Harry won't leave him, they're too intertwined to move on to other people who'll never respect them like they did each other.

Harry nods, tightening his hands on Louis' thighs and remaining buried in the boy's neck. It was a hard life, except he never really felt the weight of said burden on his shoulders until he saw what an alternate life could have been like.

"If you leave me-"

"I'm not." Louis cuts him off.

Forcefully and against the light breeze whipping around them, Harry hikes Louis' legs up higher on his waist and leans completely against him. The boy, squashed between Harry and the wall, groans from his sensitized skin brushing Harry's rough jeans.

"So you'll give me a chance?" Harry brings their faces closer, grabbing the side of Louis' face and preparing to persuade him away from rejection.

"You don't need a chance, Harry." He pushes off the wall and presses his chest to Harry's fully with an arm slung over his shoulders. "You've been proving yourself all this time."

Harry smiles, eyes bright with a green fire of passion and admiration. He reached between them and moved the flap of Louis' towel to expose him.

"How long do we have?" Harry undid his fly and released himself from the stifling confines.

Louis' eyes flew wide open and his cheeks coloured. "Harry!"
"Baby?"

"We c-can't do this." Louis tries to get free. "Not here."

"That's why I asked how much time we have." Harry removes a little silver square from his jacket pocket and tears the seal open with his teeth.

"For what?" Louis gulps, holding himself up when Harry slips the condom on.

"For someone to walk by us and see-" Harry positioned himself at Louis' pink, flushed rim and pushed in slowly. "-what I'm doing to you."

"Jesus." Louis' head thumps against the cold wall, Adam's Apple bobbing as he swallows air by the mouthful.

"Yeah? ’s good?" Harry bottoms out in one go, still overwhelmed by the wonderful tightness Louis never fails in.

Louis nods energetically, biting his bottom lip to suppress his moans so they don't echo through the corridor. He scratches Harry's back and bucks his hips to meet Harry's.

"So greedy, my love." Harry attaches his lips and teeth to Louis' neck, his hand gliding down the damp skin to knead Louis' flesh and poke at where they're connected. "Don't even need prep anymore, huh? Can just take me whole now."

Not knowing whether to nod or shake his head, Louis moans loudly and reaches down to touch himself. Harry growls inhumanely and pins his wrists above his head.

"You know you will come untouched." Harry leaves Louis' legs to support themselves as he hold his hands up against the wall and pivots his hips brutally.

Louis wanted to submit wholly during sex, and on a special occasion, outside of that. He knew in his gut Harry wanted that too, and would take such good care of him. He fought everyday to not just let a few extra words slip that will bind him to the man forever, but now it seems he'll give in.

"Take off the condom." Louis gasps, biting Harry's bottom lip. "Take it off and fill me up. Please, Harry."

Harry groans, the gravely edge to his voice contributing to the effectiveness of the sound. He pulls out at once, removes the barrier and stuffs it into his jeans pocket before slipping back in. Louis' body swallows him up, accepting the connection and driving forward with lust. Harry's mind focuses on finishing, and so he fucks harder with deep, long thrusts until Louis' unable to speak.

"I can never deny you, princess." Harry held Louis' hip in a death grip - forming purple fingerprint bruises on the plump flesh - and pounded into him until Louis was one away from screaming his voice raw.

"Please don't." Louis' panting, head tossed back as the pleasure washes his body clean of coherency and leaves him groping at the sensation shooting up his back. "Please."

"Of course not. You're my special boy. Aren't you darling?"

Harry suddenly pulls out and kisses Louis' protests away before dragging him into a tiny room meant for nothing. He loops his arms under Louis' knees and picks him up with incredible strength. Louis gasps and tugs on Harry's hair, jaw agape in a silent scream when Harry slides back in.

"I love you." Harry bites Louis’ ear lobe, creating teeth indents on the soft skin. "You drive me fucking insane."
"Harry." Louis' voice was breathy and on the verge of something else. "Please, Harry."

"Wanna come, baby?" Harry snaps his hips, filling the room with intense steam and the soundtrack of skin slapping skin.

Louis nods mindlessly, not having anywhere for his hands.
"Ask me." Harry whispers into his ear, making him groan at the sensuality and huskiness of the instruction. "Don't beg. Ask."

Louis swallows, nails biting Harry's nape. "Please can I come, Harry?"

"Doesn't sound sincere." Harry ground his hips against Louis' in circular motions, driving the boy to cry out and choke on the stifling hot air he inhales.

"Please, Harry." His brain's turned to mush and he babbles out whatever he thinks will get him a climax. "Can I come, daddy?"

"Fuck, Lou." Harry's movements still and he slams once back into Louis before releasing his warm load.

Louis' body relents and his orgasm crashes over him. He clings to Harry as his focus returns and a memory of what he's just said returns.

"I'm-" He gets cut off by Harry's lips swallowing his words.

Dropping his legs to Harry's sides and crossing his ankles at his back, Louis deepens the kiss with his arms thrown over Harry's shoulders. He follows Harry's lips and keeps them united even when they need to breathe. He parts his lips, emitting a loud exhale when Harry squeezes his bum.
"Fuck." Harry curses again, taking Louis' bottom lip between his teeth. "That was hot."

"What?" Louis' cheeks heat up and he avoids Harry's gaze.

"You calling me daddy." Harry's smouldering gaze burns Louis' softer, wide-blown orbs. "Did you know it would do things to me?"

Shaking his head, Louis licks his lips and tastes Harry's cigarette. "It slipped out."

"I hope it slips out more often." Harry pushes back his hair, pulling out of Louis and zipping up his pants. "I want to hear you call me that."

"Daddy?"

Harry takes his hands and presses them against the wall, rendering him helpless. "Yes."
Louis smiles secretively at this new information, intrigued by Harry's odd kink. He didn't mind - since it slipped out it had to have been lurking around in his mind for some time now.

"If that's what you want." Louis kisses Harry's jaw. "I'll do anything for you."

Harry captures Louis' lips once more and kisses his forehead after. "Live with me."

"What?" Louis tried to get his stunned enquiry in between Harry's hard kisses that muffled his every word.

"Live with me." Harry repeated, not letting Louis' legs straighten out as he held him even closer. "I want you in my home, going to sleep and waking up with me. Baby, I can only know you're safe-" He cups the sides of Louis' face. "-when you're with me."
"I-I...." Louis hasn't thought this far ahead and although he has strong feelings for Harry, he isn't ready for that. "I'll think about it."

That seems to satisfy Harry as he smiles and kisses Louis' forehead. "Can we go back to my room, please?" Louis raps his knuckles on the door to his left. "Feeling cold, baby?" Harry pulls him away from the wall and kisses his nose when Louis sneezes three times in a row. "This probably wasn't a good idea then, hmm? Letting your body temperature just drop like that."

"I'm okay." Louis settles into Harry's arms like he did when he felt small and wanton. Harry obediently opens the door storage room door and carries Louis out. He kicks the dorm room's door shut after they're safely inside. Niall is absent so he probably rushed off somewhere, and the pets in the corner of the room are asleep. He sets Louis down hesitantly.

"Bend over the table, Lou." Harry instructs.

"Why?" Louis quirks an eyebrow, alerting Harry of one of the many personality traits he fell for. Harry clicks his tongue and leads Louis over to the desk, pressing him forward by his shoulders. He nips at Louis' shoulder. "You ask too many questions."

Louis opens his mouth with a retort just as Harry reveals the medium-sized plug from his pocket. "Where on Earth do you keep all these things?" Louis tries not to get too excited with promise and presents himself well for Harry.

"Shh." Harry chuckles, lubing up the toy before inserting it. "Now you'll stay full." Straightening his back, Louis has to bite his lip initially when the fullness is absent but the restriction is sensitized.

"Can I have a kiss, darling?" Harry asks, after watching Louis inspect himself - or rather try to - in the mirror.

Louis blushes and stretches up on his toes to plant a gentle peck on Harry's lips. "Thank you, princess."

"Welcome, daddy."

With a proud smirk teasing Harry's lips, he doesn't hesitate to swat Louis' behind as a send-off. "Don't tempt me. Put some clothes on, my love."

Louis salutes him, like an actual navy officer of the governmental law would, before going off to serve their country. Harry laughs so his shoulders shake and seats himself on Niall's desk as he waits. It's one of the few real laughs he's had in his entire life, all were thanks to Louis. There was hardly anything half-witted or precious enough to enjoy about Harry's life before Louis. It was all hard work and no aid.

"I'm ready." Louis announces, stepping in front of Harry to block the door.

His long-sleeved navy shirt hid Louis' fists and had a little pocket by the left breast. He had black jeans on and absurd Vans with skulls and flowers. Harry noticed he wore those often. "You look beautiful, darling." Harry brings Louis into his embrace. "But your hair's wet."

"It'll dry." Louis shrugs.

Raising an eyebrow but giving Louis a stern look, he pinches the boy's hip hard enough to make him squirm. "You don't need to get sick in uni. Dry your hair."
"But-

"Lou, it's cold outside."

"Fine." He sighs with a dramatic, irritated huff and turns away. "We'll never get breakfast at this rate."

"Not if you use that tone."

When Harry looks down at his shoes, Louis sticks his tongue out at him.
"I saw that." Harry looks up, eyes alight with amusement.

Louis keeps his cool as he plugs in the dryer. "You didn't."

"You missed the opportunity to snap back at me." Harry motions for him to stand between his legs and whispers in his ear. "It's not hard to guess."

Under Harry's ministrations, Louis stands still while Harry dries his hair. At first he's stubborn and annoyed - very little - but the feel of Harry's slender fingers combing through his hair makes him purr - had he been a feline. He leans back against Harry and receives a kiss on the cheek. His hair comes out a lot better than if Louis had done it himself. But Louis' pride was too wounded for gratitude.

"You're welcome." Harry hands him back the dryer. "Louis."

"Thank you." Louis wraps the dryer's handle with the plug. "Daddy."

Harry's heated response was stolen from him when the door swings open, truly testing the rusty hinges, and Niall steps in with a look saying he's been looking for someone. "Lou!" He's breathless and grabs ahold of Louis' wrist which Harry frowns deeply at.

"Are you being chased, Ni?" Louis seems undeterred by the urgency of Niall's tone and tucks the hair dryer away before falling back against Harry.

"No uh-" Niall ignores Harry's presence. "-change of plans tonight."

"What change?"

"The new thingie is coming out and we're going out to see it."

"What new thingie?" Louis crosses his arms over his chest.

"Jurassic World." Niall pats his knee. "The tickets are already booked."

Harry's silence is stifling and he's enraged by this new lad just poking in front of himself like that. He clears his throat. "Who are you?"

Niall seems to just realise that Harry's there and makes a surprised noise. "Oh hi. I'm Niall, Lou's room-mate and sugerdaddy."

Louis sputters at the response and warns Niall off with his eyes, knowing already that he'll have to deal with both of them later. "Harry, this is Niall. Niall, Harry. Niall's my room-mate and he doesn't have enough money to be anyone's sugardaddy."

It's close to futile because Harry's already stiff with angered tension, and raw nerves that were just irritated. He looks about ready to break Niall in the most intimate ways before slamming Louis
against a wall - gently, of course - to stake his claim.

Niall cackles and releases Louis' arm to grab his jacket. "We're leaving at seven so be here before that. Nice to meet you, Harry."

When he's gone, dashing out the door like a mad man late for his appointment, Louis tries to deal with damage control. He takes Harry's hand and knots their fingers together. Harry is impassive and resembles a statue more than a man, allowing Louis to embrace him but not hugging back. "Harry?" Louis presses his red nose to Harry's warm neck.

"Lou?" Harry answers with a fluent accent, displaying his strained nonchalance.

"Are you angry?" Louis peers up at him, his bright blue eyes on full effect as they connect with Harry's emerald eyes.

"Not with you, darling." Harry assures, kissing Louis' forehead. "Not your fault."

"Can we go now please?"

"Since you asked so politely."

When they actually got to the off-campus diner in the parking lot of an insurance agency, the lunch rush is due. Harry still asks for the breakfast menu.

"Harry, it's fine." Louis tries to calm him down when the waitress refuses to comply.

His attempts go wasted as Harry eventually ends up in a discussion with the manager. Louis sighs and hides his face behind his hands, fighting the impulse to curl up on his sticky seat because everyone's giving him disapproving looks. Even the old women glare at him because of the commotion.

Louis remembers avoiding pubs, clubs and bars of all sorts to avoid the violence that always came with it. He flinched whenever someone raised their voice and cringed when it was directed at him. He always stood up for himself but if someone was shouting, he needed a little while longer. Drunk men were his biggest nightmares. They were so forward, out of control that he didn't know what to do. He just wanted to run all the time but somehow they'd always catch him in the end.

"Lou?"

He snaps out of his head with a shock and removes his thumb nail from his mouth - he wasn't aware he was even biting it.

"Hmm?" He answers Harry, who is calmer and the storm in the green sea has settled. "We're leaving." Harry takes his hand and helps him stand.

Louis doesn't know what happened between him and the manager but the 'good riddance' huff from some of the elders made him uncomfortable. Harry drove for five more minutes before pulling up in front of a building Louis hasn't seen before.

"What's this?" He asks when they're on the sidewalk, holding hands.

"It's a cereal cafe." Harry replies, entering after Louis holds the door open.

"Wow."

Inside is warm but air-conditioned, with the feel of a cosy cafe tucked away in the corner of town.
Behind the cash register station is a wall of cereal boxes, all assortments from all around the world. There is the left side of the wall dedicated to foreign goodies that look way more appetising than Cornflakes.

"Over here." Harry leads Louis to the window area where a counter ran along the glass with high stools positioned on this side.

The unique cafe is unsurprisingly busy with youngsters who are hip enough to pay extra for oats. Louis let's out a soft squeak when Harry suddenly lifts him onto the chair.

"Not in public." Louis bats his arms away.

"You're my baby." Harry whispers against his temple. "I'll do what I like with you in public."

A shiver rushes down Louis' back and hepretends to brush his cheeks with his sleeves over his thumbs to hide his blush.

There's not much a menu other than a laminated and folded purple card. Louis' studying the choices while Harry studies him from the corner of his eye. Harry notices the way the boy sometimes poked the tip of his tongue out between his lips, or bit the upper one as he concentrated. He admired the way Louis' eyes darted across the page as he registered each option without reading it over. When he notices that Louis' left hand is purposeless and curled lightly on the counter, Harry takes envelopes it with his own hand. Louis glances at him briefly before going back to the menu. He's surprised to see soya, low fat, fresh and long-life milk as choices on the side.

"It doesn't require that much concentration, mate." A strange waiter interrupts, tapping his pencil on his cheek.

Harry's about to brush him off, tell the doe eyed individual to fuck off, but is surprised to hear Louis answer him.

"There are cereals on here I can't even pronounce." Louis laughs, mesmerising eyes crinkling at the corners as he smiles freely.

"Oh well I can help, I think. Go for the Nature's Path one."

"You mean the most expensive cereal in here?" Louis feels Harry squeeze his hand, and tightens his fingers as well in response.

"It's expensive for a reason, you know."

"I'm not an oats person."

Harry was ready to shove his cash down on his bet that Louis was conversing with his man just to piss him off. Louis knows how much Harry hates outsiders, yet chose to communicate with them irrespective. Although the man wasn't in direct physical contact with Louis - he'd probably be dead if he was - it still bothered Harry marginally.

When it looked as if the waiter was going to bend over close to Louis, Harry slings his arm over the back of Louis' chair and turns in his own chair. Against Harry's nightmare, the waiter just dropped his pencil and hastily picks it up.

Louis ends up getting some sort of extremely chocolatey choice from Norway, and Harry has lost his appetite. He gets a black coffee and rejects any sugar or milk.

"That must taste awful." Louis makes a disasteful face at the drink.
"It does." Harry says stiffly, taking a rather large sip.

"Then why do you drink it?"

"Who's to say I don't fancy awful?"

It was causing Harry physical pain to remain so calm and Louis knew it. The twin veins in his neck protruded, expressing Harry's dire irritation and aggravation. It was as if he was trying to swallow the deep-rooted hatred. It wasn't working.

With Louis' hand in his, he takes to harmlessly biting the boy's knuckles. There were hardly marks left behind to remind them.

"I meant to ask you about this movie you're going to tonight." Harry's voice is strained, and his brows knit together like he's fighting an internal battle.

"Hmm?" Louis' biting his lip and fidgets with Harry's ignored sugar packets.

"When were you going to ask me?"

"I just found out."

"And you still haven't asked me."

"What if I don't want to go?"

"Didn't look as if you were given a choice."

"Am I in trouble?"

"Yes." Harry swallows the dregs of his beverage and sets it down. "Lots."

The waiter interrupts them - again, Harry notes - and puts Louis' bowl in front of him. "Eat." Harry rubs the pad of his thumb over the papery skin of Louis' knuckles.

"Am I being punished?"

"No."

Louis tries not to let his sigh be any louder than it should be. He's glad he's not in punishable trouble but there was a glint in Harry's eye, the spark of turning wheels. It made him shudder. "Done?" Harry stands, holding Louis' hand, when he's done eating.

Louis nods and before he can wipe the light brown tinted milk from his lips, Harry kisses him. His tongue swipes across Louis' parted entry and tastes the flavoured milk. Louis' blushing wildly when Harry pulls back, and follows him obediently after paying.

"Where are we going?" Louis musters up the will in his voice to ask. He could be getting himself in more trouble.

"Shopping." Harry holds his door open. "Get in."

It's more of a climb for Louis but Harry waits patiently and once he's inside, closes the door. "What are you looking for?" Louis' testing the waters before he gets too deep and asking pointless questions seem to be working.
"Clothes for you. You don't have enough here to share between the apartment and your dorm room. Until you move in, that is."

"Harry-

"I should tell you, princess. I'm not very happy with you right now and speaking unnecessarily won't make it better."

Looking down at his lap, Louis kicks off his shoes to fold his knees up against his chest. Harry sighs and takes his hand, manning the vehicle with just the other.

Louis tries a different tactic and feels more manipulative than Harry's good boy when he does.

"Daddy?"

The word did catch Harry off-guard but not enough to affect their route. "Yes, baby?"

"I don't want new clothes." Louis plays with his fingers.

"It's a gift because I love you."

"I know but.....-"

"But what, darling?"

"It's expensive."

"That's not a reason. This is your fifth rule, don't question the things I buy for you unless you don't like it."

Louis understands this and looks out his window silently. He was feeling the beginning of a new form of relationship, one he's only ever read about.

"Answer me, princess."

"Yes, daddy." It was becoming too easy to call Harry that now and Louis doesn't feel it on his tongue set apart from any other word.

"You're upset about something."

"You're upset with me."

"Oh no. Lou." Harry pulls off to the side of the road and pushes his seat as back as it will go.

"C'mere, baby."

Louis, all too happily, scrambles onto Harry's lap with his legs still haphazardly strewn across his own seat. He folds them when Harry squeezes the back of his jeans and he has to come closer.

"It's not your fault." Harry kisses both Louis' cheeks and makes him giggle. "It's never your fault."

"Never?" It was one of Louis' 'small' moments again, when his mind and body wanted reassurance and care.

"Unless you tell me otherwise."

"You said I'm in lots of trouble."
"Well, you know not to talk to strangers yet you did that." Harry moves Louis' knee away from the automatic gear shift. "You know nobody can take care of you like I can."

"I was just being friendly."

"Not everyone looks at it that way. I need you to be careful, okay?"

Louis hums contentedly when Harry presses a gentle kiss to his fringe. His mouth is pressed against Harry's shoulder when he talks, effectively muffling his words and making them inaudible. "What's that, baby?" Harry pulls him away from his jacket pocket.

"I really don't want to go shopping." Louis says warily.

"Are you tired?"

He nods, yawning for effect.

"Alright. Let's go home."

Home, by Harry's definition, meant the apartment - he refused to call it 'his' apartment or 'theirs' just yet. He didn't understand how Louis could possibly be tired after a full night of rest but he wouldn't get angry if the boy was indeed lying.

"You can't sleep fully clothed." Harry chuckled, grabbing Louis' wrist and dragging him away from the bed. "Arms up."

Louis exhales loudly and raises his arms lazily so Harry strips off his shirt, then unbuttons his pants. "Two hours." Harry reminds him of how long he has. "Then you have to get your work done."

Nodding, Louis curls into a ball under the thick, insulating comforter and closes his eyes. Harry and he had fetched some of his books from the dormitory so he could finish up here rather than there. Harry spends the two hours finishing his art piece but of course it won't be complete in just two days, so he toned it down to a pencil and chalk sketch. Two minutes in, and he's broken three pencils already from his collection.

The itch was back and he couldn't dictate the reason why. It made his fingers bear down on every instrument it held, the tightly wound aggression causing everything to snap. He hasn't had the voice of a sinister reptile in his mind since........since he came to Chicago in search of Louis. His painkiller.

Truth be told, Harry missed the manipulating destruction of such deviousness. He was too incontrol nowadays, always following the routine of ensuring Louis' health. He loved that job, making his boy happy was a true calling to him, but he longed for the things that ticked him off. Last night with the group of boys, that was in the hopes of regaining that voice. That failed so he tried again today when they went to the cereal cafe. He still got nothing.

With new resolve, Harry got up and left the apartment with his keys. His mind had gotten locked down on one thing, and he's never been able to avoid that for every day in his twenty-six years. He leaves under the conditions that he normally would, leaving the front door unlocked. "Harry?" Louis wakes up groggily, smiling at the lingering scent still rife in the sheets. He hears shuffling somewhere in the apartment and suspects it's Harry bustling about.

Harry knocks on the dark wood door of the Captain's office and gets a grim look in response. "Harry." The balding, forty-four year old man, motions for him to enter and shut the door.
"Did you-"

"I know." He sets his elbows on the table and rubs his temples. "Pretty reckless of you, don't you think?"

"Is it on the news?" Harry crosses one leg over the other.

"No. Kept the media away but it was a college campus so I can't keep bullshitting them." Captain Abrams offers Harry the pack of cigarettes after he's extracted one.

"I don't expect you to." Harry good heartedly accepts one and uses his own lighter to burn the end.

"But you know what I pay you for, Abram."

"Everytime you remind me I have to tell myself that I'm not doing a disservice."

Laughing, Harry blows out the first grey puff. "Disservice to who?"

"My country."

"Your country will fuck you over. Don't be its bitch."

"You know if I ever decide to turn you in, it'll be a life sentence for bribing federal officers."

"Yeah but you won't ever do that."

Abram's expression changes to one of pure hatred before flattening. "Fuck you, Styles."

"You wish, Captain."

"So why the Hell are you here to ruin my lunch break?"

"Need a favour."

"Of course you do."

"Tonight." His phone buzzes to interrupt him and Harry holds up his finger as he fishes it out of his pocket. "You're calling me?"

"What the fuck are you talking about?"

Harry shows him the caller identification as one that belongs to this precinct. "Answer it."

Sliding the green answer icon, Harry holds the phone up to his ear. "Who is this?"

"Mr. Styles?"

Harry looks up at the Captain who's watching him just as intently. "Yeah. What is it?"

"Your apartment is 96 Scientia Road, Flat 132?"

"Yes."

"Your place was just broken into, Sir. Your door was unlocked and five boys got in."
The end of chapter thirteen by ss98
Chapter Fourteen

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

_It cannot be seen, cannot be felt, cannot be heard, cannot be smelt. It lies behind stars and under hills, and empty holes it fills. It comes first and follows after, ends life, kills laughter._

*NARRATOR'S POV*

"I'm on my way." Harry curtly addresses the officer stationed at his apartment. He stands and points towards Abram for the captain to follow him. Once outside, he covers the phone's speaker and uses no words when picking out an officer from behind his desk to follow as well.

"Was the apartment empty?" He asks the female security officer while they get into two different vehicles.

"Sir, we weren't able to locate the suspects but a witness says there were five."

"That's not what I asked." _Louis._ Harry's Louis was alone in that bloody apartment. "When we responded to the 911 call, we found the apartment empty. We need you present for recov-"

"There was someone in the bedroom. My boyfriend. Where is he now?"

"We didn't find anybody, Mr. Styles."

"Well fucking find him now!" He barks, the anger rich in his voice. The true fear and worry was kept at bay to keep his hands from shaking.

"Would he have left before-"

"His name is Louis Tomlinson. Five foot eight with brown hair and blue eyes. He was asleep when I left. I have your captain with me and when I get there Louis better be waiting for me or I'll have your job." He hangs up after that and concentrates on getting through the streets without causing any accidents.

It's starting to rain, just the beginning has commenced with powerless droplets crashing down against Harry's windshield like little hurdles. He switches on the wipers and picks up his phone to dial the captain in the car behind him.

"Hel-"

"Put on your siren and get in front of me." Harry orders, slowing down for a full ten seconds for it to be done then speeding through neighbourhoods.

He had a tracker in Louis' phone but not the boy himself so he could anywhere, but Harry knows already who those 5 perpetrators are. He's mentally prepared their punishment and the finality of such a clean act made him lift his chin a little higher.

Louis has been keeping his eyes open against the heaviness of his eyelids. They'd shot something clear into his arm and two drops of blood fell out against his marble skin from the sloppy job. His
body screamed at him to just sleep right now in the back of a ratty old bread van, but he needed to stay awake to record all the details he could.

He was gagged by a dirty cloth that tasted of car oil, and his teeth were hurting as he bit down. The cable ties around his wrists were cutting his skin and no matter how much he tried to ease up, the exhaustion too over and the slumping of his body worsened it.

From what he knows, his bum has suffered several bruises from the bumps of the journey that's been going on for less than fifteen minutes. His back was pressed against the door with metal biting his sides and back.

He had the option of moving away but that meant being closer to the jerks who dragged him from the bed - his head hit the ground before anything else with a sound thud - and across the apartment - his throat and lungs were weak from screaming - out the door.

He had nasty rug burns, scrapes from these strangers' nails and a lump on the side of his head. All these symptoms paired with the distraught alive within him, the doubts and insecurities, were making him exhausted. He still wonders where Harry went. If he left, if he just up and left. Why would he?

Louis was curled up as small as possible and his heart was heavy in his constricted throat. He stared at his broken, bleeding nail to shut out the males shouting curses at each other and him. His hatred for violence and loudness was overwhelmed by fear and he just wanted to sleep.

He was at the point where imagining a moment in Harry's presence, where he was undeniably safe, made him release a tear or two. Harry wasn't here and that scared him.

Would he ever come find him?

Suddenly the van stops moving, the aged tyres screech under the vehicle and five heads rear their attention to the quivering boy at the back.

"I don't see Louis." Harry slams his door shut and confronts the woman with her hands up, bracing herself for his fury.

"Sir, we sent cars out." She explains calmly.

"How long ago?"

"Ten minutes."

Harry looks around him at all the possible escapes, all the paths of exit. He can't think as an impulsive idiot from college who'd have the gall to take captive the most valuable thing in Harry Styles' life.

"Captain, please-" She tries speaking to the higher standing officer who arrived with Harry.

"Did you get the registration?" He asks brusquely.

"Yes, Sir."

"Well track the motherfuckers then. Don't stand here like a bimbo."

She nods vigorously and takes one more sergeant with her as she jogs toward the patrol car with the computer tracking system in the back. Harry waits, impatiently tapping his foot and burning through three cigarettes. When she returns with a printed sheet, he's on his fourth.
"They haven't moved for three minutes." She informs Harry more than the others after pointing out their location.

Harry takes the second car's occupants with him as he dashes like a mad man towards his SUV. He drives recklessly and ignores all the road rules, his mind riddled with horrid thoughts of what a person could do to his Louis with their stationary van.

Louis pleads through his gag, tears and spit creating a disgusting taste with mechanical oil on his tongue from the rag. He shakes his head when the one with green highlights crouches in front of him, alarmed and blatant fear in his eyes.

"Princess, eh?" The boy of probably twenty touches Louis' cheek. "Accurate. What do you say, boys?"

A loud rumble of agreement from the rest of the confinement. The green-haired lad laughs when he looks back at Louis.

"All soft and defenceless." His voice was dripping cruelty and brash actions. "I'd say you had someone take care of you all your life. Our boy that your prince killed and got away with, he never had someone looking after him."

Louis looks at the others, hoping to get some humanity. The driver looks at him with resentment, but when he catches Louis' gaze he turns away. There goes Louis' hope.

"Well, princess-" He said the nickname with spite. "-let's see how well you fit the role."

When Louis tried screaming, they smothered the protests with clammy hands and shoved the cloth so harshly into his mouth Louis gagged painfully. They held him down and against his worst case scenario, they didn't have their way with him until he was a goner and had no path of recovery. But they did strip him - dignity and all - by ripping through his pants and underwear.

Louis howled in agony when someone's elbow collided with his flailing length. He breathed through his mouth and never gave up screaming even when he was hoarse and in severe pain. He felt something being slipped around his legs and was too tired to waste energy and look. He recognises it soon enough when it snaps tightly around his hips and the cheap netted material scratches his thighs. A tutu.

His eyes are half-lidded and he's already surrendered to the awful fate heading his way, when loud sirens start near them. It could be just one but Louis' vision has doubled and his mind is too foggy to focus. The attackers don't cease their actions so Louis could be hallucinating his rescue.

Except he isn't, because the back doors of the double van are yanked open - he vaguely remembers Green Hair telling someone to lock it but getting a grunt and nothing else as an answer. Hands cover his ears, as his head nearly falls off the back of the van's bed and the ringing of bullets goes off. It's muffled because Louis' not sure who's touching him.

It doesn't feel like Harry and he's ready to just roll onto his side and sleep. Harry hated the sight revealed to him when the officer opened the van's back doors. He felt the need to shout and shred through things, seeing someone on top of Louis made him livid. The deep green of his eyes transformed into something darker, greedier, less hostile and more violent. It was a form of beast, mutated as Harry grew and became wiser, snapping its neck and baring its fangs. It was blood thirsty and it made its host the same.

Luckily, the female officer who Harry gave a hard time to removed Louis from the scene before
Harry lashed out.

Harry's supposed to be calm and calculated, but anger was a man's weakness and liability. He wasn't held back and that led to the closest culprit - Green Hair - being dragged harshly to the tarred ground and beat upon. The captain gave no order and when officer's tried to restrain Harry, they ended up with a bloody nose or purpled eye.

There were no weapons, just Harry's bare fists creating blood splatters on the tar. He wasn't violent outside his lair, his hobby. Now he's seeing red everywhere.

He can see Louis alone in the apartment. These hooligans broke in and took him. He allows his hands to ball up and pound into this boy's skull when he pictures the way Louis must have protested.

When they do get Harry off Green Hair, he sits back on the road and stares at his fists. He watches the way the smeared blood sticks to his ashen skin. Then he remembers Louis still hasn't seen him, touched him. So he goes to find him.

Large hands, calloused all along the palms and firm in grip, grabbed Louis' shoulders. These hands he recognised and through drowsy eyes, he glanced up to watch stormy green eyes while he was gathered up in a trench coat and held closely. Louis sighed and let the person he's been waiting for carry him away from the noise, the drama.

Harry almost pushed the officer keeping Louis company away, but a glare worked just as well. He picked Louis up behind his back and under his knees, standing in isolation in the slight drizzle. "Baby?" Harry's voice. It's slightly gruff but all beautiful. "Lou, come on."

Louis has to signal Harry, tell him that he's okay. He wraps weak arms with lifeless movements around the man's neck, hiding his face in his neck too.

"Baby, I need to know you're okay." Harry insists. Didn't he understand that Louis was just tired? "'m 'kay." Louis mumbles, breathing deeply now that he's safe.

"That's good, darling." Harry kisses his forehead and rubs his wrists where the bloody marks are.

"You can sleep now. You're safe with me."

That's all Louis needed to hear because he nods off immediately before Harry can set him down by the paramedics' station. They inform him of the drug and say that he just needed to eat when he woke up and shouldn't move until the drug's out of his system.

"It was an amateur drug. Not even sold anywhere. They got lucky that it worked but it could have seriously hurt this one. Let him sleep for as long as he wants." The medical official told him. "Feed him when he wakes up and give him these."

Harry's handed two brown bottles of pills. He reads the labels and they're pretty basic pills for a seven day period, with two pills a way. He asks for fresh clothing and that everyone excuse them so he can remove the horrid items of ballet clothes from Louis' slack body.

He cuts through the material with scissors and slips on the customary warm pants with a hospital Tshirt on for Louis, then his trench coat since it's still raining outside. He tucks the bottles into one of the coat's pockets and carries Louis out of the ambulance truck.

"We're taking 'em in." The captain informs Harry. "You good with that?"
"No." Harry instantly answers after laying Louis down in the back of the Dodge with Harry's spare sweater as a pillow.

"What do you want to do?"

"There's a group of maybe twelve, thirteen warehouses by the dock. Go to the fifth one." Harry combs his hair back. "Get me five barrels of wine and five pig masks, a basic dissecting kit and cotton with a needle. Just one needle. And gloves. Two pairs of the surgical kind."

The captain can only nod, only agree and consent. He's lost his authority over Harry as a citizen long ago and now he's trapped. He makes the list in his head and gets into his car.

"Are you bringing him too?" He asks about Louis.

"Take the other officer with you. When you and I are inside I want Louis guarded."

On his way to the only mall in Chicago that's open for all hours of the day and night, Abram makes the call to his officers to ensure that the van carrying the five boys were taken to the warehouse. No questions asked.

A half hour later, Harry is parked outside the very same warehouse with Louis halfway out of sleep but still pretty tired. Harry bought food and left the heater on for the boy.

"'arry?" Louis yawns but winces and opens his eyes a little.

Harry's enraptured by the sheer piercing shade of blue directed at him. "Yes, darling?"

"Where are we?" Louis leans into his touch when Harry brushes his cheek and heated skin.

"I have to do something real quick before we go home, okay?" Harry stands outside and bends to kiss Louis' lips like in that Spiderman movie.

"'mkay." Louis closes his eyes again. "Don't be long."

"Promise."

Harry locks the car and will give the keys to the captain once he's inside. He tells the officer to be strict about watching Louis, be vigilant and if he slipped up his punishment would be the same as the boys inside the warehouse.

The heavy iron door slides shut along with the old glass windows once Harry's inside and the captain slumps in a chair at the back, taking a good vantage point. He chews some guava flavoured gum while he scratches his beard and watches Harry work.

First, Harry drags each boy by the scruff of his collar to hooks on hanging from a belt. That's why he chose this warehouse specifically, the captain decides.

Their hands are bound and Harry uses that to hold them up on the sharp hooks, and after each boy is handled he starts stripping them. The captain frowns at the ethic, since this is exactly what he's supposed to be stopping.

He fishes out the little clear money packet from his jacket's secret pocket on the inside. Crushed medication for the heart, he told his precinct and his dear wife. While Harry threads cotton through the eye of the needle, Abram uses his expired Visa card to form a line and rolls his last twenty dollar bill.

Harry's unusually silent during this 'operation' though his modus operandi has not changed. He
doesn't hum to himself or play blaring classical music, but he still takes his time sharpening his blades and snapping his gloves on. He inserts the scalpel blade onto its handle and sets it aside. He probably won't use it.

The captain's too blitzed to pay real attention after that, and even laughs out loud at himself once for no reason. Harry ignores him, and the other five aren't bothered about a drugged up police officer. Harry knows Louis' still outside in the car and he plans to make this quick, so he uses a legal drug that he snatched from the ambulance to still his victims. He unhooked each boy on their turn, chose a plastic pig mask and forced it on them. He could liken no other animal to their behaviour and actions.

He knew they'd remove the masks so he took the needle with its thread, and began sewing. They felt every prick and screamed with each puncture. The drunk captain cackled and Harry continued work.

The needle was sharp enough to easily go through their skin and attach the mask to their heads. Harry purposely did a messy job of it, and didn't sterilise the needle whenever he changed the thread. The masks were on, and the boys were bleeding thin rivulets of red down their bodies. He had set out a plastic sheet under them just for that.

Harry popped open the first barrel of wine, and wished he could be excited about this new method rather than blindingly mad. The boys didn't put up a fight, because they couldn't, when Harry stood them in the barrels then squeezed them to fit. The barrels were strong and wide so it worked. Before he shoved their heads down under the red grape intoxicant, he used the captain's gun with gloves on to blow a bullet through their skulls. Couldn't have them getting out.

"Do I......" The captain loosely waved at the rocking barrels after Harry was done. "-you know....clean up?"

"You're too high for that." Harry threw everything, clean and dirty, into a plastic bag. "Don't let anyone find them. They have to sit for seven days."

"Yeah sure."

Harry's clothing was smudged and stained now with various liquids. Blood, wine and legal drugs. He feels he's a walking folklore from the time of Ozymandias.

The captain locks up the warehouse, and although he stumbles at every rock and curses at every gust of wind, Harry doesn't stick around to ensure his safety. He returns to the Dodge and finds the food finished and Louis asleep on his other side. Harry puts on the radio as he drives them home and it wakes Louis up in time to exit the vehicle.

"Lou?" Harry opens Louis' door by his legs, not wanting the cold air and rain to give him a cold. Louis makes a soft noise, it could be hardly anything at all, and begrudgingly slides across the seat towards Harry.

"I'll get us upstairs then you can sleep, okay?" Harry shelters Louis from the rain and clasps the back of his thighs to wrap around his waist.

The thought of sleeping again in a room where he had been attacked, sickens Louis enough to make him nauseous.

"No, Harry." Louis sounded like he was still asleep but his arms were tightly wound around Harry's neck. "I don't wanna sleep there."
"Where, Lou?" Harry pressed the elevator button and his password into the keypad. "In the bedroom?"

Louis nods slowly and sneezes right after.

"You have to sleep, darling. The doctor said-"

"No!" Louis protested, shaking his head and trying to withdraw from Harry.

The man sighed and held on tighter to Louis' back and legs, keeping him close and embraced. "Alright, baby. Alright." Harry lifted Louis by his bum when he started to slide and kissed his forehead. "We'll sleep in the lounge, okay? By the TV."

That settles Louis and he relaxes once again in Harry's arms. He's shivering from the meagre clothing he's wearing and clung unrealistically to Harry's body warmth.

"Are you hungry?" Harry found that when he approached a chair to set Louis down, he would just have to continue walking because Louis won't let go.

"No." Louis answered, sounding small and delicate.

"Wanna bath?"

"Yeah." Louis sneezes again. "With you."

"Anything you want, precious."

Harry couldn't get the water running with Louis draped on him like this so he goes to the counter and lightly nudges the boy's hips.

Louis seems to have lost a great portion of his emotional maturity to panic, distress and fear. He can't think beyond the current moment and had the weak demeanour of a child.

"No, Daddy." Louis surprises Harry by using that name and tightening his hold on Harry's shoulders.

There was genuine horror in Louis' eyes, he was still inside that van alone and traumatised. He's still waiting for Harry and even though it's a light state of PTSD, Harry was still overly concerned. "Okay, okay." Harry rubs Louis' back, not oblivious to the hitches in breath Louis experiences when he reaches a sensitive spot. "I need to fill the tub. Right here, okay?"

He manages to get the warm water going and sits Louis between his legs as he gets washed. He knows Louis, knows his way of coping will be to completely squash this memory. It isn't normal, recommended by any shrink globally but it's Louis' way.

Harry uses the black loofer to spread a scented soap's foam all across Louis' skin. He cleans off the grime and traces of another person before running his hands over the same paths. "What did you do?" Louis asks dreamily, staring at the white porcelain tiles whilst leaning back against Harry.

"I killed them." Harry doesn't hesitate.

Louis doesn't respond and Harry has to continue cleaning him in the empty silence. The boy obediently spreads his legs when Harry reaches there and holds his arm not tightly enough when Harry's fingers slip into more intimate regions. It makes him feel warmer and more secure now that it's Harry touching him, claiming all those parts of Louis' body that he didn't get to revere.
"Baby?" Harry moved his hand and Louis went to grab it again, placing it on his tummy.

Louis' response was to roll his head to face the other side and kiss Harry's neck where the angry vein still stood out. It sank back under his skin before reappearing, and Louis even nipped at it playfully.

"Do you still want to sleep in the lounge tonight?" Harry didn't feel the pain that came with Louis biting his neck right on that vein, but he felt the pleasurable suckling.

"Yes please." Louis pulled off and huffed when he'd hardly made even a red spot.

"What is it?" Harry enquires about Louis' displeased noise.

Louis brings his damp fingers up to trace where he'd made the attempt and Harry shivers because it feels so intimate.

"You can try again." Harry proposes. "But after we're done here."

Agreeing, Louis let's Harry guide him to the opposite end of the tub. It's cold and lonely here. He tells Harry this.

"You can share a spot with me soon." Harry chuckles.

He picks up Louis' leg and examines the healing cuts under his foot. They've reopened after today and Harry makes a note to rebandage them before they sleep. He holds Louis' foot against his torso when he runs the lathered sponge up the boy's legs. In the end, he kisses the top of every toe to make Louis giggle beside himself and today's events.

"Come on." Harry helps Louis out of the tub and traps his arms under a gigantic white, fluffy towel that he ordered online.

"Up." Harry says, lifting Louis onto the bathroom counter by the mirror.

He, of course, has a proper First Aid kit and dresses the bandages on Louis' feet neatly. He puts a plaster on Louis' finger where the nail was broken and applied some cold pressure to the lump on his forehead.

Louis gets picked up before he can touch the cold ground and carried into the closet directly so he doesn't have to look around too long.

"Can you stand?" Harry asks.

Louis shrugs and sets himself down to test that theory. He doesn't feel much of a string since he's standing on soft carpeting and hurriedly dresses in Harry's grey sweater - he owned enough sweaters to run a shop - and boxer briefs. He waits until Harry's put on just pyjama bottoms and hoists Louis into his arms for a short trip lounge-ward.

"You need to eat." Harry takes the phone off its cradle on the wall.

"Nothing spicy." Louis says in his ear, having shifted to his back.

"Nothing spicy." Harry chuckles, dialling the nearest pizza joint.

He orders two large pizzas - Louis is shocked at that - which ends up coming with a dozen salted wedges - Louis loves that Harry ordered two large pizzas - and a litre of bottled soda.

"Don't get comfortable." Harry ignores his own words by pressing Louis closer to him and tanglin
their legs. "Pizza's going to arrive."

Louis nods and settles down on Harry's chest, tracing stars on the damp skin and trying to stay awake.

The pizza gets there ten minutes later and while Harry fetches it, Louis grabs the remote to switch the television on. It was still sitting on a table with no proper stand but the entire apartment should be ready by the next time Louis sees it. He keeps glancing at the bedroom whenever there's a shuffling noise, and notices that Harry locks the front door this time.

"Take this." Harry hands Louis two different pills with a glass of water. "Then eat." Louis does so and when Harry allows him to eat without a plate, he uses a tissue to hold the pizza slice. He eats mostly wedges and Harry scolds him for it.

"You're not having soda if you're only eating wedges, Louis." Harry says sternly.

"Fine. I'm sorry." Louis pouts and begins his second slice. It goes down easily enough.

When Harry's satisfied, he takes the boxes to the kitchen and switches off all the lights. Only the television stays on where Louis' watching American Horror Story. He returns to the couch with a quilt from the bedroom closet and drapes it over Louis after resuming his place under him. Louis uses a tissue to wipe the faint dough crumbs off his fingers and blushes wildly when Harry takes one between his lips.

It's his uninjured hand that Harry nibbles on the fingers of, so Louis tries to distract his thoughts with an episode of his favourite show that he's already seen. Harry bites down on the tip of his middle finger and Louis yelps.

"You can't eat me." Even in banter, Louis sounds drained.

"I'd be starting at the wrong end if I was, Lou." He laces their fingers together as Louis comes up to hide in his neck again. "Why do you like this show?"

"It's unique." Louis attaches his lips to the same vein he had targeted in the tub. Harry doesn't feel the pinch of Louis' teeth but the gentle graze of sharp molars brushing his skin makes him moan. Louis pays careful attention this time and sucks on the skin between nibbles, drawing blood to the underside of the surface.

Despite the assumptions of an outsider, Louis was just as possessive as Harry. Albeit he was more passive about it, but he took every opportunity to prove himself to Harry. He wanted to put a mark on Harry for all to see that he was taken too, that Harry saved him and their relationship was special.

"Ready to sleep now?" Harry knew Louis had succeeded in this love bite and he almost wanted to photograph what it looks like.

Louis nods and yawns, already overtaken by sleep. He sleeps to clear his mind of the riddles of today, the aches of yesterday and hopefully make room for the aftermath of tomorrow. His legs slide between Harry's and the TV goes off but the tinted windows stay open so Harry can look out on the beautiful city as it slept.

The next morning at eight, Harry remembers that Louis had plans the previous night but they were definitely forgotten now. He will hand back Louis' phone as soon as he's awake, allow him to make the proper arrangements.
Through the panoramic windows the sun was shining like a silver sea shell through dusky clouds. Harry felt Louis stir on him, the hair on his chest is probably scratching Louis' cheek by now. Harry slides Louis off him, with the intention of making a wholesome breakfast for them both. He kneels by Louis' head that's now cradled by a plush blank cushion, and kisses the boy's lips before going into the kitchen. By custom, he puts on the news but mutes it on smaller flat screen hung above the counter on the adjacent pillar.

He finds ingredients for pancakes - thanks to Louis' insistence about shopping - and some Nutella - to feed Louis' addiction, Harry secretly bought some. He switches the first stove on and lights the flame manually - he chose this stove because he needed his cooking done fast and thoroughly - before setting a pan above the flame.

There's shuffling on the couch and Harry freezes to await the heavy thump that never comes. He settles back into whisking noiselessly and lip-reading the news anchor. Harry enjoys the sizzle of batter on heated butter as he spreads out the first layer and adds a dollop of Nutella in the middle - just the correct amount with a tablespoon. He pours more thin batter onto it and tilts the pan to gather hot butter to cook the top. When it's solid, he flips it skilfully and lifts it onto a plate. After the sixth pancake is made, Harry takes a chance and raises the volume on the television just a tad while he breaks off bits of pancake to eat. It's a little after half eight that he calls the university and informs them of Louis' and his absence today. He's promised that all their work will be sent to him - for an extra fee.

He makes twelve more pancakes out of boredom and when the news broadcast finally turns to something that catches his eye, he pauses to watch.

'College Campus Massacre.'

Harry smirks to himself as he wipes the counter. It wasn't on campus so it shouldn't be labelled as such.

The woman with bright blue eyes, bags beneath them that spoke of sleepless nights, a tan line on her finger with no ring, talked animatedly about this new case. It was something brilliantly exciting to the media and everyone wanted a piece of this action from the way it looked.

She said a student was brutally murdered and five had gone missing, no doubt belonging to the same ring of fate. Harry's murders never got this kind of attention before, and only a sliver of his conscience allowed him to take satisfaction in it.

Harry fetches Louis' pills and warms up some milk the way Louis had made it just two days ago. He poured them into mugs and sipped his while the commercials came on and the guide informed them of what to watch later. Harry switched the TV off and puts on the radio positioned just below it. The couch moves, sounds of heavy shuffling coming from it as Louis stretches. Going to his side, Harry notices how sprawled out the boy is. His electric blue eyes reflect all the light in the world, encompassing even some of the green that matched Harry's emerald eye colour. He smiles up at Harry and the man sees how exposed Louis is, his sweater having ridden up and revealed all of his skin under the quilt. He looks like temptation personified.

"Good morning." Harry pushes out. "How do you feel?"

Louis blinks away the brightness and sits up. "Better."

He'd snapped back the reality of the previous day like only he could, into an elastic band before tossing it into a subconscious vault. Harry admired this trait slash capability of Louis' because it surely took years and days of tragedy to perfect. He is truly an exasperating but mesmerising boy.
They were memories, but they would not dictate how he lived today.

"I made um....breakfast." Harry doesn't know if he's supposed to sit or just remain standing. "Something does smell amazing." Louis swings his legs over the edge and Harry suddenly remembers his purpose.

He secures an arm around Louis' back, clamping down on his waist, and slipping the other under the bend of his knees. Louis is taken aback by the hastiness of Harry's capture and gasps before locking his arms behind the man's neck so he's unable to go crashing down.

Louis' about to argue that he's alright with walking but a spiteful blast erupts within his brain and he cringes outwardly. The light coming through the windows lights his nerves on fire, and the pain is a series of disconcerting pinches.

Harry sets him down on a high stool and starts to examine the healing stage of all Louis' injuries. The lump on his head has been reduced to a purple island on the left side of his forehead, easily hidden by his fringe. His cut lip will disappear soon; the broken nail was cleaned but still sensitive, and the sole of Louis' foot was much better.

"How are you feeling?" Harry asks this again, but with a different intention.

He wants to check and see if indeed Louis had shoved yesterday's happenings to a pit in the back of his mind, or whether it was too traumatic - too petrifying - for even him.

"I'm fine." Louis smiles reassuringly. "Now feed me."

If you asked Harry two months ago if he'd be in a Chicago kitchen worried sick about an individual who was half child and half Louis, he would not have responded well. Yet now, Harry can't seem to figure out why he was kept from Louis for even this long.

He's the only person Harry cuddles with, smiles for and wants to please. He made Harry an inescapably possessive boyfriend - something had driven him to use that term last night.

"Take these first." Harry hands him the pills and a glass of water.

Louis' headache goes away after the pills have been in his system for half a minute. Harry slides a plate towards him across the granite counter top topped with four pancakes. They were mighty and Louis' eyes widened at the heap.

"Are we sharing?" Louis cuts into one with a fork and no knife.

Harry shakes his head and turns the radio off when the music segment commences, only to have Louis stop him.

"I like this song."

"You have strange taste." Harry observes, seating himself on the stool beside Louis to watch him. Louis smiles as he takes another bite, messing the corner of his mouth with Nutella. "Can't argue with that."

Harry watches his little pink tongue dart out to swipe the smudge. "We're both not going to campus today. I called in."

"Could I have my phone please? Niall needs to know."

Harry seems to forget to answer before he rises to go fetch the device from his studio. "Your books
are here so you can do whatever work you have left before more comes along."

"Don't you have work too?"

Louis starts to get up as an automatic deed and his fingers reach his lips to have the remaining chocolate that's a product of his messy eating, but Harry is quicker. He puts the plate on the table and wraps a hand around the bottom of Louis' thigh to push him back onto the stool. The latter is caught off guard and holds Harry's shoulder when the chair rocks slightly.

Harry takes Louis' hand and brings it up to his mouth, feeling somewhat delirious that the chocolate spread tastes better off Louis' fingers. He bites on Louis' middle finger lightly to make the owner smile and blush.

"Stay." Harry pulls away suddenly and Louis' left feeling like he's perched on a sky-high stool all alone. "Call your friend."

Louis does so and Niall promises to have Skype open during all their lectures today so he can be there without being present. He also tells Louis he's in big trouble for not showing up last night and they hang up after Louis apologises.

"Done?" Harry leans against the counter in front of Louis, brows knitted together.

"All set." Louis sighs heavily. "I have just about an hour."

"Enough time to shower?"

"Yeah. Let's do that."

Louis fascinates Harry when he doesn't react anything like the previous night. He didn't hold his breath or screw his eyes shut. He was brave about it and Harry knows Louis' too strong for faking it. "Can I ask you something?" Louis peeks up through wet lashes once they're under the shower spray for four minutes.

Harry regards him impassively but nods confidently.

"A favour, rather."

He nods again.

"Please don't......-" Louis bites his lip as he thinks.

"Yes?" Harry encourages, wanting to know what Louis' going to say.

He lifts the shorter lad up by the backs of his thighs and holds him against the wall so he can get the sponge.

"I don't want you......to hurt people because of me." Louis doesn't know why he's choosing to say this now when Harry has all the power and convenience.

Harry frowns as he rubs the soap and sponge together between his hands. "I don't understand."

"What you did last night....it was- I know where you're coming from but I don't like it."

"It's how I keep you safe." Louis hasn't gotten called a single pet name since he woke up and he feels another headache coming on.
"I understand but I'd rather you protect me by being here and not going ballistic afterwards."
This seems to offend Harry, as he drops the soap and sponge in favour of gripping Louis tighter. He leans in until they're a breath apart.

"You're not supposed to tell me that." Harry's eyes fix onto Louis' and they burn past the soft blue barrier into the part of Louis' person where he was submissive.

"I'm not going to force you, Harry. I-"

"You most certainly won't." Harry holds their bodies flush against each other and Louis stares up at him in wonder and worry.

"It's not nice hurting people that way, Harry." Louis swallows a pained cry when Harry bites - no playfulness now - down on his throat. "No matter how......honourable your intentions."

"Honourable?" Harry scoffs amusedly as he slips a hand down Louis' back to where the smooth skin turn round and firm. "Darling boy, when I decide to defend you the last thing on my mind is patriotism."

Louis tries moving Harry's hand away from his behind, but the man growls and resembles a greedy youngster when he goes back hungrier.

"Harry, listen to me." Louis tug on Harry's wet locks while a skilled mouth does sin to his skin. Harry grunts irritably and pins Louis' hands to the wall with one of his, using the other to seek out Louis' rim. It flutters under his touch and Louis squirms against him, making Harry's chest rumble.

"Stay still." He releases Louis' hands to raise his thighs on his waist. "Why'd you stop talking?"

Louis' head rolls back, chin to the sky with his eyes sealed, when Harry folds his legs against his chest.

"I-I...."

"You?" Harry smiles when he knows he's won this silly fight.

"It's not nice hurting people, Harry." Louis gasps, some words getting snagged in his throat. "Not when you can't heal them."

"That's a sick philosophy, Louis." Harry slips a wet finger into Louis, admiring the way the boy's back curves and jaw slackens. "All you need is a reason for doing something. No matter how small-" Harry grins at how Louis shivers when he starts pumping his finger. "-or indecent-" He adds a second finger, wishing he'd had his rings on. "-or honourable."

It's never become pronounced before but Louis' mind forgets how much he really has a hold on, whenever Harry's hands are on him. He just melts and bucks to the man's will.

"You haven't filled the tank yet." Louis fights to keep his eyes open and sees Harry biting his lip.

"That means you don't need to do it."

A third finger slips in and Harry is rougher now, forcing his fingers knuckle-deep and scraping Louis' prostrate so he's left incoherent and full of panting exclamations. "It only means that I haven't gotten the chance to find someone yet." Harry removes his fingers and chuckles at the weak mewl Louis emits. "Still so desperate, baby. You still want it from me. Always will."

He positions himself at Louis' stretched entrance and groans as he slides into the tight heat. Louis' forgotten what he was saying already but it comes back to him in drabs.
"Har- Haz- oh God." He chokes out.

"Shit." Harry bites his own bottom lip, pressing his palms against the wall and bottoming out. "Always so tight for me, princess. Nobody's ever going to do what I do for you."

Louis hears the endearment and his rib cage is suddenly too tight, but it's Harry's voice and that's settling.

"Isn't that right?" Harry circles his hips, stretching Louis wider and making him breathe raggedly.

"I'm a murderer, Lou." He draws out and slams back in, knowing how much Louis liked being full.

"I like being this way. I fucking love that I'm this way."

All these words get trapped in Louis' head, replaying in his mind. He parts his lips and moans loudly when Harry starts to snap his hips, using that precise skill he's always had to nail Louis' spot.

Harry forces Louis' left leg over his arm and thrusts deeper now that he can.

"And you'll still be here, won't you baby?" Harry's pelvis meets Louis' and each thrust is so hard it's like he's trying to prove a point. "You'd still open your legs for me so I can have my way with your lovely body."

Harry has great command over his own body and Louis' at the same time because he continues with only half the amount of noises Louis' making.

"When I found you last night-" Harry has a concentrated frown on his face, voice coming off more gravely than usual. "-I was prepared to show everyone what I can do and just make them fucking bleed right there."

He's eliciting soft 'uh' sounds from Louis, coming out frequently whenever he made a particularly hard thrust, which is often. Harry gripped Louis' right thigh dangerously close to his behind, sinking his teeth into the sweet warmth of Louis' jaw as he fucked him. Louis scratched his biceps and nape, mouth frozen in a scream and impatiently rolling his hips.

"I made them suffer because of that too." Harry grunted, feeling Louis clench steadily around him.

"I- fuck!- I-"

"Shh." Louis covered Harry's mouth with his own and they both relaxed into the kiss. "F-Forget 'em."

Harry knows he's close, he's been with Louis enough times to pick out the signs. He takes Louis' neglected length in his hand and pumps it in the rhythm with his thrusts.

"I won't stop." Harry says, voice deep and grumbling. "I can't."

Louis doesn't know if he referring to now in this moment or some psychological 'Big Picture'. He'll ask later because now he feels saturated with the build-up and just wants to let go.

When Harry thumbs at the head of Louis' length, pressing the tip of his finger into the slit as he slams one last time into Louis' used and gaping hole, he comes. Harry inside Louis and Louis all over his own tummy.

They stand there, breathing heavily and holding what body parts they could of one another. Harry felt himself softening and Louis was starting to fidget because of sensitivity.

"Do you understand why I can't stop now, Louis?" Harry cupped the side of Louis' face, tracing his
cheekbones with the pad of his thumb.

"I don't think I ever will." Louis sighs and lowers his hand between their heated bodies to extract Harry's length. "But I won't ask again."

Chapter End Notes

the end of chapter fourteen by ss98
Love is what makes two people sit together in the middle of the bench when there is plenty of space around them.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

It's been four days since the kidnapping incident. Five ordinary, boring days of both Harry and Louis' lives. Louis went back to his dorm room and attended his lectures while Harry tried to have the apartment well furnished for when Louis returned this weekend.

There was no denying a steady emptiness that took over a small part of their existences when they weren't in each other's company every single moment. Thanks to their years of independence, it wasn't something that distracted them from what needed to get done at the end of the day.

Returning to a world of work, eat and study on Tuesday was confidence-boosting to Louis because that is where he felt at ease, where everything was black ink and crinkly paper. He could always control the outcome when it came to work.

Harry had dropped him off at the dormitory early Tuesday morning, stopping him just he's about to enter the tall building.

"I'll fetch you on Friday, okay?" Harry put his hands on Louis' waist, rubbing his sides comfortingly. "Right here, wait for me."

Louis nods, feeling for some questionable reason, like they're separating for an upsetting amount of time. He bites his lip and stands on the tips of his shoes to kiss Harry.

Chuckling, Harry tugs on Louis' bottom lip between his teeth and pulls the boy's shirt - Harry's own shirt - over his behind.

"What are you doing?" Louis giggles, taking Harry's hands away from his bum.

"Can't have everyone seeing you." Harry insists, putting his flat palms back there, squeezing just a bit now. "Mine, remember?"

"I remember."

The day itself goes fairly well, until the lecture Louis shares with Harry comes along at the end of the day. It's their only lecture together and they're lucky they even have that, if anything.

Louis has been running behind Niall, running to the dorms to check on his pets, running for lunch at the diner, and finally running from hall to theatre for his lectures. He had an hour's break between all that rushing and really wanted a nap. Two-hour naps at Harry's place is what he desires.

It's Photo-journalism time and Niall just dragged him to an empty row right at the back. "If you want to sleep, now's the time." Niall watches the door as he says it. God forbid the professor walk in while he speaks.

"Nut." Louis mutters and takes out his laptop.
"How long is this one?" Niall asks, sitting down and extracting a protein bar from his bag.

"An hour." Louis brushes his hair back and Niall offers him half of the bar to eat. "Thanks."

Harry walks in just two minutes before the lecturer can, and doesn't mind standing at the door until he spots Louis hidden by the dim lighting at the back. Louis notices how tense he appears, stiff and set jaw with his cheeks hollowed, glimpses of his - nicknamed by Louis himself - angry vein peeking through the skin where Louis' amateur love bite still stood proudly.

He's carrying one bag and takes two steps at a time as he jogs over to Louis' seat, loosening his tight demeanour when Louis smiles up at him.

"Hi." Louis pushes Niall with several nudges so Harry has place to sit next to the isle.

"Hello, darling." Harry immediately goes for Louis' neck, kissing it chastely in greeting.

Louis clears his throat and just about keeps his blush at bay. "How was your Tuesday thus far?"

"Thus far? Deplorable." Harry sighs cracks his neck.

"Aw." Louis frowns. "How so?"

"No need to lament." Harry laughs under his breath, taking Louis' hand in his and kissing the knuckles. "What's done is done."

Louis hums and offers half of his snack to Harry, which gets declined.

"Haven't you eaten?" Harry sounds disapproving. "I told you to eat, Lou."

"I did eat." He immediately defends. "At lunch."

"But you're hungry."

"Not really." Louis swallows the last of his protein bar and shoves the packet in his backpack, to be later disposed of.

The lecturer steps in and Louis makes an embarrassingly audible squeak when Harry grabs his arm and hip with in a strong grip. The grasp he has is almost ticklish but Louis' already gotten one puzzled look from the other hundred or so students, and doesn't require another.

He's pulled gracefully onto Harry's lap while Niall was bending over the other side of the desk, and scowls at the man for doing so.

"Shh." Harry pinches his thigh and angles his body towards the professor. "Pay attention."

That's how that class went everyday for the rest of the week. Louis sitting on Harry's lap - which he preferred even when he was in his other classes without Harry - whilst paying attention to the lesson at hand. Harry was very distracting but scolded Louis for actually getting distracted.

On Wednesday Louis got a call from his dance instructor informing him that he's in the running with three others for a solo when their show comes up. He was ecstatic and promised to join a gym to keep up the good work as soon as he could. He planned to tell Harry over the weekend because all through the week he was too swamped to do anything.

They'd gotten six assessments this week alone, all due at the end of the month, and an offer for a field trip to Seattle for February. Harry and he were both in that class and had to discuss what their
It's Friday and Louis' first day due at the Virgin Active Gym, when the time comes it will be five in the afternoon. He wakes up at two and makes a trip to the kitchen downstairs to make a steaming cup of Rooibos before returning to his work in the same room as a snoring Niall. It didn't bother him anymore because he sat by the opened window, admiring the drizzle and breeze as he plugged his earphones in.

Two of his six major assessments were completed and he filed them away in a secret drawer next to his pets' cages. Bolg liked to roam and would bump Louis' foot until he was picked up and got some attention. Bundy slept all day and ran on his wheel all night.

"Good morning." Louis smiled at the tortoise that just collided with his ankle. "You need some outside time, don't you?"

It's true that everyone just needed some getaway time so Louis' dorm organised a trip to the beach. Yet another thing Louis had to tell Harry about because he simply could not let the guys down again. Although the last time wasn't his fault, nobody knew the truth and it would stay that way.

A few forgotten posters went up in memory of the dead gang member and missing flyers for the ones who haven't been found yet, but that was it.

Louis kept Bolg on his lap until he absolutely had to shower and prepare for his last day of the week. He showered, dressed in chinos and a T-shirt, then got to packing his gym and weekend bag. Harry asked him to pack one for his two-day stay just in case he got sick of wearing oversized clothing that he could trip on.

"Is the bathroom empty?" Niall asks when Louis sits down on the bed with his phone. "Yup. Go before the others start waking up."

Niall left in a hurry and Louis laughed at him for acting like a maniac. He texted Harry, informing him of the delay because of gym and received a phone call instead.

"Hi." Louis moves the speaker away from his mouth when he yawns.

"Hi to you too." Harry's smirking, Louis can hear it.

"You got my text, did you?"

"That's why I'm calling." Harry sobers. "You're joining the gym?"

"Yeah." Louis brings his knees up to his chest. "I am."

"What time is your session?"

"Five. I'll probably be done by seven or so."

"Alright. Would you mind some company?"

"To the gym?"

Harry makes a positive grunt. "Would you like that?"

Louis thinks about it, and the memory of Harry inviting him to watch one of his boxing matches back in Middleton comes sliding back. It's a great idea since the previous intention was anger
management.

"I do," Louis brightens, smiling in his words.

"We'll go together then." Harry proclaims. "What time's your last lecture today?"

"Three to four." Louis' shoulders sag at the announced knowledge.

"My poor baby." Harry cooes sympathetically. "You've got quite a day ahead of you."

Closing his eyes, Louis leans back against the wall and suppresses his smile by biting his lip. "It sucks."

Harry laughs and the phone line rustles because he's shaking his head. "Did you eat yet?"

"I had tea."


"I will. I promise."

"Good boy. I finish up on campus at two so maybe after gym we'll go watch that move you missed last weekend."

Louis could kiss Harry through the phone. He forgot about the movie and the last thing he expected was for Harry to remember it.

"Really?" Louis' grinning when Niall walks in and gets a baffled look from the boy in his towel. "If you'd like to accompany me, that is."

"I would." Louis' working on keeping his voice level and ignores Niall's ridiculous hand motions. "I definitely would."

"What's distracting you?"

Louis stops laughing at the apparent funny face Niall's making to accomplish that very purpose. "Hmm?"

"Louis?" Harry tries again, that aggravated edge showing in his voice as he tries to get Louis' attention again. He hated not physically being there with Louis.

"I'm sorry." Louis apologises after hurling a pillow at Niall's face. "Niall's uh...distracting me."

"I know." Harry's voice is dripping with livid rejection, and he stops walking.

"No!" Louis struggles to pick up the right word. "He just came out of the bathroom and- damn- um...I meant that he's just......being silly."

Harry grips the to-go cup he bough for Louis from Starbucks with such tense strength that it not only spills and gets crushed, but the tough cardboard tears. He wasn't even standing near a bin. "Stop this." Harry snaps, glaring at everyone who walks by him.

Niall leaves the room cackling like a delusional idiot and just about dodges the object Louis throws at his back. Louis chews the inside of his cheek nervously. He knew he made Harry mad and that was not how he saw this conversation going. Deciding to pull out the only reinforcement he has - and one that he gets nervous about using - he speaks again.
"I'm sorry." Louis whispers as a secret into the speaker. "I really am, Daddy."

He hears Harry exhale, a lot calmer and takes this as a win. "I know, baby."

"Can we still go to the movies?"

"Yes."

"Are you cross with me now? I didn't mean to do that. Please don't-"

"I'm not angry, Louis."

"But you're calling me Louis. You never call me Louis."

"It is on your birth certificate, is it not?"


"Don't cry, Louis." Harry sighs heavily, fingers raking through his untidy morning hair.

"Sorry." Louis sucks in a deep breath and tries not to let it hurt him again that Harry still used his full name.

"Okay now?"

Louis nods then realises Harry can't see him doing that. "Y-Yeah."

"I wish I was there with you."

Smiling, Louis grips the phone tighter. Maybe Harry really wasn't angry because he wanted to see Louis right now, but it also could be for being stupid and now he's going to receive a punishment. "What for?" Louis asked softly, afraid.

"I haven't shared a bed with you for four consecutive nights. It's because I miss you."

"I miss you too."

Harry hears that and knows he can never truly be angry at his Louis because it was mostly mistakes the boy made, not really knowing how restrictions worked. He can't be so harsh on him, so he decides that another trip to Starbucks to refresh Harry's surprise breakfast for Louis won't do anyone any harm.

"I love you, darling." Harry feels like he needs to keep saying it, remind them both for the next two days.

Louis cracks a grin and answers. "I know, Daddy. Thank you."

"Will you do me a favour now, Lou?"

"Aha." Louis chewing his thumb nail, not biting it to a stub but merely latching his teeth onto it. "Can you go in a bit early today?"

Louis' eyebrows knit together above the bridge of his nose. "Um..."

"Do you know where I park the Dodge?"

"Yes." Harry always parked in the same spot, and if someone already took it then it was the one
next to it.

"Meet me there in half an hour, okay? Don't eat breakfast just yet."

"Okay. I promise."

It was Harry's turn because he finally got to the front of the building queue again. "Okay what?"

"Okay, Daddy."

Harry smiles in satisfaction and holds a finger up to the impatient man taking orders. "I have to go now, darling. I love you and don't forget your promise."

When Harry pulls into the pebbled parking lot, it's just five minutes until Louis' due to be there too. After he destroyed a perfectly good coffee beverage, he felt like he owed both himself and Louis a better breakfast. It would be half apology to Louis and half a treat for them both.

As he looks at the back seat at all the food, he thinks that maybe he went overboard. There's a bacon and gouda sandwich, double-smoked bacon and something sandwich, a double chocolate frappuccino with caramel of the same kind, some flourless chocolate cookies and Greek yogurt with raspberry. If this doesn't shout 'Forgive Me!' then Harry doesn't know what does.

Louis is running across the lot of the gathered dorms but miraculously reaches the Dodge in time. He only brought his book bag just in case this rendezvous ran over his schedule. Despite the chill, Harry stood leaning against his vehicle with a heavy jacket on. He raised his eyes comically at Louis when the boy walks up to him.

"Did you run all that way, Lou?" Harry pulls Louis against his chest, arms secured around his middle, and kisses his forehead.

"I jogged." Louis corrected, still out of breath.

"My poor darling." Harry kisses Louis' cold lips and tightens his firm grip on Louis' behind through his jeans. "You're cold too."

He hauls Louis into his arms, chuckling at the surprised squeal Louis makes as if he were falling, and slides him into the warm back-seat after opening the door.

"What's this?" Louis' stunning blue, blue eyes widen at the sight of so much - expensive - food.

"Breakfast." Harry gets in the back-seat opposite to him.

"All this is breakfast?" Louis sheds his jacket and sits back against the door, legs crossed on the wide leather seat.

"I thought it would better than whatever you eat during the week in that place."

Louis humbly accepts his sandwich. "Don't diss campus food, Haz. I happen to love scrambled eggs every morning with the occasional slice of stale bread for toast."

Harry isn't sure if it's a joke or not, but it bothers him both ways that Louis has such depressing meals for breakfast. He wouldn't allow that at his place, if Louis would just say yes.

"Harry?" Louis' happy expression falls all at once when Harry jumps out of the car, slamming his
door soundly as he exits. "What did I......-"

He follows Harry's path around the back of the car and when he comes up behind Louis, he can't turn his head at that angle. As a result, the door supporting his back is opened but a firm hand holds him up.

"Stand up." Harry instructs, the timbre of order in his voice.

Louis doesn't understand how he's supposed to do that in a car but gets on his feet in a kind of crouched position that projects his behind a little too much for his liking. Harry's sliding into the seat Louis once occupied, and grabs Louis' hips to set the confused boy down on his lap.

"Why'd you do that?" Louis puts an arm around Harry's shoulders and wiggles around until he's comfortable.

The soft glow of the car's light provides them with a cool atmosphere. Outside it was still too early and dull so it felt like they'd driven to a forest somewhere where no one else existed.

"It's better this way." Harry presses his forehead against Louis' temple and kisses his cheek. "Don't you agree?"

"I agree." Louis is done protecting his warm food from a fatal blow, and decides to actually eat before hunger pains struck. "And thank you."

"For this?"

Louis nods, swallows and kisses Harry's lips so the traces of an oily bite are pressed to his mouth. "Best breakfast ever."

"What about my pancakes?" Harry's tongue darts out to wet his lips and his teeth rake up the taste Louis left behind.

"You're right." Louis covers his mouth with his free hand to finish chewing. "If this included your pancakes then it would be the best breakfast ever."

Harry laughs and falls silent to admire Louis' free-willed form, not bound by any traitorous outbursts. He brushes the corner of Louis' mouth to pick up some of the misplaced mayonnaise and winks at Louis said male gawks at the way he licks his thumb afterwards.

"Yum." Harry captures Louis' lips with his own for a wet kiss. "Always better when it comes from you."

"Yours truly." Louis teases and gets another sloppy kiss on the mouth.

"Let's finish what we started, shall we?"

Harry meant finishing up all the food and Louis was all the more willing to oblige. They had their respective beverages however Louis got curious and stole several sips from Harry's caramel drink while Harry let him have his way.

Thinking about his first encounter with Louis, just how horribly awkward it was between them for weeks before either plucked up the courage to bloody do something, Harry bravely messes Louis' chin and nose with fresh cream. He was originally aiming for just his cheek but Louis wasn't one to sit still.
"Really?" Louis kicked off his shoes and slid his chilly feet under Harry's thighs on either side of him.

Harry hums and kisses away the white foam, pulling back to chuckle at the way Louis scrunched up his face. "Do I disgust you that much?"

"I'm all sticky now." Louis complains.

"No you're not." Harry uses a tissue to dramatically wipe away any damp remnants from Louis' face before drawing him into a warm embrace against his chest.

They end up using Louis' phone - he may not have a social standing at all but he still surfed the trends on occasion - to look at funny things online. It was unconventional, Harry will admit, but it was still comfortable and if it meant sacrificing enough space to hear Louis' laugh and witness his eyes crinkle at the corners then sue him.

"I don't get it." Harry takes the device to study the image again.

Louis' not surprised, Harry hasn't understood twelve out of near forty hilarious pictures he's shown him. He's also wondering why he didn't understand.

"I don't understand why they're called Vines. Vines are quite long, aren't they?" Harry's frowning at himself as he tries to grasp the concept.

"I feel like I'm sharing a yogurt cup with a robot." Louis exhales as a few more sunlight rays cut through the dark window tint.

"The twenty-first century makes little to no sense."

"I'd say that's the point but that's insulting to us all."

Louis convinces Harry to switch the radio on and listen to music genres outside his comfort zone. It just so happens that Harry takes to Indie Pop/Rock while Louis cringes at the category.

"Hippie."

"Excuse me?" Harry blinks at Louis in confusion.

"Hippie. It's what people who listen to Indie music are called."

"Really? There's a term for that?"

"Think so." Louis shrugs as the song changes to a more familiar one. "I like this song."

That's how another thirty minutes is wasted, listening to early morning music broadcasts and trying not to fall asleep. Once they're in this position, they never want to move.

"I never asked but-" Harry combs Louis' fringe aside. ",what are you doing about the Seattle trip?"

"I'd like to go." Louis worries his bottom lip. "I've never been there and even if it is for assessment purposes, I think it'll be fun."

"It could be." Harry thinks for a moment. "Today's the deadline for payments, yes?"

"Yeah." Louis internally deflates at the thought of giving up a portion of his savings for this trip but holds up his spirits physically so Harry won't notice. "I think so."
"What about this gym idea? Why'd you decide to go?"

"Oh. Eve called me and said I could have a solo for our show in a few months so I need to stay in shape."

"You are in shape, love." Harry parts his plump lips the way he does when he wants a kiss from Louis but never wants to ask. "I don't want this to take over your life and end up harming you, okay? Be careful."

Louis nods and even with him know exactly where Harry's coming from, he's a little bit annoyed that he's being told that like he's someone who doesn't already know.

He forgets that irritation and tilts his head when he notices the oddly saddened expression Harry's wearing. He balls up the wrapper from the flourless chocolate cookie in his hands and puts it in the brown paper bag for dirt.

He takes a bite and holds the remaining half to Harry's lips, which is immediately accepted and Harry even nibbles on his fingers out of habit.

"What's wrong?" Louis enquires delicately.

Harry hesitates but it doesn't last. "I wish......I wish for something I know can never happen."

Louis turns to be astride Harry's lap, one raised eyebrow of curiosity, and leans forward. "Tell me." "I wish I could let you go."

Not at all expecting that answer, Louis draws away and parts his lips. "Why?"

"Because it's not fair." Harry pulls Louis closer, ignoring the boy's flinches and resistance. "It really isn't."

"What......What did I do?" Louis feels the guilt crash down on him. He's done something and now Harry doesn't want him.

"No, no darling." Harry shakes his head and secures the sides of Louis' face in his hands. "It's unfair to you."

"What's unfair?"

"That......I didn't let you choose. I wish I knew how to quit you."

It was a quote and Louis knew where it came from, but didn't say anything.

"I forced you into being with me and only now do I see how cruel that was." Harry continued.

"It wasn't cruel." Louis puts his hands over Harry's, not bothered with wondering just how small they looked like that.

"Yes it was."

"Haz." Louis shifts Harry's hands from his face to around his back, and shifts closer to tilt Harry's chin up. "You're underestimating me, you know. I could have left if I really wanted to."

"And you did." Harry rubs circles into Louis' tummy with his thumbs. "I should have left you alone."
"I made a split decision when I left, not thinking about anyone except myself."

"You were justified in doing that."

"Regardless, I'm still......really happy that you found me again."

Shaking his head and laughing, Harry's eyes seem to sparkle. "Didn't seem that way."

"Not at first, no." Louis giggles, being shuffled when Harry corrects his seating and straightens his back.

"I don't blame you."

"Hey." Extending his fingers, Louis pushes Harry's hair away from his eyes. "What brought all this on now?"

"I don't know. Wanted you to hear that I know you deserve better."

"But you're not going anywhere."

"Good to know." Louis shivers when Harry's cold hands travel too far North on his body. "I don't need any distractions while I'm eating."

"Don't let me distract you then."

Harry breaks their eye contact to begin slowly lifting Louis' shirt. He gets over Louis' tummy and kisses the spot of skin most convenient, then moves up to between his ribs right on the sternum. He felt the fine hairs tickle the tip of his nose and Harry's chest rumbled at the pleasant feel of Louis carding through his hair.

"You're so warm." Harry buries his face in Louis' torso, bringing the boy's arms around his shoulders and lightly sucking at the skin. "So, so beautiful, princess."

"Harry." Louis' eyes fluttered shut and he moaned without warning when Harry's lips latched onto his nipple.

"My Louis." Harry growled, lacing their fingers together and holding Louis still as he rocked his hips up. "Mine."

"Yours." Louis consented breathlessly. "All yours."

Harry tugged on Louis' nipple with his teeth and turned the dusky skin pink with attention. Sensitive nipples has always been a trait of Louis' and he was never a fan of anything getting too close to his chest. It hurt sometimes, almost all the times before now because Harry knew how to make him feel good.

"I can't fuck you here." Harry rolled their hips together more fiercely. "But fuck do I want to."

"Stop." Louis' head rolled back onto the head rest of the front passenger seat, and he felt his pants grow too tight for comfort.

"No." Harry slapped Louis through his jeans at the back. "Kiss me."

Louis brings his lips down to Harry's and rubs their clothed erections together until they're both panting into each others' mouths. Louis pulls on Harry's hair and his whines are swallowed by Harry's greed. His right nipple is granted Harry's mouth, while the other hardens inexplicably from
the ordinary air blowing against the wet skin.

Wailing when Harry's teeth roughly close around the swollen nub, Louis doesn't know whether to give in or flee. It hurt but it was also the kind of hurt that put him on cloud nine.

"Your pants." Harry squeezes his fingers into Louis' pants, tugging repeatedly on the fabric. "Take it off."

Louis all too quick to obey, his gaze falls to the emptiness surrounding them through the back window as Harry draws his trousers down past his knees. He holds onto the headrest with blunt nails digging into the tough material as Harry reels him in. The older man's face is hidden in Louis' abdomen as his palms roam over smooth planes of soft skin, kneading some places and rubbing in others.

"Condom." Louis manages to breathe out, finally bringing his eyes back to just them. Harry's arms tighten in an almost lethal fashion around Louis' middle, sinking his teeth into Louis' skin above his belly button.

"Don't want to make a mess." Louis reminds him, also clearly remembering Harry saying they couldn't do this now. Oh well.

"Fuck that." Harry mutters selfishly, pushing everything off the seat and not bothering about any spills. "I can't make you mine with a bloody condom."

"Already yours." Louis' back hits the seat when Harry drops him, hastily climbing over him with his belt undone and pants down to his thighs.

Harry smiles down at him, the green of his eyes are blown wide and desperate. Louis tries to touch him, but Harry pins his hands to his sides and filthily grinds his hips against Louis'. The bare friction causes Louis' neck to strain as he tilts his head back and his jaw slackens.

"Love you."

Harry picks Louis' legs up by the backs of his thighs, placing Louis' own hands there to keep them poised. Indiscreetly, Harry takes the lube from the glove compartment and sets it down on Louis' chest.

Louis sees that it's flavoured and can't stick his soft laughter even in the midst of such a seriously heated moment. "Very Berry?"

Shrugging, Harry dismisses Louis amusement and takes back the Durex bottle. Their mouths unite as the song playing changes from the pointless conversation of two hosts to Clean Bandit featuring Jess Glynne.

"Shh." Harry keeps Louis' bottom lip captured between his lips as he slips a lubed finger into him. "Don't need anyone listening in."

Louis couldn't agree more, it would be mortifying to walk out there knowing everyone was aware of what they were doing inside this monster of a vehicle.

"Harry." Louis squeaks when the first finger gets a partner. "Harry please."

"Ask nicely, princess." Harry scolds by lightly slapping the side of Louis' bare thigh.

Louis' head lolls to the side, his sweaty cheek pressed to the seat as Harry sinks into him carefully.
He controls his breathing when Harry starts to move slowly, keeping their fingers knotted together on either side of Louis' head. He closes his eyes from staring at the back of the driver's seat when Harry starts kissing his neck, sucking on the skin teasingly as he went.

When his hands are freed, Louis starts leaving angry red lines down Harry's tough and muscular back. It almost feels like he's doing absolutely nothing, also knowing that Harry can't physically feel the scratches. They go slow for the first time since they've been together, and it feels almost like a special occasion.

"Let's play hookie today." Louis suggests, out of breath once they'd both climaxed and Harry's still inside him.

Harry grunts in amusement and his fingers splay out across Louis' hips. "You already know my answer to that."

"Worth a shot, I think."

Shaking his head amusedly, Harry sits up and pats Louis' behind firmly. "Up now. The day awaits." "I never heard that one before," Louis makes no move except to bend his knees in the air, effectively caging Harry between them.

"Doubt thou the stars are fire; Doubt that the sun doth move; Doubt truth to be a liar; But never doubt I love." Harry's eyes lock with Louis as he recites the quote from memory.

He watches the way Louis' smile widens and his eyes soften in delight and flattery. "Hamlet."

"Well done, darling." Louis is awarded with half of the last chewy cookie left. "Guess this one more and I'll reward you."

"I want another cookie if I get it right."

"Alright then." Harry laughs. "Moonlight drowns out all but the brightest stars."

Louis has to think a while for this one, and uses that time to chew and swallow the biscuit in his mouth.

"I'll give you a hint. Another quote." Harry says. "I don't know half of you half as well as I should like; and I like less than half of you half as well as you deserve."

Louis' laughing at his silly inability to not guess the right answer the first time around. "Lord of the Rings was the first and Bilbo said the second."

"Correct. You'll get your cookie when I see you next."

"How do you memorise such confusing sayings?"

"I grew up having too much time on my hands and not enough things to do." Harry confesses, then goes for a change of subject. "I can't honestly say I didn't see breakfast going this way."

Louis giggled before separating their bodies. "I need to change my clothes now because of you. Was that part of your evil plan too?"

"Indeed. What am I if not thorough?"

Louis gasps and fails to hide the tint anew in his cheeks.
"There's no need to change everything." Harry says while clearing his throat. "Use this."

He hands Louis a clean shirt from the seat behind the middle one, one that's plenty sizes too big for the boy.

"I'm going to drown in this." Louis holds up the item of clothing. "And it's red."

"Hush." Harry puts Louis on the seat off his lap.

Louis neatens his appearance and puts Harry's red and black plaid shirt on after removing his own one. It hides his hands until he folds the sleeves.

"I'll see you after classes then?" Louis has his hand on the handle, book bag in the other.

"Can I see something before you run off?" Harry holds onto Louis' wrist when he tries to open the door.

"What's there to see?" Louis stays put and waits.

Harry reopens Louis' chinos zipper and this time yanks the stubborn material down to mid-thigh. Louis doesn't fight but he sits back and let's Harry's familiar calloused hands explore the newly exposed skin.

Harry uses his apt fingers to trace his favourite spot on Louis' body, the spot he always took a while longer to treat tenderly and with care. He smiles at his own name engraved in Louis' inner thigh, the lines now slightly pink but still very much there.

"Prettiest thing." Harry presses his thumbs into the mark and rubs gently.

Louis listens to the new cars starting to pull into vacant parking spots around them, and gets antsy. He takes Harry's hands in his and removes it from between his legs.

"Later." Louis kisses Harry's forehead as he buttons himself up again.

"We don't have any lectures together today-" Harry straightens himself up too. "-so I'll see you outside your dormitory at four thirty?"

"Deal." Louis opens the car door and inhales sharply at the rush of cold breeze. "Laters."

"Bye, baby." Harry let's Louis jump off.

Louis' just made it to his lecture before the teacher walks in, looking at him strangely until he offers them a salute and rushes to his seat beside Niall.

"Try to leave a note next time." Niall is chewing something that smells like strawberry.

Louis' cheeks heat up involuntarily. "Sorry."

"Almost sent everyone out looking for you, you know."

"No you didn't." Louis laughs, rolling his eyes at his friend's dramatisation.

"Oh shut up. With those kids missing and one dead, we're not taking any chances."

They don't speak for the rest of the lecture, and when it's over they sprint to the elevators before they have to take the stairs. Niall manages to get them a spot before it's too crowded. They
eventually catch a break after their third lecture, opting to spend it sprawled out across the courtyard lawn. Niall sprawled out, Louis' lying on his front with his nose in a book. He's too comfortable to alter his position because of the sun beating down on his back.

"Whatya reading?" Niall rolls onto his back next to Louis, booming voice and all.

"Hmm." Louis holds the sleeve of Harry's shirt with his thumb and when he uses it to support his head, he can catch the man's scent everywhere.

"Don't know that one."

"Shut up, Niall." Louis pushes him lightly. "It's-

"It's not John Green, is it?"

"No. George R. R. Martin."

"Pervert." Niall sidles up next to him and takes one half of the book in his hand. "Where'd you get this?"

"Library. You can use your student card for more than food, you know."

"Outrageous." Niall flops onto his back again lazily and sighs. "Talk to me, Lou."

"I really want to read."

"I'm more important."

"You're right." Louis looks at Niall briefly. "How was your day, Niall dear?"

"I got a blood transfusion."

"Jackass." Louis bursts into laughter. "You did not."

"No but I hear a truck's coming for blood donations next week."

"Interesting."

"Yes, Louis I plan on giving them blood."

"Huh?" Louis blinks to adjust his eyes from reading line after line when he glances at Niall. "Good talk. You've made me hungry."

"Me too." Louis yawns, setting the book down and closing his eyes. "I'm sick of that diner."

"There's a Subway about five minutes from campus." Niall suggests hopefully.

"Let's go. How much time do we have?"

"Give or take an hour before our last lecture of the day."

Louis nods and puts his novel into his bag, fishing out his phone from the side pouch to text Harry.

To: Harry

Niall and I are going to Subway now for lunch xx

Much as he expected, Louis gets a phone call rather than a test response. He ignores Niall's laugh
and answers. "Hi."

"Which Subway?" Harry asks immediately, Louis' too accustomed to his manner for surprise.

"Five minutes from campus."

There's silence for two minutes while Niall stands outside the college gates waiting for Louis' decision.

"Go but don't talk to anyone, understand?" Harry finally says, making Louis grin.

"What about-"

"Niall doesn't count." Harry's smirk is heard through his interruption. "Are you still wearing my shirt?"

"Yeah." Louis starts walking again with Niall next to him. "Don't think I'll give it back now."

"Keep it then. Be safe now, darling. I love you." Harry does Louis a favour by hanging up before he can answer.

Louis places his order first and finds a table under Subway's Employee of the Month frame, while Niall handles his. Louis digs in as soon as Niall's sitting.

"Slow down. It ain't running away." Niall mocks him, sipping Louis' lemon water.

"What'd you get?" Louis asks, covering his mouth out of habit.

"Meat balls."

"Can I have some?"

"No." Niall scoffs. "Is that even a question?"

"Don't be mean."

"You've never shared anything with me."

"You still take everything."

"Fine."

Louis takes a bite of Niall's sub and decides he doesn't like it, but swallows anyway.

"So.....-" Niall observes how Louis finished his food for the first time before him.

"So?"

"Who are you always on the phone with?"

"A friend."

"I'm your friend and you hate phoning me."

"I don't phone him, he calls me."

"Is it that dude I found you with last week?"
Louis remembers how Harry spent the night at their dorm and Niall probably got back to see them fast asleep. "Yeah."

"Wasn't that the new kid?"

"This isn't high school, Ni."

"Yeah. It's more expensive here."

"So have you been spending your free minutes on anybody?"

Niall laughs loudly with a squashed ball of paper in his hand. "Nope."

"Why not?"

"Don't know." Niall shrugs. "No time?"

"That's ridiculous. What's the real reason?"

"Okay fine, I did ask someone to accompany me to a coffee date after he spilt his disgusting chai tea all over me."

Louis lights up at this news and kicks Niall's shin when he stops talking. "And then?"

"Well it didn't happen yet!" Niall rubs his leg. "I only asked him this morning while you did your disappearing act."

"Oh." Louis blushes. "So when's the date?"

"Not a date."

"That's what I said. When is it?"

"Tomorrow. Hoping to ask him to come to the beach with us."

"I don't think he'll say no. No one can say no to you, Ni."

"You say no."

"I'm special."

"You certainly- Ouch!"

They take a cab back to campus, splitting the bill when they finally arrive after a minute-long trip. Making it in time for their last lecture, Louis discovers that Niall bought a pre-packaged muffin from Subway as well and demands that he shares it - more like politely asks.

At the end of the day, Niall bumps into someone - the coffee date - on his way out and Louis abandons him to return to the dorm. He falls face-first onto his mattress after greeting his pets and toeing off his shoes.

His packed bags are waiting for him by the door, and now he decides to add all the textbooks he'll be needing to the lot as well. At 15h45 he finally moves, not remembering having fallen asleep, and sluggishly moves to get all his stuff on his back.

He walks outside and sets everything on the floor before the waiting period commences.
Parties are about to begin, celebrating the start to a well-deserved weekend. His watch reads 16h02 and the parking lot is still empty, void of anyone except those rolling into party venues.

He's just about to sit on his bags when his phone buzzes and the infamous Dodge pulls up in front of him. Louis doesn't even wait for Harry to get out before he's stepping forward.

"I'm late." Is the first thing out Harry's mouth. "I'm sorry, Lou."

Louis actually laughs at the man's panic. "You're five minutes late. It's not the end of the world."

"You shouldn't have been waiting." Harry picks up Louis' bags for him and kisses him repeatedly on the lips.

"It's okay."

"Won't happen again. Promise." Harry helps him into the front passenger seat and puts his bags in the back before getting in. "How was your lunch off-campus?"

"Filling." Louis replies, hand on his tummy. "Meat balls aren't nice."

"Well, I could have told you that darling." Harry chuckles, taking Louis' hand in his and kissing away the icy feel of his fingertips.

The gym is about a twenty-five minute drive from campus, and because Louis has yoga while Harry's seeing his personal trainer they must part ways once again.

"Text me when you're done with everything." Harry squeezes Louis' hand and kisses his forehead. Louis promises to do so before rushing down the echoing halls to the change rooms. He probably should have done this in the car or beforehand. Once dressed in specially purchased gym clothing - his favourite football team's jersey and slacks - he enters the class meant for him.

It takes forty minutes before Louis and the others are released to go about their business again. Louis seems to be the only one using a guiding brochure and he really couldn't care about snide remarks right now, so he goes up to the fitness training level and gets on the treadmill with his headphones.

"Hi." Someone to his left is speaking, and probably to him.

He looks over at them and smiles politely, not letting up his pace. "Hey."

It's a brunette woman with a lovely smile and outstandingly white teeth. "I'm Bridget."

"Louis." They shake hands over the machines' handles.

"You were next to me in yoga class earlier."

"Oh." Louis glances outside before checking the monitor. "Sorry I'm not very good at socialising."

"I understand." She nods. "Did you come by yourself?"

"No, I'm with my boyfriend."

No smile faltering from her. "Is he on this floor too?"

Louis shakes his head. "He has a personal trainer."
"Oh, that's nice. It's good to have someone to train with."

"I'll say." Louis smiles.

"How long have you been using this gym?"

"First day, unfortunately. You?"

"Since I moved here a couple years back. I can show you around until you get the hang of it, if you want."

"Sure. Thanks."

By six in the evening when the panoramic window he's stationed at reveals a curtain of black, he gets off the treadmill with Bridget and stop at a special club called The Grid. It looks positively terrifying to Louis, but Bridget drags him to a place right at the back. Unfortunately, sitting at the back won't get you less attention here because there are six trainers moving through the rows. "Let's go grab something to drink." Bridget proposes since they've both finished their waters. He texts Harry and gets an answer to meet him at the lowest level before they left, that's where Harry's training. With a smoothie from the health bar - everything gets put on his membership card - he bids Bridget goodbye and takes the elevator down to the workout dungeons.

It's a fairly easy place to manoeuvre in. Louis takes the only path available - a hallways with noises running up the ramp - to a polished glass door. He steps inside and the initial smells are wax, deodorant and rust. He can't really explain the last one.

In the middle of the room is a giant boxing ring. It could be regular sized but to Louis, it's massive. At first, he doesn't see Harry but the shouts of encouragement and curses at a slight defeat, belongs to a beefy man leaning over the edge. He's on the side of one of the two males in the ring, and it doesn't make locating Harry any harder.

One of the two fighters - it's legally termed boxing - has a protective helmet on while the other doesn't. It isn't difficult to guess who is who after that. Harry's not wearing a shirt and Louis can observe how the sweat rolls off him in a tumble easily enough. He has white cloth wrapped around his knuckles and running shoes on paired with old pants.

There's a dangerous gleam in his eye that only Louis seems to take note of, as he's seen it on many occasions prior to this. He clutches his bag strap a little tighter when Harry takes a swing at his opponent and comes out triumphant when the other man falls. Louis flinches at the blow, as it seemed excessively painful with Harry's bare knuckles in contact with someone's exposed face.

"Don't know why I bothered with my previous clients before you, Harry." The - coach? - says loud and proud, to which Harry shrugs him off when he tries to clasp his shoulder. "Already got a groupie, I think."

Harry turns his head and Louis suddenly remembers that he's standing at the doorway with no purpose. He gives Harry a disgracefully small wave before Harry himself start moving towards him.

"Ready to go?" Harry's wiping his neck with a white towel and Louis wonders why he never buys any other colour towels.

Louis nods, fighting his most ridiculous desire to admire Harry just one more time like this. He seemed to become some kind of epiphereal being with hidden black tattoos and a deep voice. Harry was sin on legs. Who knew sweat could be attractive?
"You don't seem tired." Harry observes, smirking when Louis' cheeks turn bright pink.

"I'm quite tired." Louis replies, yawning for effect.

"My session doesn't end for another thirty minutes." Harry guiltily admits, leaning in for a modest kiss on the lips. "You can use my shower and wait over there."

"You have a personal shower?"

Harry shrugs and picks up his slanted smile again. "On second thought-"

"Nope." Louis shakes his head, frowning at the plain dirty feel he's experiencing.

"No what?"

"I'm not waiting to shower with you."

Harry's arm goes up next to Louis' head, causing him to lean further in with the corner of his mouth turned up. "What's wrong with showering with me?"

"I don't trust you-" Louis presses his back against the wall. "-to not....do stuff."

"We can wait to go home then." Harry captures Louis' chin between his thumb and index finger.

"I'm quite free to do anything I like there with you."

"Not tonight, Haz." Louis gets fidgety when Harry's lips press against his throat. "I'm really tired and you owe me a cookie. Several of them."

Harry seals Louis' lips with his own, cupping both sides of the boy's face and concentrating on deepening the kiss. Louis' fingers curl against Harry's chest and around the large cup in his dainty hand.

"Harry, you horny bastard!" A rough, rude voice interrupts them just as Harry sucks Louis' lip until it's pink and raw.

There's a rumble so powerful in Harry's chest that Louis feels it travel in vibrations through their shirts.

"Go finish up, Haz." Louis encourages. "Make me proud."

Harry offers his a lopsided grin that really exposed his youthful roots before leading Louis over to a high table against the wall.

"Sit." Harry lifted him onto the hard surface. "Don't move. Don't-"

"Talk to anyone. Got it." Louis wiggled left and right until his back was against the wall and he crossed his legs.

"Why'd you have to go that far back? How am I supposed to take my good luck kiss now?"

Louis rolls his eyes and plants one chaste kiss on Harry's cheek. It seems to work because Harry jogs back over to the ring right after.

Sitting back again, Louis puts his gym bag across his lap and scrunches up his nose at the distasteful feeling of damp skin and hair because of a workout. He didn't want to sit here for the next thirty minutes more still in his own dirty state.
Maybe he'd have enough time to shower upstairs then get back here. He wishes he'd thought of doing that in the first place. Part of him was just too eager to see Harry, and threw logic out the window.

So after informing Harry by whispering in his ear, Louis takes the elevator - he feels it's a bit ironic to have in a fitness establishment - up to the showers. It was a quick shower and he left his hair wet afterwards, still planning to have a proper round when he got to the apartment.

Louis found Harry finishing up when he got back, just slipping through the thick ropes of the ring with a towel around his neck. Harry sees him and smiles, taking Louis' hand firmly in his grasp as soon as they're close enough.

"Come with me to the showers." Harry tugs on Louis' arm twice until the boy takes heed of his request.

"Okay." Louis follows dutifully beside Harry under his heavy arm.

Harry goes to his locker that's separated from the others, positioned next to a single shower that's behind all the others.

"Do you treasure privacy that much?" Louis asks casually, letting Harry take his bag and dump it on a bench.

"I treasure something else much more." Harry grabs Louis' hips and crashes his lips against the boy's, rendering him surprised and sputtering.

Louis' back is flush against the wall, his arms wound around Harry's neck and his head tilted to deepen the kiss. The backs of his thighs are gripped mercilessly, and yanked upwards to wrap around Harry's slim waist.

As Louis starts to feel the embers of an abandoned fire light up again, Harry releases him all at once.

"Wait here for me, darling." Harry's smirking. Bloody smirking, Louis glares at him with crossed arms.

Reaching the apartment meant getting there at just past eight, when Louis' dead on his legs and Harry's walking close behind to catch him if he swayed. Louis insisted he wasn't that dramatic or weak.

The loft is neatly organised, as opposed to how it was last weekend. The TV is hooked up between two grand glass windows that ran around the apartment on a cement pillar. The kitchen was fully stocked with food and cutlery, even the walk-in closet was properly organised.

"Shower, baby?" Harry asks, picking Louis up off the ground. "A proper one this time." Louis finds that Harry remembered exactly what shampoo brand he uses, and even got lighter scented soap just for him. He feels smug and could purr from satisfaction when Harry's hands spread the aloe vera foam to every part of his body.

"Where's my cookie?" They're dressed for bed, except they won't be going to bed anytime soon, when Louis asks this.

"Oh yes." Harry bites his lip when he recalls that he meant to stop at the cafe on their way back.
"go get it."

"Harry." Louis laughs. "It's late and you'd be insane to go out just to buy a cookie."

"But it's for you." Harry kisses Louis' forehead. "I'll be back in ten minutes."

"I was joking." Louis tries stopping Harry from shrugging on his jacket. "Don't go."

"Princess." Harry sighs and drops Louis' hand to pick him up off the ground, carry him to the sofa and set him down. "Stay."

"You're crazy." Louis holds Harry's shoulders, keeping their faces an inch apart.

"I believe so."

Harry's lips press against his firmly once before he's gone, leaving Louis to stare at the closed - and soundly locked - front door. He pouts at the commercial on TV and wishes he never opened his mouth.

Ten minutes come and go. Louis settles in under the thick sofa quilt with hotel emblems on it, facing the newest episode of Criminal Minds. Twenty minutes in, and Harry still hasn't gotten back. Unfortunately, Louis let the physical strain on his body overrule and fell asleep on the couch with the quilt kicked aside.

Harry gets back at ten.

He didn't plan on it, and he certainly didn't plan on coming back to Louis with stained fingers and a bodily tremor everytime he moved. He unlocked the door shakily and closed it slowly, fingers of one hand stiff as he dropped his keys and exhaled painfully.

There was a shuffling noise from his couch, and Harry remembered that Louis was here.

The reminder settled the clawing at the inside of his skull and soothed his fears, every single one of them. He stumbled over to the couch and crawled onto it without minding his dirtied state and stained attire.

"Lou." Harry pressed the side of his face to Louis' tummy where it was warm, soft and home.

His bloodied hands were messing Louis, smudging the pale perfection that was Louis' body. He held Louis' waist tightly with rigid fingers, pressing his ear to Louis' chest where his heart beat. Louis always tossed around in his sleep, and once again his shirt has ridden up past his torso. It was almost like he was already making a spot for Harry to hide in.

"Lou." Harry swallowed and spoke louder, he kissed Louis' neck and the boy stirred from Harry's weight on him. "Wake up, Lou."

"'Arry?" Louis didn't open his eyes but he brought a hand up to comb Harry's hair, his nails scratching his scalp lightly. "Is it raining?"

Harry shakes his head, eyes split wide open.

"Why is your hair wet then?"

"Look at me."

Louis sighs, irritable because of his disrupted slumber, and opens his eyes. He still can't see
anything besides Harry's healthy head of hair so he switches on the light of the lamp. He screams when he looks at Harry next.

There's blood. Blood on Harry, on him and even on the couch now. It's splattered across Harry's cheek and smeared on his forehead. His green eyes are depths of black now, an emotion so rare to an angry man that Louis' frightened by it.

"Lou, no." Harry grabs Louis' hands and slots himself between his legs, disallowing Louis to move away. "Shh. I love you. I won't hurt you."

Louis believes him, and that's why he calmed his breathing long enough to speak. "Harry, what happened to you?"

Harry, feeling safe enough with Louis, pulls the boy into his arms and breathes in his scent. It was so calming to a monster that scratched Harry's weakest spots with a hot poker and roared to cause him agony.

"I-I.....your cookie. I went for that." Harry starts explaining, calmed by the feeling of Louis running his hands through his hair. "Cafuné."

"What?"

"What you're doing with my hair, it's called cafuné."

"Okay, Harry. Tell me what happened now." Louis locks his ankles behind Harry's back.

"She kept trying to touch me, Lou." Harry frowned so deeply Louis felt it could hurt his face. "I don't want anyone but you touching me."

Louis stays quiet, one hand clasping Harry's nape and the other continuing the soothing act of playing with his hair.

"I think it was adrenaline." Harry hooks his chin over Louis' shoulder. "When she kept talking like she knew me and wouldn't listen when I told her to go away."

Something was confusing Louis. Why was Harry so shaken about this woman and taking her life? He's been so collected, calculating before.

"Someone saw me, Lou." Harry squeezed his eyes shut and gasped. "They saw what I did to her."

Chapter End Notes

Thats the end of chapter Fifteenth by ss98
I'd stand in the shadows of your heart and tell you I'm not afraid of your dark.

"Someone saw me, Lou." Harry squeezed his eyes shut and gasped. "They saw what I did to her."

*NARRATOR'S POV*

+  

"They saw you?" Louis questions as if Harry's broken confession held no substance. "Who did?"

"I don't know." Harry sighs.

He works on breathing in Louis' sleepy intoxicating scent rather than corrupting his logic with panic. Harry didn't operate that way.

*But he's also never had a witness who got away before either.*

"How bad was it?" Louis asks calmly, fingers not tensing up or stopping the circular rubbing motions against Harry's scalp.

"Was what?"

"The woman."

"I just......hit her."

"How badly?"

Harry knows Louis wants an intelligent answer from him, one that answered the question fully. He shut out the fear and subtle anxiety in favour of crawling between Louis' parted knees and hauling the boy's mass onto his lap. He also brought Louis' face to his neck with a firm but gentle hand, and rubbed Louis' back where each knob of his spine could be felt.

"Badly enough with a broken stove plate that her neck now hangs off her shoulders now."

"So she's dead."

Harry hums quietly, almost to himself, and takes up the light occupation of sucking red claiming bruises all over Louis' skin. The boy gasps from this new sensation but can't seem to stop the man from continuing.

"Stop, Harry." Louis feebly fends off the much stronger male crushing him from above. When Harry doesn't listen, Louis sighs and gives up defending himself. "Where's the body?"

Harry releases the spot by Louis' hip - one of his favourite regions to explore because of the way the boy's pelvic bone pressed against the pale skin - from between his teeth.

He's changed from someone nervous to proud in a matter of seconds. The transformation is much akin to the way Louis handles situations like when he can be what outsiders see, or when he just
wants to be small, simple-minded and happily looked after.

"It's in a park." Harry's smirking arrogantly with the warm press of his teeth on Louis' belly button giving him shivers. "On a swing."

"Are you- Harry! That's dangerous." Louis exclaims, flailing his arms and failing once again to escape Harry's impenetrable cage.

"It's not like someone will attack her." Harry chuckles in a manner so dark Louis fails to see the boy who stumbled in here and the man who follows him around in this Harry's eyes.

"You have to go get it. Take her somewhere else." Louis' shaking his head and suddenly Harry doesn't like all the fight he's putting up.

"Why should I?"

"Because if someone sees-"

"I know what I'm doing, princess." Harry digs into Louis' smooth neck with experienced canines. Louis groans from the burst of displeasure and the prick on his skin of Harry's too sharp molars. He huffs and shoves Harry's unbudging chest with both his arms when the man doesn't let up and holds Louis in place with that bite.

"My good boy." Harry's breathing heavily through his nostrils. "Are you going to tell me next that I'm not a good enough civilian?"

"You aren't." Louis gasps when his throat is released and he feels fierce engravings where Harry's mouth latched on.

"I know."

"You're sadistic."

"I've been told that so many times it doesn't have an effect on me anymore."

"Harry, little kids don't need to see a limp body on a bloody swing first thing tomorrow morning!"

"Don't raise your voice at me." Harry growls, ignoring all that Louis has said. "As much as it is alluring, it's also not meant for you."

Louis scoffs and holds the armrest as he drags himself out from underneath Harry. The man makes a displeased sound and kisses down the length of Louis' body as he goes.

"I'm making tea." Louis announces. "You need to fix what you did."

"What I did?" It's not my first time doing this, Louis. I know-"

"I know you know what you're doing but today wasn't supposed to be a day that you do it."

Then Harry got it, and allowed his ego to deflate somewhat to accommodate his trepidation. He's suddenly back to his old self and by no means afraid as he pulls out his cellphone and dials the second speed dial.

"I'm not going to do anything." Harry shrugs and Louis' about to ask him what he means but thinks better of it.
Louis avoids Harry's gaze that he feels burning into his soul through his back as he puts the kettle on and finds the ordinary teabags on a middle shelf. Good on Harry for not shelving it above his reach. He needs some sweetness and an overload of sugar sounds about perfect.

"Abrams?" Harry speaks into the device. "I need you to do something."

Louis only hears Harry's side of the clipped conversation from then onwards when Harry goes to stand by the black tinted windows. He's still watching Louis, and God knows how he manages the level of intensity in his look as he maintains a conversation.

"There's only one fucking park within walking distance of my place, Abrams.......No, I don't.......There was a witness. I saw their face and they saw mine.......Because you're going to fucking handle this for me. Call me when it's done."

Making the mistake of looking up from stirring his very sweet caramel-coloured beverage in a red mug, Louis sees that Harry is no longer by the window. He frowns because when did Harry hang up?

Without a precautionary warning, bands of muscle encircle Louis' petite waist. The surprise causes Louis to gasp and the spoon between his lips clatters noisily against the countertop when it falls. "What are you doing?" Louis asked, tone sticking to bored and emotionless as he tosses the spoon into the sink and retrieves a new one.

"Seeking comfort." Harry's wet lips glide smoothly across Louis' pulse point where several fading red blemishes still stood.

"What for?"

"Do I need a reason?"

Louis sighs and brushes Harry off when the taller, well-endowed male tries to capture him in his arms again.

"What's the matter, princess?" Harry sounds tired, and he probably is but Louis can't conjure up enough sympathy to convey.

"Nothing." Louis shrugs quickly.

"Between your eyes....." Harry trails off.

"Is my nose?"

"You're frowning."

"I'm practising."

Harry takes the heated mug away from Louis when he tries to leave, and tugs on the spoon Louis' sucking on until it comes out.

"You're mad with me and I don't understand why." Harry, with all the uncontested manhood he possesses, sticks the same spoon in his mouth right after confiscating it from Louis.

"I'm not mad." Louis drawls. "I'm disappointed. There's a difference."

"What's there to be disappointed about?"

"The way you handled that." Louis vaguely gestures with his free hand to the space where Harry
conducted his phone call.

"What do you mean?"

"You're hiding behind a corrupt police captain, Harry. That's cowardly and just then, you sent him to go take care of a mess you created."

"Cowardly?" Harry's surprisingly calm for taking a blow so grand to his ego.

"You should take care of things yourself. Take responsibility for those actions because they're nobody's but yours."

With a tired exhale, Harry pinches the bridge of his nose and Louis watches how his fingers grip the tabletop.

"I'd rather not be jailed-

*Then don't bloody slit people's throats as a hobby.*

"-for doing society a service."

Louis dismisses that immediately. "We're not discussing your twisted view of society today."

"The logic behind what I do is simple." Harry steps up into Louis' extra personal space where their exhaled breaths mingle in the tight gap between them.

"What's that?"

Louis brings his cup to his lips and takes a long sip of his tea. Harry doesn't speak until Louis swallows and looks at him again.

"You're my only priority." Harry pulls aside the neckline of his T-shirt to reveal the untidily carved 'L' on his shoulder muscle. "If I'm not here because of some lazy slip-up then who will protect you?"

"I can take care of myself and-" Louis refuses to be intimidated or shot down by the growing smile on Harry's bastard face right then. "-do you really thing you'd let your obsessive compulsive self slip up?"

"It can happen."

"Not with you."

"Of course it can." Harry follows Louis' hand up to his shoulder where it presses the pink engraving where white tissue is scarred all around the English letter.

"No, it can't." Louis covers the symbol once again.

"And why not?"

"You're too careful. It's programmed in you to be precise and neat about things."

"Then what happened a few hours ago was not me because I remember far too much of her blood on me-" Harry bites his lip at the memory, his expression remains unreadable. "-for it to have been neat."
Finally feeling the repercussions of a failed argument, Louis blows out a long breath through his mouth. "Harry, my point is that you can be blinded by.....something too hateful to help anyone, and it makes you do terrible things."

"You need to understand this, sweetheart." Harry approaches his closing statement calmly. "I'm definitely not what any person wants. And by that I mean, I was born this way and won't ever change. The craving to do these terrible things won't ever expire and no amount of wishing will make it go away."

Louis probably didn't have to hear those words of chilling reassurance to know it was cold, hard fact. Anyone who got to see even a single true emotion behind the green mask Harry barricaded himself behind, would know that the drive Harry had for certain aspects were passionate and undeniable.

"You're confident about that." Louis' peers up into the mossy abyss staring into his crisp blue oceans, which is exactly how Harry saw them. He sees Louis as a god who commands the finest, most graceful and intricate things with his eyes.

"I've been by myself long enough to be confident. There's no fixing me, baby."

"Don't be so sure."

Somehow, Louis felt incredibly sad at hearing that. Harry felt he was broken deep down and no person should be that way alone.

"If it's us that you doubt-" Harry continues. "-then let me reassure you."

When his hands drop from their high perch on Louis' waist, the shorter lad shakes his head. "It's almost midnight."

"You want to sleep?"

Louis nods.

Understandingly, Harry kisses Louis' forehead with a smile. "Anything you want, princess."

"We're dirty." Louis groans a complaint. "I have a stranger's blood on me."

Harry's eyes follows Louis' indicative fingers as he futilely attempts to wipe away the smears on his hips from where Harry held on too tight. The love bites have not faded and probably won't for a good while because Harry was extra rough when he made these.

It completely throws Louis off his controlled axis when Harry speaks softly with a husky lilt in his ear next. "You look very sexy to me, princess."

How could Louis forget already how much human blood was a pleasure Harry sought deliberately? The man loved pain because he knew he'd never encounter it but he hated that Louis had to.

"How very psycho of you." Louis wraps an arm around Harry's neck and uses it as leverage to stretch upwards.

"I won't argue with you on that." Harry lifts Louis up by the back of his thighs so they'd cling to his waist. "I'm a deep and dark pit full of misery and fucking fantastic amount of insanity."

"Is that your way of being sarcastic?"

"Not at all." Harry deadpans, and doesn't waste the opportunity to set Louis down on the counter
and hold the crook of his knees firmly. "I'm fucked up enough for this entire city. I'm the whole package, you know. The entire 'voices in my head telling me what to do, bloodthirsty, a beast in bed and other places' persona that people try to pull off."

Louis' turned from annoyed to giggling by the end of that speech. "Total catch, you are."

Harry smiled but it was more of a twitch and the light disappeared from his eyes, recoiling into what he would be without Louis.

"What voices do you hear?" Louis whispers, ignoring the uncomfortable feel of drying blood on his skin as he rests his forehead on Harry's.

"Too many." Harry's finger buds grip the space between Louis' shoulder blades. "I used to have just one but now.......-"

"Now?"

"They're all just a jumble of voices. It's almost as if.....I know what they're saying but I can't hear them because they're all talking at once."

It was a constant buzz for Harry and he'd often end up with severe migraines because he couldn't handle the stress. If he didn't have lovely Louis with him as a firm distraction from inside his corrupt mind, it could get so much worse.

"What do they say, Harry?" Louis searches Harry's eyes.

"Right now I don't know whether to go back out there or bend you over the counter."
Louis blushes profusely at the visuals that come with the last part of Harry's statement. "B-Back out there?"

"To fix what I did, I believe." Harry's signature smirk can melt anyone's tough exterior - and rile up any physical interest. "However, it'll be much more mutually beneficial if we go with the latter option."

"Sex-crazed." Louis teases, his fingers fisting the back of Harry's shirt.

"I'm not that bad, actually. It's more like Louis-crazed because everyone else repulses me."
It's an exceptionally affectionate thing to say and Louis should be used to this by now, since Harry took every opportunity to leave him flustered and stammering. That in itself was endearing because not every person wants to put effort into wanting someone.

After all this time, when they've known each other for a little over two months and there's hardly a moment when they don't want to be together, Louis' finally ready to say what he couldn't stop Harry from saying.

"My body is yours-" The boy accepts a light kiss from Harry. "-and I lo-"

Harry's phone rings on the cold marble, vibrations causing it to shift in slight movements across the surface.

"Tell me." Harry ignores it, his enchanting green locking with Louis' vulnerable blue.
Swallowing hard, Louis is partly glad he wasn't pushed aside in favour of a phone call. His barrier for life crumbles at Harry's feet as he inhales and crosses his ankles behind Harry's back.

"Tell me you love me." Louis instructs slowly. "Please."
"I love you." Harry doesn't hesitate. "With every fibre of myself multiplied."

At Harry's cheesy addition, Louis smiles shakily. "I love you too."

The worried vibe melts between them and Harry's smile broadens to a thousand watt grin. He ignores the phone when it buzzes for the second time, and picks Louis off the counter to support him with his own body. Their lips meet and like many times before, the embers of a dormant flame explodes.

"You love me?" Harry's asking with large hands cupping Louis' bum and keeping him elevated.

"I love you." Louis confirms, cheeks painted rosy and teeth peeking out through his smile.

"After everything I told you."

"After all that." Louis giggles when Harry lifts him higher in a single jerking motion.

"I'm a bad person, Lou."

"Then I'll be the good, at least I'll try."

"I love you." Harry returns, squeezing Louis to him so they're as close as can be with all the space around them. "My baby loves me."

"I do. I'm sorry I...took so long."

Harry shakes his head and pulls Louis' lips down to mould with his. "Mine. Mine. Mine."

Louis squeezes Harry's frame by tightening himself around the man. "I'm all yours."

When the phone buzzes again, Louis sighs and grabs it from the counter. He fights the instinct to hit the reject button so Harry's mouth will keep doing what it's doing on his neck, but it might be an important call from the druggie captain.

"Answer it." Louis insists. "My body will still be yours after."

"And heart." Harry corrects.

"Love actually comes from your brain-" He's left stumped when Harry swats his behind. "I'm going to have to do something about that smart mouth of yours." Harry's carrying Louis into the living room.

Louis just sticks his tongue out at Harry in time to have him see it, then realises that he's abandoning his tea.

"My tea!" Louis protests in a whine. "I want my tea."

"Shh, princess."

Harry crashes on the couch and Louis shrieks when he's smashed between the cushions and a body much larger than him. The older male smothers Louis' fights with intense kisses before pulling away to answer his phone.

"Abrams?" Harry says into the device, his arm wrapped around Louis' wriggling frame.

Louis watches as Harry's face becomes impassive and then hardens. It's not a look he likes on
Harry's beautiful face but he's also afraid of what touching him without permission will end up like. He waits patiently with his fingers picking at any loose thread.

"I'm coming there. Keep her with you." Harry finally speaks harshly before hanging up.

"What happened?" Louis takes a gamble and touches Harry's tightened jaw with his fingers.

"The witness came forward at the station when Abrams got back from cleaning the park."

"Did they make a statement?" Louis enquires, going easily when Harry hauls them both up into a seated position.

"No. I told him to take the witness out to where it happened."

"What will you do?" Louis' slightly nervous about Harry lashing out more than necessary.

"You'll see for yourself. You're coming with me."

"O-Okay."

"What's wrong?"

"You'd normally never take me and I don't really... want to be there if you plan on hurting anyone." Louis was strong but today's been a long day and he just wants his tea so he can sleep. Sleep with Harry beside him.

"You need to see what I can do." Harry pats Louis' hip in the way he does when he wants the boy to get up. "I owe you that."

Louis nods, not having anymore words and yawns with a small hand covering his mouth. He's pulled back suddenly to straddle Harry's lap and gasps when he meets bare skin.

"Ride me." Harry takes Louis' ear lobe between his teeth. "I don't want to go there like this."

It was too much energy, too much restlessness. He didn't plan on shedding more blood tonight, maybe not for the next week now because he doesn't see the itch coming back to haunt him. If he deals with the witness buzzing with vivid energy, it will come out uglier than it should.

"But I'm tired, Haz." Louis bites his lip and his eyes are half closed.

"Alright, baby." Harry flips their positions and holds Louis against the couch cushion. "Like this then? I need to get rid of energy, darling. The sooner we deal with that inquisitive bitch we'll come home and go to bed."

Louis nods and weakly raises his hips so Harry can pull his sleeping pants down. He'd do anything to please Harry. The man's lips meet skin reverently as he goes and eventually tosses the clothing aside. He removes his shirt and captures Louis' lips hastily. The kiss is hardly one at that, but it'll make do.

"Spread your legs, baby."

Harry takes one of Louis' ankles and creates a wide gap between the boy's thighs by setting it on the back rest of the couch.

"We don't have lube here." Harry kisses Louis' nose and moves off him.

He returns a moment later with two things, one he sets down on the coffee table and the other he
flips the cap off of. Squeezing some onto his fingers, Harry preps Louis' willing and pliant body carefully although he needs to hurry, because he knows Abrams can't stall to save his life. "Do you like this mark, Lou?" Harry traces the branded scar on Louis' inner thigh. "Reminds you who you belong to, doesn't it?"

Louis nods energetically and pushes down on Harry's shoulders, spreading his thighs wider simultaneously to keep him in place. He throws his legs over Harry's shoulders and arches his back with a breathless gasp when he feels a warm, wet tongue prodding at him.

Using urgent, whining noises to indicate his impatience, Louis' fingers are lost in Harry's hair as a vigorous attempt is made to tear him apart.

Harry fucks his fingers alongside his tongue into Louis' writhing body, tasting the mint lube and all that is his boy. He picks Louis' hips up off the sofa and ignores the ache in his jaw as he laps more eagerly at the boy's fluttering, glistening hole.

He feels the kick of energy racing through him like ice on molten lava. His nails bite Louis' skin and with every buck of Louis', he growls and retaliates by swatting his thigh or behind. He feels the ripple of flesh on the side of his face and the sweet scent drives him long past sane.

"Behave." Harry apologetically kisses Louis' parted lips, slipping his tongue between the red and raw cushions, when Louis whimpers at Harry stopping. Louis answers by clinging to him, thighs against Harry's waist and arms around his shoulders.

"More."

"Yeah? I will, baby. I know you like my attention but we're in a hurry."

"Daddy."

Louis throws his head back over the arm rest and reaches between them to grab hold of Harry's throbbing length. He hastily undoes the rope on Harry's slacks and pushes it away like it personally annoys him. He can feel the pulsating head, foreskin pulled back and precome dribbling down from stimulation.

"Fuck. You need to warn me before you say things like that." Harry slowly inches into Louis' clenching heat with a groan.

"Sorry, Daddy."

Harry's not average-sized, and definitely not small. He always knocks the air right out of Louis' lungs by how well he fills him, how deep he can go without trying.

"Ready, baby?" Harry buries his face in Louis' neck when the boy whines and throws one leg over Harry's.

"Yes. Yes, Daddy."

"Have to be quick, okay?"

Louis' awake enough now to enjoy the friction of his own dick rubbing between their sweating bodies. Harry puts an arm's length between him and Louis. He presses his palms into the arm rest where Louis' head is resting on either side, and starts to snap his hips with a vengeance. Unable to contain anything, Louis screams as he's penetrated brutally but perfectly. He feels the jab to his insides and can see the dent in his lower tummy at how full he is.
Harry's thrusting causes Louis' body to jerk everytime and his teeth latch onto Louis' exposed neck. He doesn't hold any urges back as he moves between Louis' legs. He knows he's being rough, and it's splitting Louis open in the best possible way, but the energy is slowly dwindling. He won't stop now, and Louis' blunt nails dig into his waist in a push but pull fashion. The air is thick and smells like their skin. The only sound is of Harry's hips meeting Louis' pelvis in precise aim.

Louis' eyes close and he can't find the energy to do anything else now. The burst of adrenaline has dissipated and he can't fight the closing of his eyes.

"Tired?" Harry grunts, still slamming repeatedly into Louis' weak body.

Louis' so confused but his length is throbbing under his shirt and he spills onto the fabric without shame. Harry's holding his waist and pounding into him with enough force for the couch to creak and shift sporadically. With an empty mind but body that's willing to please Harry to no end, he keeps his arms around Harry and fights drowsiness.

"Sleep, baby." Harry presses his lips to Louis' jaw. "I'll give you a plug, okay?"

Nodding, Louis turns his head away but Harry's still using him relentlessly and the sensitivity levels have boosted too high. He starts to whimper and grumble from discomfort before Harry releases into him at his end.

"Sorry, darling." Harry collapses on top of him. "I know you're tired."

"'S 'kay." Louis yawns and forces himself to move so Harry slips out of him. "Love you, Daddy."

"Love you too, darling."

"You were so good, princess. You're always so amazing to be inside." There are curved lips on Louis' temple and he smiles sleepily. "Mine."

Louis hums contentedly and smiles. "I know."

"We have to go now though."

"I don't wanna." Is Louis' reply, laced with irritation and exhaustion. "I want my tea."

"You can't have that cold tea, Lou. I'll make you more when we get back, okay?"

"Extra sweet."


* * * * *

It was a ten minute walk but because of a sleepy Lou, Harry had to take the car and let him rest inside. He let Louis shower quickly and change into some of Harry's sleeping attire because the boy looked to warm and innocent in Harry's massive clothing.

"Look at me, Lou." Harry instructs at a red light which isn't en route to where they were supposed to be going.

He picks up the faded hood of the sweater Louis' wearing and it nearly hides all of his face comically.
"I want you to look out your window, okay?" Harry says calmly. "Don't turn this way or to the windshield."

"Why?"

"I don't like this neighbourhood but I have to pick up something and these people shouldn't see you."

"Oh." Louis chews his bottom lip. "Okay."

Since Louis can't look at anything besides through a darkly tinted window, he takes to listening closely. Unfortunately, all he picks up is Harry opening his window, some light shuffling, and the window closes again. He brings his knees up to his chest and doesn't ask any questions.

"Darling?" Harry touches Louis' socks. "Are you still tired?"

"A little." Louis lies. He's hardly tired at all.

Outside the place Abrams Harry parked in such a way that the restricted walkway Abrams gave him the address to, is blocked from anyone's sight but Louis' passenger side was also right in place to witness everything. Louis' interests, however, lay at the apartment on the kitchen counter and in bed with preferably two fluffy pillows and a warm body next to him.

"Stay put." Harry kisses Louis' forehead and puts the radio on for the boy's entertainment during his absence. "I love you."

"Hmm." Louis blinks away the distractions. "Love you."

When Harry leaves, Louis' alone with his rapid-fire thoughts. It's as though the reality of this serious situation has just about dawned on him.

*Harry's going to kill an innocent person. That makes two in one night.*

Louis' already stated his thoughts on Harry's ways. He had no part in it, and never wanted real specifics so he'd have horrible mental images. He also knew that Harry would never hurt him, and that almost makes things okay. It's a selfish, ludicrous way of living but Louis was born in a town where someone needed to be different and that was he.

He stares at the sewn car seat of Harry's side so he doesn't see what's happening outside. Turning up the pointless music, Louis manages to block out any screams. He worries for Harry, just Harry. He doesn't want Harry to get hurt out there and Louis chews his thumb nail in contemplation.

His mind loses control of the amount of negative outcomes as conclusions, when there's nothing to hear but the passing of other cars. Louis can't see a thing either through the many obstructions and he tests the door handle to see if it's locked.

One tug and it opens easily as any luxury vehicle would. Louis thinks about how odd it is that Harry didn't lock him in, and hops down to the cold ground. The sound of music follows him out until he closes the door again and realises he has no shoes on.

It's difficult to imagine that the interior of a Dodge could be so good at shutting out noises, because right now Louis can hear everything. From barking dogs, far off clubbing noises and loudest of all: a fight.

He can't see because Harry took a left turn behind a dumpster between two buildings and that it all
was meant to go down. Louis should be listening to his gut telling him to get the Hell away but the longing in his chest says otherwise. It's human instinct to flee, but Louis' only half human without Harry.

"Hazza?" He rounds the corner, towards the sounds of something very unpleasant, but he can't seem to fear the danger.

First, he peeks around the bend and doesn't know what to make of the scene at all. Upon seeing it though, he wishes he never left the car but also is glad that he did.

There's someone in the corner of the dead-end, slumped against a brick wall and Louis only uses the discarded police badge to recognise Captain Abrams. At that sight, Louis gasps and backs up but the effort to hide was made futile when all the conscious heads turn to look at him.

All seven of them.

Seven? Louis feels an array of emotions spark in his constricted ribcage but none are indicative of what he should do. He doesn't know how to move now that fourteen eyes are glaring at him, only two of which he recognises. He can't run because the thought of being caught and thrown somewhere makes him tremble.

Harry's back was to him but upon his intrusion, turned to look at him in clear surprise. Silently, he's asking Louis why the Hell he cared to leave the safety of the car.

There's a strong will about Louis to just shake his head and get annoyed because this is not how he saw this Friday going and he wants to whine about it. He snaps out of it when he realises it's too damn unrealistic and stupid.

Louis doesn't know if Abrams was knocked out or he passed out because of the white bag in his hand containing mysterious powder, but evidence points to the former when someone shouts indecently to him. There's no movement from Harry except when one of the advancers shifts and all Hell breaks loose.

It wasn't meant to go this way. Harry was going to take care of one witness and be done with it, but that witness was difficult enough to not come alone and that resulted in an unconscious Abrams and an outnumbered Harry.

When there was a threat to Louis, the person he cared for most in every world, Harry became a brute. A psychologist would term it bipolarism but the truth is, Harry just has that much control over his actions. It isn't blind rage that followed any other male. No, Harry allowed himself to develop the monster that resided within him for moments just like this one. He had his mad eye on the girl who still had to be silenced, but first he had to keep the other five from getting near Louis. If Harry had worn any extra clothing, bashing heads into walls would not have been as easy as it was.

He snapped the neck of the first boy, he looked sixteen but half as clever. It was simple enough because no one knew Harry had known Louis, the doey-eyed boy biting his lip in distress and confusion a few meters away.

The first of them fell but he wasn't dead, just unconscious from such a sudden impact on a sensitive pulse point. The second one, with burly arms and a gold tooth, made a disgusting grunt before attacking. This one was more of a challenge but Harry got him pinned and slammed his face into the uneven, filthy tar.

There was a crack heard and then Harry's being hauled off the groaning man. It's not much of a struggle when he captures their necks in both arms and hurls them in the direction of the nearest
wall. The impact of their skulls on brick, will probably give them internal bleeding. The last one takes care of himself when he tries to run, and the girl too. Harry makes to go after them but Louis grabs his arm with both hands firmly.

"Stop. Stop, Haz." Louis grabs the sides of Harry's face and forcefully yanks his attention away from the retreating figures. "Look at me. I'm here."

Harry's buzzing with that unleashed beast's energy and his eyes can't stay on one thing for more than a nanosecond. He fights to let Louis hold him, caress the part of him that needs to cool off. "Hey, Haz. Harry." Louis feels the sweat on Harry's forehead and neck, the racing pulse and the the bone of his screwed jaw. "Thank you for saving me."

An inhuman sound comes from deep in Harry's chest but he looks at Louis with more familiarity now.

"There you are." Louis pushes Harry's hair back and ignores the waking sounds of the males who thankfully aren't dead. "I love you, okay? Nothing's going to happen to me."

Harry makes a consensual noise and his tense shoulders loosen up. Louis smiles at that and reaches for Harry's left hand, only to frown and gasp at the odd result. It didn't feel like Harry's hand, because it was cold and twitching as something dripped down. Louis doesn't remember that much blood being spilt.

He brings Harry's wrist up to the street light after they're out of the darkness and starts to feel faint at what he sees.

There's no ring finger. Just a bloody bank of ripped tissue and oozing crimson. Harry's silent, still coming frown from his induced high but when his gaze settles on what Louis' examining, he becomes confused as well.

"What happened, Harry?" Louis removes his hoodie and wraps it around Harry's hand that's still losing blood.

It's not shock, and Harry can't feel anything which Louis is so grateful for, but Harry can't seem to understand why there are four fingers rather than five.

"In the car, Haz. Please." Louis takes the keys from Harry's back pocket and unlocks the vehicle in a hurry.

He gets Harry to a hospital in time for attention by breaking all road laws getting there. The night around them is slow and at ease, while Louis' fighting for time as he drives. Harry doesn't say anything, doesn't even complain with muted noises.

The doctors ask that he wait outside while they conduct an exam and quick, mild surgery. Harry began to act out when they mentioned surgery, and Louis had to stay with him until he was calm.

"You'll be fine, Hazza." Louis reassures him. "I'm waiting here for you to come back, okay?"

He kisses Harry's forehead and only looks away when Harry's being taken off to the OR. He sits on the empty chair in the room Harry had requested, waiting impatiently. It's just a damn finger but Louis can't seem to cope with the idea that Harry's in surgery and he's hurt.

When he realises the blood on his clothing won't disappear, he asks the nurses for fresh clothing and gets a set of new grey slacks and firehouse T-shirt.
It's at two in the morning that Louis sees the doctor come out, headed for him. He stands immediately despite the wobble in his tired legs and drowsiness setting in.

"Where is he?" Louis asks immediately. "Is he okay?

"It's fine but you didn't come in with the finger so we couldn't do anything about that. The wound was open and since he was born with congenital analgesia, he doesn't know how long it's been that way. We're going to keep him here for twenty-four hours to see if it develops an infection or not."

"If it does?"

"We'll clean it and add another day or two to his stay. The wound won't be closed until we're sure so for now he'll have to have his bandages redressed every hour."

"What about blood loss?" Louis tastes blood when he licks his lips and rubs his sweaty palms on his pants.

"We have that under control. We've given him a wrist and arm brace to immobilise the limb. Do you know what happened to him?"

"N-No, I don't."

"Alright." The doctor doesn't use a suspicious or unconvinced tone. "We'll have him taken back to the room but can you follow me to my office please?"

"What for?"

"It's an ER so we took care of him but this is a private establishment and require payment."

"Oh. Yeah, okay."

He finds Harry's wallet in the glove compartment and rushes back in. The doctor takes Harry's card and creates a patient file.

Louis experiences a churning feeling in his stomach that makes him wince once in a while as he sits silently in a visitor's chair. The doctor notices.

"Are you okay?"

Louis nods and smiles wryly. "Fine."

The doctor goes back to writing and Louis feels sweat on his back, but the room is cold. The ticking of a wall clock is triggering a throb in his head with every tick. The nausea worsens and he jumps up with a hand on his mouth.

"Where's the bathroom?" Louis feels like squeezing his own throat to keep the bile from rising. The doctor is unsurprised and helps Louis quickly to kneeling in front of a toilet. He throws up everything he's eaten and dry heaves pathetically until the wave passes.

"Take this." He's handed to Advil and a glass of water. "Stress affects everyone in different ways."

Louis gulps down the water and apologises for the interruption. He can't seem to wake up though because the room is spinning and closing his eyes helps only a little.

"Would you mind if I took a look? It could be Vertigo or something small but I'd like to be sure." The medical professional says in a soft voice and Louis nods.
He's taken to Harry's room again and as he walks, he feels better but also more tired. Harry's conscious when he gets there and the confident look fades to confusion when Louis enters.

"What happened?" Harry starts to get up, because he pushes aside the fact that he was just under the knife. "Lou?"

"I'm fine, Haz." Louis smiles and comes to his side. "Just a little sick."

"Sick? Why? You never said anything."

"I didn't know." Louis shrugs. "How are you feeling?"

"Fine. Lou, are you-"

"Mr. Tomlinson, can you sit up here for me please?" The attending nurse interrupts their moment so that the examination can start.

Harry glares at her. "Don't interrupt me."

"We're on a schedule, Mr. Styles."

"I fucking pay you so shut up and let me talk to him."

"Haz." Louis sighs and turns to the poor woman. "I'm sorry. I'll be right there."

The African-American nurse rolls her eyes and stands there with a forced courtesy as Louis goes back to Harry.

"Be nice." Louis says softly. "And I'm fine. Doctor said it's stress."

"What stress?" Harry, even lying in a hospital bed, looks like someone nobody should bother. Louis laughs and bends to kiss Harry's damp, cold lips. "Silly."

"You're okay though?"

"I'm fine. Hand to God."

"God isn't real."

"Not tonight." Louis smiles knowingly. "I love you. Rest now, please."

"I love you, baby. Come lie with me?"

"When I'm done with the doctor, I promise."

The nurse in blue scrubs with a clipboard in her hand decides to intervene once again. "Sir, you can't share beds."

Harry's soft expression hardens with hatred that sparks in his green eyes. "I'll have you-"

"Shh." Louis giggles and covers Harry's mouth. "I'll be right back."

It's only just a few feet away before Louis' up on the other bed and awaiting his test. The nurse takes his blood pressure, a sample of his blood, listens to his heartbeat and presses his stomach last. When she does the final act, Louis hisses and pushes her off a little too quickly.

"Does it hurt?" She asks, watching him rub the spot she pressured.
"Yes. I-I'm sorry." He muttered quickly.

She smiles politely, kind because she likes Louis more than Harry. The doctor enters and Louis makes silent conversation with Harry while the two talk.

"Lie down for me, Mr. Tomlinson." The doctor says once the nurse has left.

Louis obeys and turns his head to watch Harry, who is burning holes of anger and repulsiveness into the doctor's back. Louis laughs quietly when Harry looks at him.

The nurse comes in with a large white contraption set on a rolling table, and the doctor moves aside to position it.

"Thanks, Martha."

"I know what that is." Louis frowns. "What does it have to do with me?"

"Just a precaution."

"I'm male, doctor." Louis feels cold gel being spread on his stomach.

"There have been cases."

"What the Hell are you doing?" Harry steps in, his brows knitted together as he shouts.

"Please relax, Mr. Styles."

Louis warns Harry with his eyes not to say anything more and let's himself be tested. They'll find nothing anyway.

There's silence but then the wan dips low on Louis' tummy and the doctor makes a 'hmph' sound.

"What? What the fuck is it?" Harry's more on edge than Louis, and despises the fact that he can't be there right now.

"Harry." Louis sounds disapproving.

"Look over here, Louis." The doctor points to a tiny screen on the white clinical machine. "Do you see that?"

"What am I looking for?" Squinting in concentration, Louis can see nothing but fuzz.

"A small blob of sorts. It'll be almost white."

Louis sees it, a little white bean surrounded by grey orbitals of fluff. He wants to scream when it hits him, and he inhales sharply enough to choke.

"No." Louis shakes his head.

"What?" Harry's pulling back his bed sheets to wake up.

"Mr. Styles-"

"Tell me to get back in bed and I will fucking-"

"Harry!" Louis has been getting closer and closer to his capacity concerning Harry's foul mouth with strangers. "Enough."
With a steady scowl, Harry goes to stand next to Louis and looks closer at the screen. Louis holds his uninjured hand and notes how Harry keeps the other one hidden.

"What am I looking at?" Harry's irritation at the itch in his hand, the audacity of this hospital's staff and now this never-ending confusion is dripping with his words.

"That's an embryo. You've been pregnant for two weeks, Louis."

Chapter End Notes

and thats the end of chapter sixteen by ss98. more soon
"Don't worry about the darkness in my soul. It ignites me like an embered coal.

"That's an embryo. You've been pregnant for two weeks, Louis."

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Everything moves too fast for Louis' blurry senses to comprehend. It's too loud for his ears to process, and he's caught staring at the ultrasound as if crippled mentally.

"Hold him, will you?!" Someone - the doctor who attended to Louis' pregnancy - is shouting.

It's Harry they're talking about. The man is stark raving mad and revealing every trace of insanity he's ever kept bottled up.

Harry's screaming at first and it is most certainly not because of joy. The large, expensive monitor with the photo of their baby on it crashes loudly when Harry shoves it powerfully. The sound rings in Louis' eyes when he looks up, now that his distraction has been removed.

There's no stopping the tantrum Harry's succumbed to, and since Louis is the cause this time he isn't of any assistance either. The green Louis has grown so familiar with, became to dependant on, has melted so that the black shadow always threatening to spill over takes him.

He resembles a restrained predator rather than a human being with higher intelligence. His eyes are set on Louis, but there's no love or recognition in them.

Louis flinches and looks away, ashamed. He has nothing to say so he stares at the individual hairs on his arm as two - maybe four - fully able-bodied men drag Harry, kicking and shouting profanities, from the room.

"Get your fucking hands off me!"

Harry is stronger than most people, sometimes even whole groups of people. The hope that's ignited in Louis comes alive when he thinks that Harry can - with some effort - break free of his captors but he's letting himself be held back.

When the room's empty of Harry's madness, Louis releases the breath he didn't know he was holding. It's too soon to say anything, the shock is too sudden, and Louis needs that nap he's been wanting all day before he can think up a solution.

"Are you okay, Louis?" The African-American nurse who Harry continually insulted, rubs his back and Louis wishes it was Harry doing that.

Louis nods, inhaling deeply with closed eyes. "He didn't hurt me."

"They'll sedate him. I've never seen anyone act out like that."

He laughs humourlessly. "He's a different kind of special."
As nice as the staff are, this is a hospital that needs beds for actual patients. Louis thanks the nurse and walks out with twenty dollars from Harry's wallet; the bastard owes him that.

"Louis!" He's just about to watch the electronic doors slide open when a roar of his name makes him pause. "Fucking let me go, you cunts!"

Louis realises that Harry's not looking to comfort him, call him cute endearments and cuddle him. Harry was angry and violently disappointed. He'd hurt their baby, Louis' little angel that looks like a bean. Abomination or not, the baby is Louis' with or without the unstable father. He keeps walking despite the profanities being shouted in his name. He almost wants to cover his tummy and hide the baby, protect it from hearing such vile things.

Standing on the sidewalk in the cold air, Louis realises he still has no shoes on and should be feeling cold. Bean will be feeling cold too.

"We'll be inside soon, angel." Louis whispers with a hand on his stomach, protective and caring. Louis remembers Harry's face when the revelation was made minutes ago. It was so void of familiarity, bloodthirsty and merciless. Louis felt like one of his victims except someone was there to save him, those others didn't. It was scary to face that Harry when Louis was his target. A yellow cab stops and the cigar-smoking driver looks up at him with estranged interest. Louis feels disgusted.

He gives the cab driver the apartment's address and asks him to wait outside while he gets his things. He's going to need more twenty dollar bills.

At the dorm, everyone's out for Movie Night and Louis' alone lying on his thin mattress after a luke warm shower. He lifts his shirt to trace the pudge that's come with his little Bean, and smiles.

"What am I going to do now?" He asks his abdomen softly with the light off.

It felt pleasant to be pregnant. Louis felt he could stop and talk to this constant companion, even if he couldn't get a response. Being pregnant and male is outrageously rare - it shouldn't happen at all - but now that it's here, he won't destroy that gift.

"Your daddy hates us." Louis bites his bottom lip to keep it from wobbling. "I love you though, my little Bean."

It's so early in the morning and Louis is stiff with exhaustion. When Niall stumbles in thirty minutes later, he catches Louis curled up and crying.

"Lou?" The blonde best friend sits down to pat Louis' hair. "What happened?"
Louis shakes his head and sobs harder into his chlorine-smelling pillow. He looks pathetic, blotchskinned with red lines from sleeping on his side. He's just hurt, is all.
"Did crazy boyfriend hurt you?" Niall sits on Louis' bed and comfortingly rubs his hip. "Tell me if he did."

Harry didn't hurt Louis, but that glimmer in his eye told everyone that he was planning on. He was going to hurt little Bean. Their baby.

"He did?" Niall grows tense and those piercing blue eyes become cold. "I'll rip his balls off."
It makes Louis laugh but choke on spit in his throat. "Please don't."

"He made you cry." Niall cooes. "Nobody makes my sunshine cry."

Louis loves Niall and his inappropriate compliments so much.
"What did he do, Lou-Lou?"

"I'm pregnant."

Somehow after that all the dorm brothers end up in Louis and Niall's room, each one bearing a comfort food and mug of warm cocoa. Niall's bed is pushed toward Louis' and everyone piles on, minding the pregnant belly of course.

"They'll be our baby." Niall has his head on Louis' tummy. "Our dorm mascot."

Louis smiles but it's empty and lost, no twinkle in his eye or crinkles at the corners. "Sure."

"Don't be sad, Lou." Beauregard, Louis' all time favourite toaster chef, is playing Louis' pillow.

"The baby will be sad."

"I'm not sad." Louis lies, rubbing his eyes.

"Baby Bean says he or she loves you." Niall offers his best mate a big grin. "And that you need to drink the hot chocolate before it's cold."

Everyone laughs but it's soft and the morning's light is finally floating in when Louis decides it's been too long a day.

"I wanna sleep." Louis brings the covers up to his chin and closes his eyes.

"We're all sleeping here." Beau announces.

In his sleep, Louis smiles but he still feels lost and lonely. He needs closure if Harry doesn't want this baby because now there's a big decision to make. Keep or give up Bean?

It's a shock and one Hell of a surprise. Louis didn't know he could carry children, actual human children for nine months. It's a gift, really. He wants to cherish it and this baby but he can't because of college and finances and time.

Nobody bothers Louis to wake up but when he does, he's dragged off to the beach. He wanted to go see Harry in hospital, wants to know if maybe he's changed his mind or something but Niall nags him endlessly. Louis appreciates the dedication and agrees to get some down-time watching over his exotic pets at the beach.

"Don't wander off now." He keeps dragging Bolg back to their own group everytime the creature wobbles off.

Bundy hates it here and burrows into Louis' shirt - Harry's old band shirt - every chance he gets. He creates lots of tiny holes in the fabric and even pricks Louis' tummy pudge, but it seems the creature can sense something odd about Louis.

Louis takes a book with him and sits on the beach chair Beau gave him, reading in a soft voice to Bean from a John Grisham novel. Sometimes he'll look up and watch the others splash around, but go back to rubbing his tummy quickly.

"How about another genre?" He sees that Bolg has settled down comfortably on his front and Bolg is buried in the sand.

He doesn't have another book but he promises to get started when they're back at the dormitory. After starting The Shining for the fourth time, using his same tattered copy since childhood
ownership, Louis flops down on the sheets. He's missed two dance lessons and half that amount of gym sessions. If he goes through with this pregnancy, he'll kiss dancing goodbye.

"I can't take care of you, Bean." Louis cries alone that night. "I'm not ready."

When the week comes around, Louis still hasn't heard from Harry. Not that he expects anything but......he almost does.

He goes to class with Niall as usual, and eats lunch as usual. He sits on his bench in the courtyard as usual and reads more of Stephen King's writing to Bean. He tries not to think about Harry even though he knows he's being a coward, exactly what he insulted Harry for being.

After Harry doesn't pitch up for the one lecture they have together, Louis lies to Niall and takes a cab to the private hospital institution.

"If you apologise to him, Lou-"

"I'm not going to see him, Ni." Louis lies smoothly, but maybe his voice cracked somewhere. "Alright." Niall hugs him. "Be safe and come back because it's my turn to make supper."

"I promise." Louis' sure he said it but he hardly heard the words himself.

The nurse from before smiles sympathetically up at him and Louis glares at her, his hand on his tummy protectively. He doesn't need pathetic sympathy. He needs to talk to Harry and understand why the Hell he wanted to murder their baby.

"In here." She opens an unmarked door, where the windows are covered with neat blinds and inside smells of ammonia. "There's a buzzer if you need someone or-"

"Thanks." Louis smiles, trying to dismiss her.

He closes his eyes, feels his eyes stinging and some salt water arise before breathing in and going ahead.

Harry's on the bed, head turned away from the door with his eyes trained on the silent movie playing. Louis knows Harry senses him before his injured hand clenches and the skin covering his jaw flexes.

"Louis?" Harry doesn't turn around yet.

"H-How'd you....-" Louis' voice croaks, so he clears the pain in his throat with a cough. "How'd you know?"

"I didn't." Harry looks at him and he looks terrible.

His lip is bust and there are bags under his eyes, unhealthy bags from sleep-deprivation. His cheeks look hollow but it's only been two days and that's not possible.

"You look like you saw a ghost." Harry says dryly, coughing as he tried to shift.

"What happened to you?"

"They didn't stop fighting even when I did."

Louis' chest explodes with sadness. Harry was mistreated in this place but he really doesn't know who to call culprit.
"I'm.....sorry." Louis eyes the straps around his wrists and probably his ankles too, speculatively. "They tied you up?"

"I came after you but you were already gone." Harry pulls on the binds futilely and gazes pitifully at Louis. "Chased your cab down the block."

Glancing up, Louis' emotions of confusion and depression flood his expressive blue eyes. "Why?" Harry smirked and even in this 'glorious' state, he looked beautiful. "Because I love you and you're crazy enough to love me. I hoped that would stop you."

"What?"

"I screamed down the street for you to come back. You didn't hear."

"I'm sorry, Harry. I......-" Louis takes another, easier step and the load on his shoulders lessen. "I had to. You were going to-"

"I wasn't." Harry interrupts. "I know you think I'd do that but I would never hurt you or that baby. Never."

"You're saying that now because you're tied up."

"No." Harry shakes his head, brows frowning deeply and the concentration of his stare weakens. "No. Lou, I- I know I scared you but you are everything to me."

"When they told you I was pregnant you looked at me with this-" Louis frowns at the tiles. "-hatred and I knew you'd do something. I can't let you hurt Bean."

"Bean?" There's light in Harry's shadow and it causes both of them to smile just a bit easier. "Is that....Is that what you call them?"

"It seemed appropriate." Louis is standing beside Harry's bed now. "If you looked for long enough, you'd have noticed that they look like a bean."

Guilt flickers across Harry's gaze before it's masked expertly once again. "Bean."

"Little Bean." Louis corrects, smiling with the glow he has the right to as his hand rests on his flat tummy. "Little Bean." Harry's eyes focus on Louis' small hand, jealousy filling his core. "Can I?"

"Can you what?"

"Hold you. I miss you, Lou." Harry cranes his neck like an eager pet when Louis leans forwards, closer to him. "I can't eat or sleep. I don't want to do anything without you."

Louis thinks he should get all the thoughts he's had over these two days out there, share them with Harry.

"I was....." Louis looks at his shoes and how dirty they are. "-thinking ab-about.....giving Bean up."

"For adoption?" The thought makes Harry growl.

Louis shakes his head. "Abortion."

Harry's posture turns aggressive and his tone changes to a threatening one. "How dare you?"
"I didn't know what else to do!" Louis will not cry. He will not. "You don't want the baby and I can't take care of Bean alone."

"You were going to kill our child, Louis."

"Don't say it like that, Harry. Please."

"I want the baby. Lou, that's my child." Harry protests heatedly. "That's my baby inside you and I'll fucking cut myself open before I see harm come to either of you, let alone be the one to do it myself."

Louis looks up through his thick lashes and Harry's breath catches in his throat as he memorises every inch of this perfect moment.

With a happy noise that was too submissive to be real, Louis climbs onto Harry's hospital bed and sits on his hips. It surprises Harry but the man is now at ease in his heart, a special hollow cavity reserved for his princess.

Louis smiles, truly pleased this time, down into Harry's strangely excited orbs of foresty passion. "I love you." Harry strains his neck, feeling the kinks in his bad back but he needs to do this. "I love you and this baby."

The dam breaks and Louis falls forward to kiss Harry, smothering him with wet pecks. He meets the man's cold, chapped lips and warms them up again with his. His teeth hold on to Harry's bottom lip as he draws back and it swells from the bite.

"Mine." Harry whispers. "All mine."

Louis hums and kicks his shoes off the bed.

"I'm sorry." Harry kisses Louis' neck multiple times, all over the skin and wishing he could just wrap the boy up and hold him so close. "I'm so sorry I scared you and made you leave."

"I forgive you." Louis sniffles, glad beyond words to be back where he feels most secure and at home.

"Does Bean forgive me?"

Louis looks up in awe of Harry and his ability to change suddenly. He likes that Harry can be aggressive and full of edgy testosterone around others, but became mellow for Louis and now their baby.

"Bean forgives you." Louis mumbles.

"I want to touch." Harry is staring at Louis' tummy like X-ray vision will grant him physical contact. "I want to feel them."

"I can't help you there." Louis shifts in his straddle and Harry groans. "What's wrong?"

He feels Harry between his legs, lined up perfectly with his crotch as he starts to grow more erect in the paper-thin hospital gown. Louis' eyes widen and he giggles into Harry's neck with a furious blush on his cheeks.

"Being tied up has its benefits." Harry whispers, seduction on full-blast as he mouths at Louis' ear.

"No it doesn't." Louis' just trying to deflect the situation by clearing his throat.
"Lou." Harry raises an eyebrow. "I want you."

"No." Louis shakes his head and sits back, palms flat on Harry's chest.

"Princess." Harry's taking no prisoners when he bucks his hips up and Louis lets out a squeak. "Ride me now."

"No, Harry." Louis gets off the bed, much to Harry's chagrin, and closes the door so nobody hears Harry's begging.

"Lock it." Harry encourages. "Then climb back on me."

Rolling his eyes, Louis goes to Harry's left side and takes his hurt hand in both of his. "How do you feel?"

"Horny." Harry isn't kidding. There's a tent in his gown from under the blankets and despite Louis' nagging arousal, he must maintain composure.

"About your hand, I meant." Louis sees that the bandage isn't soiled and the missing finger is still missing.

"I'll live. It's just a finger." Harry shrugs. "Abrams brought it here yesterday but the doctors couldn't do anything."

"I'm sorry." Louis kisses Harry's cheek and releases his captured wrist. "I love you."

"Prove it." Harry grabs Louis' shirt when he tries to move away. "I need to be inside you."

Louis was not immune to Harry's attempts at dirty talk, they were all so effective after all. His face heated up but he had to fight this temptation, they had to be careful now that they were having a baby and this time is the risky period.

"Shh." Louis sat back on his heels once astride Harry's waist again. "We need to get you discharged first."

"Then you're coming with me." Harry's tone is gentle - they wouldn't dare disturb their little Bean in its sleep - but firm. His waiting period is over now.

"Where?"

"The apartment. You need to move in with me."

Leaning forward and resting his forearms on Harry's chest, Louis studies the storm in those stunning green eyes. The hard emerald became shifting ground upon which mixed emotions lay. It was mesmerising.

"Niall won't let me." Louis combed his fingers through Harry's silky locks. "You're the psycho boyfriend to him."

"He isn't far off-" Harry wrestles with his straps once before sagging hopelessly again. "-but I'll be damned if I let him keep you from me."

"Nothing's keeping me from you." Louis looks at the swallows that are dark enough to show even through Harry's flimsy hospital gown. "Except......um-"

"Except?" This was news to Harry and he rushed Louis to finish. "Except what, baby?"
"You have to... I know how much it's a part of you, Harry, but this has to stop." Louis is begging but that's not what he came to do. He didn't even prepare his argument. "Lou, you know I-"

"This baby-" Louis puts his hand on his abdomen as emphasis. ":-needs you there all the time."
"I will be there all the time."

"No, you won't." Louis whines. "It's such a.....risk. An unnecessary risk and please, we need you to stop. I'll help you in every way that I can."

"Do you really think it's that easy?"

"No, I know it's not easy. It's....It's been who you are for so long and just asking this is probably unfair but it's not for nothing."

"You're unbelievable." Harry falls against his pillows with a dead look in his eye. "I can't just stop, Louis. It's fucking important to me."

"And your baby isn't?" Louis has to put up the walls he's always had before Harry came waltzing in but it's so much harder now that they've been down for so long.

"You shouldn't be able to have babies, Louis! It's fucked up that you can." Harry shouts and Louis flinches at the high volume.

The words sting. They sting like hot metal on frosty skin and Louis slowly starts to bleed. **It's a gift**, he reassures himself. **Bean is your gift.**

"That's not the point." Louis thanks any diety above that he didn't untie Harry as he gets off him. "Louis, this is not over."

"It is." It's so soft when he speaks. He's upset and Bean is starting to make him feel nauseous.

"Don't go."

With sick laughter, Louis puts his shoes on. "You don't get to call me a freak of nature then use that voice on me. Hurting people is more important to you than giving your child everything, so I hope that works out for you."

There's something that **shatters** behind Harry's mask but Louis' already too close to the door to look back.

"Lou. Come back." Harry crates his neck and fights the hand restraints again. "**Louis!**"

Wincing, Louis jiggles the stubborn door handle before pulling the door open quickly.

Harry's voice follows him. "I will fucking find you."

Louis knows it's true and that scares him beyond reason. What if Harry does something stupid? He swore he'd never hurt Bean but Louis isn't so sure about him anymore. It could have all been a facade.

He hails a Chicago cab with a forced smile and tear tracks on his cheeks, the hospital pamphlets creasing up in his clammy palm. It would be the hardest decision, and the toughest thing to go through. Maybe Niall will go with him to the appointment.
Back at the dormitory, Louis puts up a healthy front and eats for Bean even if he's too sick with heartache to eat. Showering was easy, that was robotic, but playing happy when he really wasn't proved to be a painful task. He never gets offended but Harry crept into his most private thoughts, his empty heart and filled it all up. One word from the man and Louis' a goner.

"Movie time!" Beau is there, all smiles with a salad bowl at hand. They always eat salad during a movie.

"What movie is it?" Someone asks but Louis doesn't know who because he volunteered to do the dishes.

"Van Helsing." Niall is the one who answers.

Someone swoons and Louis laughs, for real this time. He really has the best dorm brothers. The movie starts and Louis' given the salad bowl first - pregnant with the dorm mascot and all that. He nods gratefully and begins to nibble on a carrot stick.

"Someone's drunk as a sailor." Beau comments, looking out the window with a hand over his eyes. "What?" Louis looks over the back of the couch.

There are angry car tyres screeching on loose pebbles and Beau jumps back as if it was a damn 3D movie with too realistic features.

"Our parking lot?" Niall gets up, throwing off the blanket he was sharing with Louis. "Yeah." Beau lifts the curtain. "Idiot. You'd think they'd have realised we're the boring dorm by now."

An annoyed round of protests floats into the air from every other brother. Someone even tosses a pillow lazily in Beau's general direction to make a fuss.

"Uh." Niall bites his lip. "Lou, go upstairs."

Louis looks at him with a confused frown. "What?"

"Psycho boyfriend's here and he uh- looks angry."

"That's psycho boyfriend?" Everyone's up and looking out the window except Louis. Someone whistles appreciatively and others groan before slapping that person. They all seem to have forgotten that Harry's coming to this dormitory.

"Why does he have a key card?" Beau frowns. "Shit."

Louis' in the kitchen, pulling his T-shirt down over his belly protectively and drinking a glass of water. Either he or Bean was thirsty with anxiety. He knew hiding upstairs won't get Harry to leave. Hell, a police force won't get Harry to leave.

"Don't bother." Louis leans his back against the counter, applying extra pressure to where it has recently started to ache.

"He won't try anything, will he?" Beau comes closer, standing in front of Louis but playing down the fact that he's acting as a shield.

Louis shrugs. He's so tired because Bean's been making him sick a lot more lately, almost as if they need Harry around in spite of everything.
The common room door flies open and it's a slap to Louis' face but he crosses his arms over his front and waits.

"Mate, could you not-" It's Niall who speaks first and Louis' blocked quite well by Beau.

"Shut up." Harry snaps. "Where's he?"

"We're all he's here, crazy." Someone else answers and Louis smiles to himself.

"Move." Harry's not bothered with the insult, he's asking Beau to move and Louis' heartbeat picks up.

Louis puts a hand on Beau's shoulder and smiles reassuringly, asking him to let him deal with this. Beau's hesitant but he obliges and steps aside considerably.

When Louis' eyes lift from the ground, he's met with a hurricane of torment. It's such a pained look, such an offensive sight to see Harry torn apart like this. He doesn't know what to say, so he let's Harry come to him. Using large strides where his heavy boots bang against the creaking floorboards in his urgency.

"You need to stop leaving me." Harry says. The first thing he says and it's Louis' fault.

Shaking his head, Louis turns away when Harry tries to touch him. Bean's still inside him and it needs to be a good home for the baby. Harry being around was toxic if all he was going to do was throw around free curses and insults.

"I didn't leave anything at your apartment. I don't have anything of yours. What do you want?"

Louis is not giving in to this monster again so easily.

"You have my baby." Harry looks wounded, deep down where hurt is festering because Louis isn't there anymore.

Not for long. "Bean stopped being your baby when you called me a freak."

"Lou, I didn't- I didn't mean that." Harry tries to touch him again, his princess, but Louis isn't having it. "I love you."

"That doesn't mend all problems, Harry!" Louis didn't mean to shout but it doesn't faze Harry either. "Saying it all the time won't make everything better."

"I know it won't."

It's then that Louis really looks at Harry. He notices the redness of his cheeks, the extra puffy lips and the cracking in his voice. The bags under his eyes are red and so, so depressed. He's a hollow man in a mask.

"I'll stop." Harry takes a deep breath before saying it, and exhales afterwards. "I'll never touch- I'll never do anything like I used to before."

This time Louis let's Harry touch him, grab him around the middle and cup the side of his face. There's raw desperation in Harry's eyes, in the evidence that lies of his unseen crying. Harry is mortal after all. He feels things and Louis is a big piece of that.

"What made you change your mind?" Louis feels Harry's severely injured hand flatten on his back. "I was selfish." Harry tugs him closer. He's been away from his baby for too long already. "I want
this baby and I want you. Both of you belong with me."

"Don't say things you don't mean." Louis held onto Harry's firm biceps and peered up at him with clearly pleading eyes. "Bean doesn't deserve that."

"Neither do you." Harry argues, his arm wrapping all the way around Louis' body comfortably. "You're mine even if I'm not the best."

Louis can't contain his soft giggle - the music Harry's been craving for twenty-six plus years - and smiles up at Harry. He easily forgives but he needs a reason and the prospect of a crying Harry who just reacts rashly at first but just needs some time, is oddly settling.

"You're the best. Bean thinks so, and so do I." Louis assures him, stretching up accordingly with Harry leaning down to bump their noses and unite their lips.

There's an applause and Louis' spooked enough to feel the race in his heartbeat. He clings to Harry when he sways a little and his supporter growls, pointedly annoyed that they're in fact not alone. "Sorry!" Niall has that proud mother hen look again. "We're leaving."

He pushes everyone up the stairs, but Beau needs his ear twisted before obeying. He doesn't like psycho boyfriend at all.

Harry turns back to Louis and the stiffness in his jaw softens at the bleary-eyed vision. He previously did not notice but Louis is covered in oversized clothing and his little hands are hidden by the long sleeves of Harry's shirt.

"I saw this conversation going either way." Harry confesses, a strain in his words as he said them. "I don't know what I'd have done without you."

"Moved on." Louis supplies with an unhappy sigh. He didn't really want that.

"Never." Harry states firmly. "You're my princess, and now you're having my baby."

"Do you really promise to never.....go back to doing what you did?" Louis looks up earnestly at Harry.

"You have my word." Harry takes Louis' hand and kisses the fingertips. "Come home with me, baby."

"I love you." Louis felt it was appropriate to say.

"I love you." Harry places Louis' hand over his heart. "I'm sorry I ever hurt you."

"I forgive you." Louis leans on Harry when his back starts to hurt again. "Take me home."

"You'll move in with me?" Harry looks so hopeful, it's the most innocent emotion Louis' seen come from him since they met.

"I will." Louis grins when Harry swoops down to kiss him hard on the lips. "I just want to sleep now though."

"Is Bean making you tired?" Harry pushes Louis' hair away from his eyes.

Louis nods. "And sick."

"My poor baby." Harry kisses him again. "We'll come get your things tomorrow. Where's your bag
for staying over?"

"Upstairs." Louis says it fairly loudly to warn those eavesdropping on the staircase. He knew they were.

"Take my keys." Harry offers Louis his Dodge keys thoughtfully. "I'll bring your stuff."

Louis nods and has an elongated kiss stolen by Harry when the man surprises him. He's caught off guard but melts into the connection easily enough, the flick of Harry's tongue on the roof of his mouth is highly intoxicating.

"I'm dead serious when I tell you, don't move from that car." Harry raises the keys above his head with his flamingo limbs and makes Louis feel very inadequate in height.

"I promise." Louis refuses to jump for it. He's pregnant and unwilling.

"Who is it that you're promising, darling?"

Undying smirk on Louis' lips, he sighs and reaches for the keys once again. "Yes, Daddy. I promise."

"Good boy." Harry kisses his forehead and very gently swats his behind. "Go now."

Harry throws every item of Louis’ belongings that comes into view into a selection of travel bags. He may have said that there's only need for an overnight one to Louis, but why create inconveniences? He even takes Bolg and Bundy to be loaded into the boot of his Dodge.

Nobody tries speaking with Harry while he leaves. The distant, cold look in his eye doesn't exactly attract friendly conversations.

Louis' fallen asleep in the front passenger seat with the light on and curled up adorably so he didn't have to put the heater on and kill the car's battery. Harry smiles at the sight and switches on the heater to keep it toasty.

He carries Louis into the apartment building first and takes the elevator with the boy fast asleep in his arms. It's a picture moment, and Harry really needs his camera.

After setting Louis on the comfortable king-sized bed and stripping off all the unnecessary layers of clothing, he goes back to bringing up the remaining luggage. It's so much harder now that one of his vital finger aids have been removed. He leaves the pets with open cages in his studio, knowing that no toxic items are scattered on the floor. The bags go in the closet but Harry's too eager to climb into bed with Louis to hang anything up.

"Whatya doin'?" Louis is up and moving around while Harry puts his phone to charge in the kitchen.

"Did I wake you?" Harry welcomes Louis into his side, feeling the sleepiness radiate from Louis.

"No." Louis puts his hands and chin on Harry's shoulder.

"Hungry maybe?"

Louis shakes his head, hiding his face and smile in Harry's neck shyly. Harry feels like dying of the sweet innocence that always lingered around Louis.

"Let's go back to bed." Harry gets off the stool. "You look sleepy and Bean must be too."
"Bean." Louis echoes, clearly exhausted but stubbornly holding on to consciousness.

"Yes, Bean." Harry picks Louis up gracefully by the backs of his thighs, earning a soft giggle from the boy before he starts walking.

"Our Bean."

"Last time I checked-" Harry sheds his shirt, shoes and pants before climbing onto the mattress. "-Bean indeed was ours."

"Lucky him or her." Louis hums delightedly when Harry rests his head on his tummy, rubbing ticklish but soothing circles on the skin of his waist.

"Can I have a kiss?" Harry stretches up to attach their lips momentarily.

Louis smiles into it and brackets Harry's body with his constricting thighs. Harry's lips curve upwards at the feeling and he forces his tongue past Louis' lips, tasting all of Louis' sweetness greedily. Louis moans and his arms wrap around Harry's head, holding him close as he surrenders. "Not tonight, darling." Harry does not feel confident about satisfying Louis while he feels disabled by the injury of his hand.

"Why not?" Louis' lips are on his neck and it's so tempting that Harry's eyes screw shut up exhale through parted lips and revel in the feeling of Louis' thin wet lips sucking on his vein. Harry doesn't answer but the swelling of his traitor dick alerts Louis of his apparent arousal. The boy is enjoying the reaction and rolls them over to put Harry under him.

"Louis." Harry sighs, rubbing Louis' bare thighs.

"I wanna." Louis whines, his hips grinding down on Harry's growing erection.

He's so enticing and God-like over Harry, rolling his hips sinfully with a bitten lip and small hands roaming Harry's body. The man can see Louis' pregnant baby pudge and it's always going to be the sexiest thing he's ever laid eyes on.

"Alright, darling." Harry meets Louis' thrusts with urgent hips rolling in figure eights filthily together. "Have to take it if you want it, baby."

Louis nods vigorously, so pleased that Harry's letting him do this. He yanks Harry's boxers down and with hungry eyes, he leans closer to the stiff red length.

"Be careful." Harry warns, voice like silk and caramel in Louis' foggy mind. "Don't get too excited and hurt yourself."

Louis' nodding again and goes back to tasting Harry. It's his favourite taste, the bitter sweetness that's perfectly juxtaposed. Harry throws his head back when wetness engulfs the fat head of his member, suckling on it. It's Louis so of course it's not expert techniques but Harry's never wanted anything different from the nervous tendencies of his boy.

"Fuck Lou." Harry grits, hips stuttering as Louis tries to go down further.

He tastes the warm skin and doesn't gag when his mouth is full, leading down his throat. Louis takes it like a pro because he's never wanted to do this more desperately in his life. He hollows his cheeks and moves his mouth, small hands holding Harry's bucking hips from hurting him.

Louis' tongue slides across the head, and Harry groans so loudly it echoes through the apartment.
The boy sucks hard, like his life depends on it and moans so the pleasurable vibrations go up Harry's body in all the right ways. He feels the vein on the underside of the ten inch member press against his tongue, and the foreskin is pulled back by Louis' teeth.

"Enough. Stop." Harry really doesn't sound like he wants that.

Louis pops off Harry's member with red, swollen lips and glassy vision. He's abruptly rolled over and only then becomes aware of the heavy length still in his boxers. He squirms and wiggles about until Harry gets the message and growls, tearing through the fabric to get to Louis' naked body.

"Mine." Harry breaths and the single word drives Louis' hormones through the roof. "All fucking mine."

There's no time to respond because Harry flips Louis onto his front, very mindful to place a soft pillow under Louis' tummy before doing so. He pulls Louis' cheeks apart and slaps one when Louis starts to roll his hips against the cushion.

"Mine." Harry watches the skin turn red, then pink. "Only I will pleasure you."

Louis mewls and looks over his shoulder to catch Harry eyeing him where he's begun to feel a new cold breeze hungrily. He gasps when Harry licks a fat stripe across his hole, stopping to dip the tip in before moving on.

"Mine." Harry massages the firm muscle of Louis' bum and presses gentle kisses all over where it's red from his spanking.

"Yours." Louis pants, sweat gathering on his clavicle and it feels like everything in the world is working to rile him up more.

"Mine to protect."

Harry sinks his teeth into the 'HARRY' scar and further marks the abused flesh. Louis' strength vanishes as he sighs into the possessive grip, going lax in this familiar hold.

When he thinks Louis' been neglected for two seconds too long now, Harry dives back into his previous occupation. He licks his lips first and removes their lube from his small bedside table. Louis manages to spread his legs just a little more, desperate to see what's being done to him.

"How are you so perfect, darling?" Harry kisses the base of Louis' spine, feeling the bones beneath his skin.

Louis' in no condition to answer in any higher form of English, but he thinks Harry's referring to the fact that he's basically hairless everywhere besides those baby hairs of his.

"L-Laser." He stutters, fists clenching in the sheets as he feels more sweat dampen his body. Harry's lips twitch where they're still resting on Louis' heated, flushed skin. He inhales with closed eyes and documents the scent, commits it to memory so he's ready to tell the world Louis is the sweetest-smelling thing in the universe.

"D-Daddy." Louis cries out desperately, reaching behind him to get a hand in Harry's hair. "Want you."

"I'm here, darling." Harry takes Louis' hand out of his hair and kisses his wrist where he can feel the racing pulse on his lips, wanting to be in synch with it so their hearts would beat the same.

Harry pours some of the aloe vera flavoured lube on Louis' rim, then on his fingers. He listens to
Louis' hiss at the cold contact, and blows on the spot where the liquid is staying put. Louis lifts himself on his elbows, but Harry holds him down with a flat hand on his back.

With vigour, Harry sinks a finger into Louis past the clenching ring of red muscle. His tongue matches the pace, unable to fit it alongside his right-hand digit just yet. He is careful with his bandaged hand, keeping it on the bed away from where it could worsen the healing process. When the angle gets difficult, and Harry's tongue tip just slides in with two fingers, Harry picks Louis' hips off the bed. He kept his left hand on Louis' thigh while the other worked at scissoring him open.

At three fingers, Harry was satisfied and pulled out. Louis whimpered at the loss of interaction and eagerly turned on his back for Harry. His own length was ignored and curved upward, weeping precome from the obvious stimulation.

"C'mere, baby." Harry wraps his able hand around Louis' ankle and slowly drags the surprised boy towards him, away from the pillows. "I love you, Lou."

Louis smiles dopily up at Harry and pulls him in for a sloppy kiss that ends up with too much teeth and tongue to be deemed a proper kiss. "I love you, Haz."

"Wrap your legs around me, princess." Louis obeys silently.

Harry loses it when he uses his right hand to position himself, but that meant his left hand serving as support for his body. That limb is still too weak, though he can't feel the stings and pain, to aid him that much and he crumbles. He falls onto Louis and the boy is thrown off by the impact.

"I'm sorry, Lou." Harry searches Louis' eyes frantically for any sign of harm.

Louis just giggles and shakes his head before rolling them over once more, knowing very well that this position was more suitable. Harry doesn't even feel insecure about it although he liked being actually on top, and runs his hands up Louis' thighs repeatedly.

He bites his lip hard enough for the wet skin to peel off and start to bleed into his mouth. The metallic taste only adds to the sexual atmosphere with more heat, more passion.

Carefully Louis lifts himself up on his knees and focusses on holding Harry's length in place before sinking back down slowly. He groans when the head presses against his fluttering rim, and pushes against the tightness to envelope the bulbous tip. It pops in and Harry moans in approval as he watches it all from the best possible angle. He always wants Louis on top now.

"Wanna go slow?" Harry sits up when Louis' bottomed out and slowly creating eights with his rolling hips.

The boy glances up at him and throws an arm around his neck, holding their bodies closer and maintaining eye contact. He shakes his head and groans when Harry plants his feet on the mattress, hitting his prostrate in just the right way. His head hangs back between his shoulder blades, his short fingernails creating half-moons on Harry's shoulders.

"Fuck." Harry mutters reverently, bucking up once and watching the way Louis loses his breath in favour of crying out.

He was so deep inside Louis that he was worried about Bean, about hurting the baby and Louis. Against Louis' wishes, he goes slowly with the roll and snap of his hips. Each thrust is deep and aimed at Louis' special spot. Harry puts a hand on Louis' tummy where he can always normally feel himself and presses his nose to Louis' neck.
"So full, aren't you?" He nips at the tanned skin. "Of me and my baby."

Louis brings his other hand to rest between Harry's swallows and gasps when he gets a hard thrust. It causes his orgasm to fall out of him in a tumble and for his body to clench Hellishly around Harry. When his back hits the cool sheets, Louis opens his eyes with a worried expression that flatters Harry unbelievably.

"I'm fine now, baby." Harry reassuringly kisses Louis' awaiting lips and just to prove his point, slams his hips against Louis' pelvic bone *hard*.

Louis screams and tosses his head back. "Harry!"

"Yes, baby." Harry turns his head to nuzzle Louis' neck and suck loving bruises into the skin as he started to fuck him. "Scream for me, darling. Want the whole street to wake up and hear me fucking you."

Louis is prey to Harry's dangerous mouth and all the dirty words that leave it. He's helpless and vulnerable. He spreads his legs wider and hitches them up higher on Harry's waist to encourage him to give him more.

"Shit." Harry rests on his forearms and starts to viciously snap his hips, each time the slap of skin on skin reverberates through the room. "You're *f*uck*ing* mine."

"Yours." Louis' hands fall to his sides and he feels his body jerk rhythmically with every Heavenly thrust from Harry.

Louis feels full when Harry's inside him, and hollow when he isn't. His noises cannot be helped and his jaw falls agape, trying to suck in as much air as his body will allow.

"Harder." He breathes. "Faster. Daddy, please."

Harry smirks down at him, falling forward to press their swollen lips together harshly. "Yeah? You've become so greedy, princess."

Louis gets the wind knocked out of him when Harry alters their positions, one of Louis' legs over his shoulder and the other sprawled to the side as he thrusts powerfully with animalistic impulse. Louis' certain he'll be limping tomorrow and have bruises down where Harry's showing no mercy. "Like that?" Harry drops Louis' leg when he realises that Bean's not going to like such a drastic stretch.

Louis nods anyway and comes between them, whining in a high-pitch when Harry doesn't stop. He didn't expect him too but the sensitivity of his clenching walls is too much. Harry eventually releases a copious amount of his load into Louis and drops down to rest on Louis despite the size difference.

"One of our best." Harry is panting into Louis' ear while he gets his arm caressed by Louis' spidery fingers.

"Definitely." Louis cranes his neck so they can kiss briefly. "You're crushing Bean."

Harry sits up and pulls Louis onto his lap. With wet wipes from where the lube arose, he cleans them both before extracting a third thing.

"Can't have my c*ck* in you all night." Harry is unsurprisingly disappointed by that. "So this will have to do."
Louis' too tired to care now and easily let's Harry insert the plug snugly in place, keeping the stretch and Harry's come inside him. It was comforting to feel claimed and marked up in that way, so he smiled and climbed onto Harry's chest to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

close the end of chapter seventeen by ss98. more to come so stay tuned
Louis' too tired to care now and easily let's Harry insert the plug snugly in place, keeping the stretch and Harry's come inside him. It was comforting to feel claimed and marked up in that way, so he smiled and climbed onto Harry's chest to sleep.

Harry had set an alarm for seven and woke up just before it could go off in blaring insanity. The news came on instead of an annoying ringtone on the digital clock, and he watched Louis' sleeping form in admiration as the reporter spoke.

The boy was still tucked into his side with a dainty palm on Harry's chest, looking so frail amongst the sea of black ink that Harry littered himself with. He took the hand in his fully capable own, while the bandaged left hand ran lines up and down Louis' side. The sensations were probably ticklish and made Louis squirm, a far from threatening frown forming on his face.

Harry moved to Louis' tummy where it smelt like disinfectant wipes and the pudge was perfectly formed. He traced the outline of it and when Louis shifted, hauled the boy onto his chest for safekeeping. He kissed Louis' forehead and telepathically sent his wishes for the boy to wake up to him.

Louis' body fitted into its ideal slot from Harry's body, and it was a settling thought to have that maybe - by some divine providence - people were actually made for each other in a physical sense.

"Darling?" Harry sneakily felt around for the plug and when he found it, he applied pressure to the base.

Louis grumbled something incoherent that sounded like 'Leave me be.', but it didn't mar Harry's intentions. He felt Louis' foot tuck itself between his thighs and his chest lie flush against Harry's as he sighed contentedly.

"I'm gonna make us breakfast. You can shower first, okay?" Harry slid Louis off him and it felt like detaching himself from the warmth of the world.

Nonetheless, Louis obeyed and started to wake up. He knows that he's potentially the worst he's been in terms of soreness, every step meant a wince and biting his lip because of the delicious burn between his legs. He's grown complacent since meeting Harry, feeling like he now had the man to look after him so there was no need for early rising and a strict regimen for himself. He liked - loved - feeling small and cared for because that world was safe and made him happy all the time. Most of the time.

Harry leaves the bedroom in the general direction of the kitchen and Louis pads into the joined bathroom, all yawns and hunger demands from Bean. After a refreshing shower he dresses in the clothes he'll use for uni from the bags Harry brought.

In a printed T-shirt he liked not because Lil Wayne used it in a skimpy music video but because the alien caption had amused him, a pair of blue jeggings that hugged all his feminine curves in just the right places and black secret socks, Louis strides into the living room.
He almost trips on something that he doesn't remember being there and gasps when he looks under his shoeless foot.

"What's Bolg doing here?" Louis asks, watching the creature crawling towards the lounge carpet that's thick and red.

"I thought you'd appreciate the sentiment." Harry greets him with a longer kiss than necessary when Louis comes to sit on the opposite side of the breakfast counter.

There were waffles already on a plate and two tall glasses of orange juice. Louis gives up drooling over the food to ogle Harry instead, the man with as a gorgeous vision from the merciful Gods above. He knows Harry would scoff at that and say he came from the pits of Hell instead.

"I am gratefully." Louis beams. "Is Bundy here too?"

"He's in the studio still. Probably just didn't leave his cage." Harry shrugs, turning back to the stove. "C'mere, darling."

Louis takes two steps around the solid counter, he approaches Harry with quizzicial eyebrows. He's smirking suspiciously when Harry cups the side of his face and leans down to share in a languid kiss. Louis' fingers fan out on his bicep and he lifts his weight onto his tiptoes.

"Shoes?" Harry doesn't like Louis moving around in just socks that are so thin.

"Don't wanna wear 'em now." Louis' pouting at Harry's prominent Adam's Apple.

"That's fine but don't let the cold affect Bean, okay?" Harry kisses his lips and temple leisurely.

"Eat, while I shower."

"Alone?" Louis turns to look at Harry's hesitantly retreating figure.

"I won't be long. Eat, love."

With the huff of a fussy child, Louis begins to stab a fluffy waffle and has a fair dosage of maple syrup with some berries. Morning sickness hasn't started so Louis has a while to enjoy being around food variations. After the over sweet taste of waffles, Louis takes some scrambled eggs from the heated frying pan with half a sausage.

He turns around and nearly knocks himself over in shock.

"Harry!" Louis clutches his chest and the fork-speared sausage in his hands.

Harry's dressed from the waist down, but putting his tattoos and marks on display for now. He's smirking at Louis as if surprising the boy nearly into cardiac arrest is amusing.

"Not funny." Louis mutters, poking Harry's chest. "Mean."

"Sorry, princess." Harry takes Louis' hand with the fork and bites a chunk out of the sausage.

"Where'd you come from?"

Harry sips his orange juice as he manoeuvres around Louis to set a tiny tube of something orange into the extravagant coffee maker. "Mother's womb."

Louis rolls his eyes, turning back to appreciate his plate of food - and a quarter of a sausage since he started out with half - when Harry seizes his waist. Without breaking the intense staring they're a
part of, Harry slips his hand into Louis' trousers at the back and feels the plug still there.

"Such a good boy." Harry smirks proudly, flashing his perfect teeth and lust flickering in his dark eyes.

"I cleaned myself." Louis erases that smirk quicker than developing it.

"You did?"

Louis nods hesitantly, looking away from Harry's gaze to where Bolg has reached the carpet. "Let's rectify that situation then." Harry picks Louis up off the ground and glances at the clock. They have plenty of time.

Giggling and tightening his weaker arms around Harry's neck, Louis turns his neck to look over his shoulder at where they're going. The small table that serves as a reservoir for mailed letters and sometimes a dining room table on the opposite end of the room, it seems. Louis' interest gets more curious.

Harry sets him on his feet and goes for the button on his jeans, popping it deftly before working the tight zip. He frowns at this because tight zips meant constriction for their Bean.

"No more tight clothing." Harry pushes the pants down and drapes it over a chair back. "Bean could be uncomfortable."

Louis cooes at the thought of their unborn, undeveloped little Bean. Not long after, Harry picks him up by under his arms to seat him on the solid table.

"So pretty." Harry kisses Louis' neck in a wet trail, clasping the backs of the boy's knees to tighten around his waist. "Lean back, baby."

Leaning all his weight on his elbows, Louis watches Harry sit down on a chair between his legs.

"All yours, Daddy."

Harry's eyes meet Louis' in a fleeting moment where they exchange something silent and shy, before the man is back to massaging the inside of Louis' thighs and spreading his legs. He props Louis' feet up on the edge of the table with bent knees raised in the air.

"Aw." Harry peppers feather light pecks with damp lips over the 'HARRY' engraving. "Are you sore, darling?"

Suddenly Harry's waking up and bending at an uncomfortable angle to kiss Louis swiftly. "Don't move."

Louis doesn't ask questions. He never does. He just lays there, sprawled out on the bloody dining room table watching Bolg weave through tall strands of synthetic wool. He's breathing heavily and his underwear has gotten excessively tight so he chucks the article of clothing aside.

Click.

In a haste, Louis covers himself with his shirt and sits up to see what made that noise. "What are you doing?" Louis relaxes when he sees Harry. Harry with a camera.

"Documenting." Harry shrugs and comes back to his rightful seat with the Durex lube. "Lie back."
Louis nods and falls slowly, his back sticking to the table's surface where his shirt rode up from all his squirming. Harry grabs the base of the plug and slowly extracts it; sitting gave him the ultimate view of how Louis' body repeatedly clenched around the toy. It released completely with a soft popping sound that made Harry bite his lip.

"You look sore." Harry's so very smug about it, his agile fingers pressing at all the right places. His eyes feast on the fragile state that Louis is in, all flushed and glistening pink. Louis' still stretched and the tight muscle flutters, gripping repeatedly to nothing but air and makes Harry salivate. His own pants tighten until the outline of his bulge is recognisable. He knew there was no serious pain, and that Louis enjoyed the tenderness of feeling absolutely wrecked.

"You're so beautiful." Harry kisses Louis' tummy on the pudge, down to his muscular thighs and plants one right over Louis' hole.

Small fingers tighten in his hair and the musical sound of Louis' broken moans in several pitches, fill the flat. Harry parts his lips, still pressed to the sweet smelling skin, and plunges his tongue into Louis. There's not much resistance and he can feel the squeeze of Louis' walls closing around him. He seals his mouth around the intrusion and forms a strong suction with all the power of his exercised lungs.

Louis' vision begins to dim and black spots are forming to represent the pleasure flowing so openly through his willing body. He pauses between tugging on Harry's hair and scratching his own thigh to scream. His body picks up every movement of Harry's now that he's pressed to close in such an intimate place. He feels Harry's groans and his smile, each one sending sinful vibrations up Louis' back causing it to arch.

When Harry removes Louis' hands from his hair and releases his legs, Louis whines and tries to gather that lost energetic attention again. He attempts to keep Harry between his legs because the man had a tongue of sin and lust, and Louis' greedy for it.

"Lou, baby." Harry chuckles like Louis' not a whimpering mess on his dining table. "I'm going to fill you up with something better, okay?"

The confession catches Louis' attention and he becomes obedient once again, anticipating the moment Harry stopped taking so long. He even spread his legs equally apart to attract the man's longing attention.

Harry unzips his fly and releases his throbbing erection that's hardened to its true length, showing off his size as he pressed the head against Louis' rim. It was a stretch and the healing of last night had to be stopped in order for him to fit.

Louis locks his ankles around Harry's back and pulls him in, arching off the sticky table when Harry bottoms out. Their hips meet in the best possible way and Louis' blinded from sanity with the amazing burn of feeling so full. Harry keeps his left forearm pressed against the table and the right creates finger-shaped bruises for Louis to remember him by.

"Tell me if you want me to stop, okay?" Harry puts his left hand on Louis' tummy.

"I don't." Louis blinks away his fuzzy state of mine. "Want you."

"I know, darling. But Bean can't be uncomfortable."

Louis agrees so he nods and blushes when he gets pulled up into a sitting position. Harry forces Louis' thighs to be hitched on his thighs and starts to thrust shallowly in and out.
"Damn camera." Louis gasps at the loud snap and bright flash.

"Shh." Harry picks his thighs off the table and begins to fuck deeper, burying his face in Louis' neck at the overwhelming silky heat that's enveloping him.

"Love you." Louis hasn't said it as yet and can't have them forgetting.

Harry grunts into Louis' neck and takes some of the already branded skin between his teeth. "Love you."

Louis knows this won't be their last time doing something so naughty on a surface like this, so he finishes quicker than usual. Harry releases into him after feeling the tightness strengthen around him, and inserts the plug to take his place - to a lesser standard - in record time.

"Tired?" Harry smiles at Louis' swaying form.

Louis nods, eyes half-lidded and hair disarrayed. "Little bit."

"Think you'll survive the day long enough to come with me to a doctor's appointment?"

"What appointment?" Louis pulls up his pants and tries not to flinch as how sensitive he is now that he has clothes on, rubbing against his skin.

"We need to know more about Bean." Harry answers, taking Louis' hand and leading him back to the kitchen after a thorough clean-up. "I made an appointment with a Dr. Cole for twelve today since we both have an hour break at that time."

Louis nods in understanding, only slightly disoriented now from previous heated escapades. He suddenly remembers the Seattle trip and how Harry ignored his wishes by paying for him. "When's the Seattle thingie?" He asks, nibbling on another waffle with eggs. He really wants a sausage now that Harry's already bitten his.

"February third." Harry responds, sliding smoothly onto a tall stool and heaving Louis onto his lap. "Why do you ask?"

"That's a few days away." There are eight days to be exact. Louis feeds himself more egg, craving meat.

"Don't stress about that." Harry kisses his temple. "We won't even go if the doctor says we can't."

"I want to go."

"I'll take you after Bean's born if you really want to."

Harry has nothing to lean against so he mainly leaned on Louis with as little weight as possible. He set the camera to take three consecutive photos every minute, so it goes off once again - on the kitchen counter this time - and captures their moment. Harry's legs overflow and Louis' don't touch the ground, Harry's body completely shields Louis' and hides him from the world.

"What time's your first lecture?" Harry asks, his injured and freshly bandaged hand rubbing Louis' tummy in an old-fashioned, possessive way.

Louis grabs his phone from the charger and checks his schedule. "Quarter to nine."
Harry hums in acknowledgement. "I've been thinking about changing my course."

"Oh? Why?" Louis notices how Harry left his own sausage untouched on his plate, and decides that it's now his.

"I don't like what I'm doing now." Harry shrugs.

"You love photography."

"No, I mean that at first I took so many subjects just so I could find you but I don't like sacrificing that much time dealing with all of them."

"So what do you want to change to?"

"I'll drop everything and take one major course."

"Major? You need lots of credit for a major course."

"I have that." Harry nuzzles Louis’ neck and admires how perfectly shaped it is, with no knots and stiff muscles. "I was a straight A-plus student and I have extra credit for the admission."

The coffee machine is done preparing Harry's expensive coffee and beeps with a flickering green light on the lid. Louis collects the blank mug from under the nozzle and hands it to Harry.

"What major course were you thinking of?" Louis finishes up his food and watches Harry take the first sip of the scalding beverage. "And isn't that hot?"

Harry sets the mug down, filling the air with a wonderful coffee bean aroma. "Yes it probably was but, I couldn't feel it."

"You could hurt yourself!" Louis bats Harry's hands away from the mug and stirs the black drink with a spoon.

"Medicine." Harry answers Louis’ question. "Anesthesiology, to be specific."

That's a shock. It's a surprise to Louis and he almost stops stirring the coffee. "That's a lot of work if you're starting now."

"Saying I'm too old?" Harry laughs.

"I'm saying it's a lot of work for anyone. I remember those requirements clearly."

"Twelve years of study. Four years doing a pre-requisite college course with Bachelor of Science. Four years getting a medical degree at med school and another four years for a residency."

Louis knows Harry did his research thoroughly if he's looking into actually altering his course officially. It's just a drastic change and although he has full faith in Harry’s capabilities, he knows those courses are hands-on and notoriously well-known for their time-consuming nature.

"If you're sure-" Louis smiles. "-then I'll support you."

Harry's shaking his head and watching over Louis' shoulder as steam comes out of the coffee being carefully stirred. "You know I'm joking, Lou."

"Hmm?"
Harry's wild cackle makes Louis fidget and blush. "Lou, studying medicine would take all my time. Take me away from you and Bean. I don't want that."

"Oh. Your jokes are awful, Haz." Louis lifts the mug to his lips to do a test but Harry takes it away before he can. "Hey."

"No caffeine for you. It's not good for Bean."

* * * * *

"Lou!"

Niall is jogging across the parking lot towards said person, who is being held around the waist by Harry and having kisses demanded from. "Kiss me." Harry brings his lips very close to Louis' again.

"Niall's here." Louis turns away with a cheeky smile and greets his best friend. "Morning, Niall."

"I thought you weren't coming today." Niall eyes Harry's stance but moves on quickly.

"I'd miss you too much, Ni." Louis knows Niall can't see that Harry's whispering about kisses in his ear whilst nibbling on his ear lobe, so it's his duty to guard that blissful ignorance.

"Clearly." Niall knows. There's no way he doesn't know since Harry's being so indiscreet about it. "Also, I have an invite for you."

"Invite?"

"Yeah for our entire dorm. There's a party at Beau's brother's dorm and we're invited." Louis nods, hands pushing futilely at Harry's shoulders. The man is a human boulder. "I'll let you know. I don't like parties. It's too loud, too bright and too drunk. He has Bean to worry about nowadays."

"See you in class?"

Louis sends Niall the saddest, most apologetic look he can manage with Harry crushing him. Niall laughs as if it's hilarious and runs off with a pathetic wave.

"Why must you go?" Harry's kissing all the visible marks of claim he made under Louis' turtle neck - the boy had to change after he took one look at his reflection.

"I have class now." Louis brings Harry's head away from his neck. "So do you."

"Kiss?"

Louis presses their lips together, simultaneously moving Harry's hands away from his back. He is careful with the bandage, but Harry wore an extra long-sleeved shirt to hide it already.

"Have a good day, baby." Harry kisses Louis' nose.

"Ditto. Learn something artful for me."
Niall's been making loud kissing noises for the past ten minutes.

"Niall!" Louis whisper-shouts at his friend. There's a row of them now, all Louis' dorm mates who are partaking in the public humiliation scheme.

"Lou-Lou?" Niall blinks innocently and if it weren't for those eyes of his, Louis would have managed to stay angry.

"You're a menace."

"I didn't take you for an exhibitionist, Lou." Beau says, making Louis turn tomato red and want to melt into his chair.

"Shh!" Niall throws a pencil at the boy. "People are looking."

Indeed people were looking and Louis has a new death wish for his dorm brothers, but he rubs his tummy and feels better. Bean always makes him better, being such a soothing presence as a constant companion.

After that horrific lecture, Louis now has eight assessments to complete before the Seattle trip. Only four are complete. Harry sat in three of his lectures, and received one spectacular project that's going to carry a chunk of their final grade.

"Does anyone know about the Arts on Main fair?" His female lecturer asks the class as they sat in front of canvases at different stations.

Harry didn't, so he kept quiet. It's become harder for him to not glower at everyone for just being there with their glorious Wednesday morning smiles and exposed throats. He wants to cut it all, like a man with a sickle but no power. Louis' not here to cuddle with him and giggle and tell him that he'll be bloody fine.

"Lazy, all of you." She shook her head and laughed. "The fair is one of the cities' biggest ones. There's an open market where the students from the culinary classes will prepare food, then there's the art. This year they'll showcase your work."

There's a rise of approving noises and excited peeps. Harry Googles the Arts on Main fair on his phone. It's a good distraction from staring at the way his lecturer's spot of skin on her clavicle beats with her pulse.

He let's his mind wander - no harm in that - to what could cause something like that. Cutting the skin would tell him for sure.

"Unfortunately there are only five galleries available so when you give me those projects I asked for last week, I will choose five of you. You'll be given a space and asked to fill it with your original work before August."

It sounded interesting and Harry would have photography plus drawn, painted and sketched art to put up. He misses having Louis' body to caress and calm himself down so much.

"That will carry sixty percent of your final mark. Not this year but at the end of your three years. I'll give the selected five the criteria and rubric later."
There's a knock on the door and everyone turns to look at the keeper of the Biology lab - where the student body kept their live animals for research - stands there in her knitted skirt sheepishly. Harry goes back to his phone after one look at her.

"Sorry to disturb you, Lizzy." She says first. "The lock of the bio-lab won't open and I need one of your students to help out if they can please."

"Oh of course." Harry's professor is so polite. "Harry?"

He *hates* her, and makes sure the glare he sends her way conveys that message. He doesn't let anyone volunteer him because he'll go if he damn well pleases on his own. Fuck her piety.

"Would you mind?" The intruder asks.

Everyone's looking at him. Anticipating. Waiting. Bored. His hyper-sensitive nose can smell sweat and flavoured gum being smacked between someone's molars probably. He thinks about Louis and how mad he'll be if Harry was outwardly rude. They're trying to work past that together now.

Without a word to anyone, he wakes up and walks out ahead of the intruding teacher. He takes the keys from her hand and ignores her completely. He's doing them a favour but he won't be pleasant at the same time.

"Are you always this grumpy?" She questions as if she's fucking allowed to.

Harry slides the key into the padlock, already able to hear the skittering noises of tiny creatures. *Tiny and vulnerable creatures.* Harry wants to hold them. *Tightly.*

"Thanks, Harry." She says gratefully after Harry yanked the stubborn lock with his right, uninjured hand and it sprung free.

He left her keys attached to the lock and walked off.

By the time twelve o'clock comes around, Louis hasn't seen Harry all day but waits beside the Dodge anyway. He planned his day mentally whilst he sat on the nearest bench.

He needed to cancel dance lessons - adding forever to that sentence was depressing - and visit the gym's pregnancy-friendly zone while Harry worked out. He felt like watching *Grease* tonight but first he'd complete one entire assessment.

After ten minutes Louis saw Harry storming out of the Fine Arts building, walking in his direction like he knew where Louis was without looking up. Louis stands, and barely has time to put his satchel back on his shoulder before Harry's right in front of him, broad and intimidating.

"Kiss me." Is all he says before his lips are slotted into place with Louis'.

Louis almost stumbles backward from the surprise, but Harry has him around the middle. His calloused hand draws calming circles on Louis' pudge under his shirt and he bites the boy's bottom lip.

"What's wrong?" Louis wasn't naïve enough to think that Harry reacted that way just because he wanted to. He knew better than that.

"I feel like I've taken a celibacy oath." Harry grits and maybe it sounded funny but no one's meant to laugh, the pained look in Harry's eye was no joke.

"If you did, then you've broken it at least twice so far."
Harry's smirk lessens the worry in his eye. "It'll be three, maybe four by tomorrow morning."

"Wishful thinking." Louis giggles and Harry's chest loosens up a little. "Tell me your troubles now."

"It's hard, Lou." Harry exhales through clenched teeth. "It's so difficult."

"What is?"

Harry's not ashamed to say it, even if they are in public. The world is such that the passer-by's will just think him to be a lunatic stuck in his prime dimension before moving on to family dinners.

"To look at them. To know that everyone's......out of my reach.” He doesn't know how to explain it to someone who understands but can't empathise.

"You never felt this way before, Harry. Even when you weren't doing anything but could."

"That's because I knew that I could. Now, there's a.....a fucking restriction and when you're not around it's impossible to look away."

Louis sighs, feeling a burst of regret coming on but he couldn't back down on this. If he did, it'll ruin the future of their baby and he'd rather die than let that happen.

"I'm sorry, Haz." Louis has to tilt his head upwards to look into Harry's eyes that are tinted over in black and so uncertain. "I can't relate to you but I know it must suck to go through that."

At least Louis wasn't pretending to get everything Harry's saying. He appreciated that he wasn't pulling the old 'put yourself in my shoes' technique that every therapist tried.

"I'll do anything to help you, Haz. You know that." Louis smiles but it's a nervous one that ends with a twitch.

"Love you."

"I love you too, Harry."

The thing is, love doesn't take away pain. The figurative pain that hurt Harry worse than any physical pain could. Instead, love masked the pain and made it better for a short time: but when that time was up and something wasn't there to block it, it would erupt in his face.

It's for those reasons that Harry smoked two cigarettes on the way to the doctor's appointment. Louis said nothing.

Dr. Cole's office was in a private building in the middle of the city, next to the most expensive square block in Chicago. Harry parked in the underground parking and held Louis' door open for him. His princess is still the only person he'd use his gentleman manners on.

"Ready?" He held Louis' hand and kissed his knuckles because the scent calmed him and their purpose here, even more so.

"Not really." Louis was guarded in his responses but he tried distracting Harry as often as he could.

"No?"

"I'm excited but-" Louis wrings his fingers tightly together nervously. ",maybe it was just a glitch the first time?"
With an amused smirk directed at Louis' paranoia, Harry flinches without feeling pain but noticing the swelling in his wrist. It's nearly purple and bloated.

"A glitch? Is that possible?" Harry hides his hand behind Louis' back when the nurse summons them.

Louis and Harry are directed down a short hallways that smells of clinical alcohol and baby wipes, before a door with Dr. Cole's name on it is opened for them. Inside they are greeted by a friendly looking doctor in light blue scrubs with a spotless white coat over it. His full head of brown hair and carefree smile sets Louis' anxiety at ease but just fires up Harry's.

"Mr. Tomlinson." Dr. Cole stretches his arm out.

"Louis." His response is polite and topped off with a smile.

"Mr. Styles." Dr. Cole smiles all the same at Harry, who just nods stiffly after a firm handshake and sits down next to Louis.

The office is spacious and very elegant, Harry notices. There are many crystal figurines on the edge of Dr. Cole's large table in different colours.

"They're good feng shui." The doctor notices Harry staring at the mini ornaments.

"They're beautiful." Louis compliments.

"Thank you, Louis. Now-" The doctor seats himself opposite them with his hands folded. "-you're here because I've only dealt with male pregnancies and you want the best for your baby. Do you have any questions?"

They didn't really, not yet so Louis shakes his head for the both of them.

"We're going to do a scan and maybe we'll see something because male pregnancies work faster in the first trimester but the heartbeat can only be heard four or six weeks in."

Louis lies on the stiff rubbery bed and lifts his shirt, Harry standing supportively by his side and clasping his hand. The cold gel is spread and Louis watches how intently Harry's following Dr. Cole's actions as if trying memorise them for later.

"Do I smell cigarette smoke?" Cole's questioning gaze, laced with disapproval, moves between Louis and Harry. "Mr. Styles?"

Harry wasn't going to answer and Louis knew that, so he said something before the awkward silence grew tangible. "He smokes regularly."

"Well, we can't be doing that around Louis. This little baby could be born with a disability or incurable condition if he or she is constantly exposed to environments like that."

_Fucking great_, Harry thinks to himself but his eyes were always the most expressive part of him and Louis notices the hot irritation.

"There we are." Dr. Cole has the wand pressed to Louis' slightly lower tummy. "One little baby." Harry can see perfectly and the corner of his mouth lifts in a purely joyful twitch when he observes the faint wriggling of a bean that will grow into half Louis, half himself. It's way past miraculous and extraordinary now.
"Can we have a moment please?" Louis asks the gynaecologist and receives a nod in answer. "Haz?"

Harry looks up from the monitor where he's willing Bean to move a little more and notices that they're alone. "Hmm?"

"You okay?" Louis reaches up and caresses the side of Harry's face.

"Yeah." Harry breathes, cupping Louis' hand with his and leaning into the warm touch. "That's Bean."

"That is."

Louis sat up straighter and wiped the gel off his stomach with complimentary tissues. He takes note of Harry's tension and remembers the first ultrasound as a regrettable experience.

"Harry, if you...-" Louis doesn't know how to say it, how to draw Harry out of miserable bubble he's isolated himself in.

"If I what?" Harry seems to grope at the attention.

"You don't have to....stay with me. There's no-"

"Obligation?"

Louis nods, taking back his hand feeling a little relieved and a lot worried.

"Lou, we've discussed this already." Harry quickly covers Louis' front with his shirt and brings their bodies closer. "I love being here. I don't feel obligated because there's nothing I want more."

"I'm sorry, you're just....not with me."

"I know, I was distracted but I'm here now. I promise."

"Thank you." Louis presses the cold tip of his nose to Harry's neck. "Can you call Dr. Cole back please?"

When Harry promised to be mentally present for the rest of the appointment, he meant it. He answered every question directed at him and when there were none he read the many pamphlets given to him by Dr. Cole. They got digital photos of Bean and had to pay a much higher fee to have the digital Blackberry photo displayer with it. It was magical and Harry liked that it was a moving image of their baby, maybe repetitive and not a live feed, but Louis lit up everytime he glanced at it. They asked about air travel for the Seattle trip and were assured that it would be okay, as long as Louis took the pills now prescribed to him and ate on the flight.

The other bits of information Harry commits to memory and makes a reminder to check on the food they have. He wasn't going to keep any unhealthy groceries beyond what they really wanted.

"Your wrist." Dr. Cole nods in Harry's direction. "Lost a finger?"

Harry's about to growl and tell him to fuck off because that wasn't his business, but the good doctor continues.

"It shouldn't be swelling if it's healed enough to be out of a brace."

Louis makes a confused face as he rises to his feet. "They didn't give Harry a brace."
"They didn't? Well that's extreme negligence." Dr. Cole shakes his head in a disgusted manner. "This building houses many specialists' offices, let me call my friend to come check it out please. She's the best radiologist and will take care of you in no time."

It's Louis' insisting expression, that's dripping with defined concern and worry that gets Harry to sit back down.

"I'm fine." Harry whispers to Louis while Cole's on the phone with his friend.

"It's swelling, Harry." Louis chews his bottom lip. "I can't believe I didn't notice."

"I wouldn't let you."

"Why?" Louis looks positively outraged.

"Didn't need you to worry. It's nothing fatal, princess."

"You can't know that, Hazza."

The other friendly doctor comes in - apparently on her lunch break - with bright amber eyes and dazzling teeth. She introduces herself as Dr. Hepburn and goes on to examine Harry's hand very delicately while Louis hugs himself and chews his thumb nail.

"Does it hurt?" She asks strictly.

"I don't know." Harry answers.

"Meaning?"

"Congenital analgesia, I have it."

The look on her face melts into something more reverential but cautious. "Really? That's a rare condition."

Harry doesn't say anything as she removes the bandage and opens the well-equipped briefcase that accompanied her up three elevator levels. He pulls out an iPad and a cylindrical scanner while Louis comes to Harry's side, fitting in effortlessly with Harry's healthy arm encircling his waist.

"There's no fracture."

"But I brought this for you anyway. You must wear it no matter how much it bothers you, okay?"

"What's the purpose of this?" Harry eyes the brace in her hand.

"We need to keep as much blood as possible flowing correctly. Your finger has open nerves and won't stop bleeding if you keep using it as if it's normal. Wear this and it will make the healing easier."

"How long does he have to wear it for?" Louis enquires as the newer professional wraps Harry's hand from finger stub to wrist again in a blue bandage.

"You need a family doctor to record this and tell you but if you want, you can come back to me in a month."

Harry doesn't trust doctors, especially now that he's been robbed of a proper first few recovery days but agrees with her anyway.

"I'll start a file. Here are some forms I need you to fill these in-" Dr. Hepburn hands Louis a thick
envelope. "-and get them back to me, okay?"

"Alright, we will." Louis plasters his public-polite smile as he accepts the offering. "Thank you."

Harry has a wrist brace made of structured metal over a hard, stiff bandage dressing. He has to wear an arm sling that kept his hand angular and able to heal without any physical exertion. The brace was new and the bandage had powder in its fibres that were beginning to itch, and Harry was fucking angry about it all.

They were quiet on the way back to their campus, with Louis in the driver's seat. Louis could sense Harry's tension and Harry was numb to everything not concerning him. He never should have gotten out of bed.

The professors didn't care that they pitched up almost half an hour late and had to ask the person next to them what had happened thus far.

Louis went through the rest of his day without any obstacles, and when it came time for his class with Harry he was excited. It's been nearly five hours since he kissed Harry at the Dodge when they got back from the appointments and maybe it was over-active pregnancy hormones, but he really missed Bean's father.

Except when Harry walked into the class he immediately took a seat at the front, despite Louis having kept a spot for him as he always did.

Louis knows he did something wrong, and he doesn't know what to do. Maybe that freak comment was still alive, or maybe Harry changed his mind. Men can do that.

After the lecture ended, Louis expected Harry to get up and leave without a word. He even planned to ask Niall for cash so he could take a cab, or maybe he'll stay in the dorm again. Instead, Harry waited dutifully by the door and Louis took longer than necessary packing up because of slight pinches in his tummy.

"Jesus, Bean." Louis mutters under his breath, supporting himself on the table after bending over. "Lou?" The voice Louis' been missing so much to mend his wounded heart is right next to him, whispering in his ear.

"I'm fine." It's ruder than he intended it to be.

A big hand is moving his away from his tummy and taking its place. Harry picks Louis up to his full height and kisses his forehead.

"I'm sorry." Harry tells him softly, lips pressed to Louis' temple.

"Why didn't you come sit with me?" Louis closes his eyes and leans into Harry, tilted to the right because he doesn't want to further aggravate the bandaged half.

"I don't know." Feeling guilty, Harry wraps an arm around Louis' back and presses their bodies into a perfect fit. "I was so angry earlier and I just didn't think."

"I missed you."

"I love you, princess." Harry leans in closer to kiss Louis' lips and feel the negative feelings from today just flow off him. "You're the best thing that's ever happened to me."

There's no opportunity to reply because Harry shamelessly forces his tongue into Louis' mouth and squeezes his bum through his jeans. He wishes he could use both hands but even now he can feel
the plug Louis' been keeping inside him all day.

"Let's go home." Harry says, picking Louis' bag up.

He wants to pick Louis up but due to obvious circumstances he can't. There's no better experience than holding Louis really close and feeling Bean's baby pudge against him. Even though it's another infuriating thing for Harry, he just let's himself be taken with his princess.

"Aren't we going to gym?" His princess asks, climbing into the car.

"We have an hour or so before we have to." Harry gets into the driver's seat and prepares himself to drive with one hand.

"Harry, I can drive."

"It's okay."

Louis leans back in his seat and closes his eyes as the scenery starts to blur around him. As he contemplates the body of a presentation he has to do based on one theme and six literature pieces, Harry turns the radio on. The latest news report distracts Louis for a short while.

"Police haven't made any comment yet but it seems the bodies were forced into wine barrels-

Harry turns it off right after he listens to that, and Louis watches his knuckles turn page white on the steering wheel.

"Was that-"

"Not now." Harry snaps then sighs. "Sorry, baby."

"It's okay."

Louis understands. He tries to get better at it everyday for Harry and Bean's sake. He knows that Harry wants to get away from a terrible past and he wants to help in every way possible.

"Are you hungry?" Harry parks in the private garage next to the only elevator in the lot.

Louis shakes his head and yawns, making a cute tired noise at the end. Harry caves when he opens Louis' door and stops Louis from jumping down.

"Wrap your legs around me." He instructs, all business-like because he can't afford to mess this up.

"I can walk, Hazza." Louis giggles and the light in his eyes are magnetic.

"I don't want you to."

"Your arm is hurt."

"But I love you more."

Harry doesn't get to carry Louis upstairs in the end, because Louis hopped down and avoided Harry's arms that were constantly gravitating towards him. Once inside the apartment - Louis wasn't sure if it's theirs but he doesn't want to think that because his name is nowhere on the lease - Harry takes their stuff to the studio while Louis changes.

The floor-length mirror in the walk-in closet never really came in handy, but Louis couldn't stop
looking at his stomach with it. He pushed it out a little and pulled up his shirt to expose his skin, make it look more real. Harry walked in looking for his pregnant princess who was easily deterred from any path, and leaned against the doorway silently to watch.

"We'll get there." He said through the silence.

Louis, as always, knew Harry was there the whole time because his body had easily latched onto a sixth sense that constantly alerted him of Harry's nearby presence.

"I know." He settles against Harry's chest when the man winds his arms around his body from behind.

"I'm impatient too." Harry sets his perfect chin on Louis' shoulder.

"You are?"

"As a father, I want to meet my baby as soon as I can." Harry's hand spans out across Louis' flat tummy. "Let's go out tonight."

"No." Louis' quick in his response and breaks into a soft giggle after.

"No?"

"No." Louis repeats.

"Why not?"

"Because we have gym until six."

"We can be back by nine."

"What do you have in mind?"

Harry didn't tell him, but promised Louis a good enough surprise. All through Louis' training session with a personal guide at the gym - employed for those like Louis who can't do the basics anymore because of pregnancy - he tried to crack the riddle. Bridget was not there and Louis found that he actually missed her company. He took swimming lessons and those were quite interesting because Louis particularly enjoyed the coming night casting such beautiful shadows in the heated pool.

He showered more thoroughly than the first time because they aren't going home right after, washing his hair and scrubbing himself. He thought about putting the plug back into him after having removed it for the gym session, but the tender nature of his sore behind left him against it. Harry had another twenty or so minutes left to work out, so after being allowed a brief moment to greet Louis with a peck on the lips he went back to work. Louis sat cross-legged on the table against the wall and read very softly to Bean and himself. Today's choice was The Book Thief. When Harry finished showering he looked like a dirty vision. The sweat droplets were replaced by water and his body gel left a trail of scent everywhere he walked. His hair was wet and sticking to the sides of his face and neck.

"How do you train?" Louis asks, because Harry couldn't have been doing proper boxing with a stiff arm.

"I had to work with one arm and a punching bag." Harry answers. "Treadmills and weights."
Nodding, Louis stood to help Harry back into his brace and bandages. He couldn't use them when he worked out because the risk of damage was great.

"They told me I shouldn't come back until my hand is healed." Harry continues. "I could hurt it even more."

"Then you should listen to them, love."

"That is forfeiture."

"No, you caveman." Louis wiggles to the side so his body puts no pressure on Harry's arm sling. "It's accepting some excellent advice."

"I'll listen to you since you agree, but not anyone else."

"Biased." Louis turns his head to the side to kiss Harry's piece of art jawline, nudging at his warm neck with a cold nose.

"I prefer to call it in love with."

"You're biased and in love."

"I'm crazy and in love."

Harry's date idea was last minute and nothing spectacular, but Louis loved it from the moment Harry opened his car door.

"You brought me to the cinema complex?" Louis let's Harry clasp his hand for warmth against the cold and undying chill that travelled with Chicago's wind.

"I still owe you that movie." Harry brought Louis around to his right side and threw an arm delicately over his small but proportionate shoulders.

"I forgot about that." Louis admits, feeling the cold breeze whip through his damp hair and making him sneeze.

"Lou." Harry sighs with a disappointed tone. "Did you dry your hair?"

"You didn't."

"I have a strong immune system."

"So do I."

With an unamused frown, Harry leads Louis into the building with a quick pace. It's warm inside with carpeted floors and lots of people waiting in queues. Harry pushes Louis against a nearby wall and blocks all his escape routes.

"I'm fine, Hazza." Louis whines when Harry starts running his fingers through his hair.

"You'll get sick." Harry curts, in no mood to banter with Louis.

"Then you'll take care of me."
"I obviously will but why would I when we can easily avoid all that? Plus, Bean will get sick too and we don't want that, do we?"

"No." Louis' pout is the most beautiful thing to land on this Earth and Harry will attest to that.

"Let's go." Harry figures he can't do much now that they're already in public with no resources.

"Wait here."

Louis stands obediently by the main entrance for Harry to return. A cleaner from the bathrooms notices him standing alone.

"Waiting for someone, are we?" The aged man is golden haired and brown-eyed. He's hunched over and using his mop as a support stick.

Smiling very politely but showing his discomfort by stepping away, Louis answers. "Y-Yeah."

"You're a shy fellow." The stranger observes. "What's your girlfriend think?"

"She doesn't exist but I do." Louis' fear and discomfort fades into something warm and fuzzy instantly. "Get the fuck away from him."

It's uncalled for and Harry's words are very harsh but Louis needs to keep Bean safe and you can never judge a person - old or young - by their looks. The janitor moves away and the few close people who overheard turn back to their groups, while Harry comes back to stand as a tower over Louis.

"I leave you for two minutes and the perverts pile up at your feet." Harry smirks in a lopsided manner that lights up a dull room.

"That's mean." Louis accepts the heavy jacket being put on him.

"It was effective."

"Thank you for saving me from a seventy year-old man. Who knows what he'd have done to me, right?"

"Princess." Harry admonishes. "It's not to be taken lightly."

"Or blown out of proportion, Smarty Pants."

The cinema complex was different than other cinema houses, because these theatres could only take ten people at a time. The seats were plush red couches and there were people on hand to get you whatever you wanted. It also cost a whole lot more.

Harry asked Louis to sit on his lap and the boy was very willing but also very conscious of Harry's arm. He snuggled up Harry's warmth and bathed in the scent Harry's jacket gave him, forgetting about the very adventurous adverts that were playing on the screen.

"Do you plan on watching?" Harry asks when Louis' fingers start playing with his shirt buttons. "I do." Louis turned his head towards the screen and stopped fidgeting.

Harry lost interest five minutes in, and so took to playing with Louis' fingers or kissing behind his ear. Louis would mumble something and try turning away but Harry hauled him back every time. "Stop it." Louis arched his back and whined like a toddler when Harry started tickling his sides. "I wanna watch."
The cinema had eight other people who pretended not to envious but annoyed at the couple sitting right at the back.

"Sorry, princess." Harry kissed Louis' cheek. "I love you."

Louis hummed, eyes glued to the screen and widening whenever the movie resembled its predecessor: *Jurassic Park*.

"Lou." Harry wanted to hear Louis say it back.

Louis didn't hear him because at that moment there was a loud crash on screen that blocked him out. "Lou." Harry tried again, growling as he would when he demanded attention before. "Baby."

"Hmm?" Louis couldn't choose a movie over Harry but he really was tempted.

"I love you."

"I know." Louis squawked when Harry poked his sides repeatedly. "I love you too!"

"Thank you." Harry turned Louis on his side to face to movie and curl up on his lap.

The movie finished and Louis was exhausted afterwards, when the excitement of a motion picture wore off. Harry had been rubbing Louis' tummy for two hours now, and hates that he has to stop. Back at the apartment, Louis emptied their gym bags into the bathroom hamper and fed his pets - who were both already experts in the layout of the flat - while Harry showered.

"Bolg, get inside." Louis was laughing at the creature's stubbornness. "It's bed time."

Bundy was nocturnal and therefore went about his business on his wheel, not bothering anyone.

"Have half a carrot stick then." Louis breaks a thin piece off and feeds the tortoise.

Then came his turn to shower. Harry swatted his behind as an encouraging send-off as Louis scurried off. Afterwards he flopped onto the bed in boxer briefs and Harry's Packers jersey, turning onto his side.

"Come to me." Harry spoke, all serious tone and seductive man voice. Louis' never had that tone of voice.

Louis found his way into Harry's open arm and got his leg hiked up on the man's hips. The comforter and duvet is brought up over them and Louis giggles when Harry's hand magnetises to his tummy again.

"Is it amusing that I want to feel my unborn child?" Harry raises an eyebrow.

"Not at all." Louis shrieks with laughter when Harry rolls them over and puts his face on Louis' tummy.

"Goodnight, angel." Harry kisses Louis' belly button right by the pudge.

"Night, Hazza."

"And goodnight, little Bean." Harry nips at the flesh. There's no answer but Harry's satisfied with just that anyway.

It was going good for Harry. He felt.....lighter and could be *healing* after twenty-six years of having an open wound. Louis made him warm and whole, plus the presence of a promised child that
Harry will protect to no limits.

*It's not you. Twenty-six years of living freely and in a day you're letting this boy dictate your life.*

Harry hasn't heard that voice in weeks, and it was an absence of whisper he's willing to part with. He stiffens at the serpent's appearance, his eyes remain closed because he knows what he sees if they're open.

*You know. He's a hole to fuck and now you ruined it. You're obligated, not in love. Love doesn't exist.*

Why was it coming now? After all this time it was silent and now Harry's subconscious brings the pain back. Louis hasn't been asleep for five minutes yet and Harry's starting to feel beads of sweat roll down his sides.

*Fucking leave, you coward! You never should have went back to him. Should have stayed in Middleton.*

Harry buries his face in Louis' bare tummy. The scent and softness calm him and the raw bleeding starts to slow. He clutches Louis' hips like he's his lifeline.

*You'll just do it later when you realise how stupid you're being. This isn't your life and you're lying about wanting it. A fucking boy is pregnant and they won't let you stress. They won't let us do what we know how to do. They won't let you smoke either.*

Well that was the truth. All of it was. Harry loosened his grip a little but wrapped his able arm around Louis and kept the other straight since he had no brace on.

*You'll snap, Harry. And when you do, you won't be able to go back.*

Chapter End Notes

The end of chapter eighteen by ss98. more soon
When you love someone, truly love them, you lay your heart open to them. You give them a part of yourself that you give to no one else, and you let them inside a part of you that only they can hurt— you literally hand them the razor with a map of where to cut deepest and most painfully on your heart and soul.

*NARRATOR’S POV*

Friday came around when Chicago decided to have its worst possible weather session. It's been storming for the past seventy-three hours and forecasts predicted hail for Friday night.

Harry's had two appointments with Dr. Hepburn thus far regarding the care of his lesser operating arm, and seems to admire her professional attitude which makes Louis proud to know he's trying hard enough. Harry tended to shove people out whenever they tried to ask a question about himself and it was never a good thing to have Harry dislike you.

Louis and Harry had a nice little routine going and neither could complain about the overload of simplicity because both appreciated the plain regimen as opposed to something untimely and uncoordinated. It was domestic and fine-tuned even though it's only been in play for two or three days.

Outside the storm goes on, heavy droplets of rain colliding loudly with the apartment's glass walls. It was a real task getting Louis to fall asleep with all that noise for these past nights, but Harry could sleep with any amount of noise.

"Shh, princess." Harry had his eyes closed already. "It's a storm."

"It's loud, Hazza." Louis complained, ducking under Harry's able arm and nuzzling his chest. "Does it bother you?"

Louis nods, his face still hidden in the crook of Harry's shoulder and the pillow. He whimpers when a crack of thunder whips out close to them and the room is lit up for just a moment.

"I don't like it, Hazza." Louis sought comfort by sniffling and pawing at the man's chest.

"I can't control the weather, baby." Harry truly regretted that he couldn't. "Want me to distract you?"

He slides his arm under Louis' pillow and keeps the other limp against his chest with Louis' smaller palm holding his wrist. Ensuring that Louis' right ear is smothered by the pillow, Harry brings his lips closer to the other and kisses the spot that always made Louis turn pink.

Harry fell asleep after the storm's hype was over, after singing as many songs he had memorised to Louis in a soft whisper.

It is now the early hour of eight when Harry's digital alarm clock goes off on his side of the - their - bed and the news reports come on. He's become complacent and fallen into a comfortable life with Louis and the growing Bean bump the boy possesses.

"I'm up." Louis mumbles as he always does every morning, but hides further beneath the
"It's your turn to make breakfast, baby." Harry's injured arm has grown weak and he hates that he can't feel the muscle strain as he wraps it around Louis' body.

"I know." Louis yawns, covering his mouth, and blinks away his tiredness.

Harry always found it peculiar that Louis went to bed smelling of shower gel but woke up filled with a subtle flowery scent. It was something that made Harry want to cave and just bury himself in Louis' petite, sweet body.

"Morning."

"Hmm." Harry groggily replies.

Harry's eyes were mesmerising first thing in the morning. Bright green and alight with innocence just like what Louis' blue orbs looked like every day.

"Wake up." Louis nudges Harry's arm weakly.

"How's my baby?" Harry sniffed and shuffled along the bed until he dropped his face on Louis' tummy.

"Bean's energetic."

"Yeah?" Harry rubs soothing shapes into Louis' hip. "Are you feeling sick?"

Louis yawns and shakes his head. "It's still too early for that."

He didn't wanna leave the bed's warmth and Harry's wonderful embrace as it was a long night yesterday. After they got back from a restaurant Louis heard about and mentioned to Harry - Harry had to take Louis there first thing - they watched the recent episodes of *American Horror Story* and *Game of Thrones* before showering for bed.

Harry grunts and wraps himself around Louis' pliant body more, nuzzling the boy's neck and exhaling contentedly. "Love you."

Harry usually said it first every morning as a ritual. He also squeezes Louis' bum and sinks his teeth into Louis' neck so he squirmed and whimpered under him.

"Love you." Louis replied breathlessly. "What do you want for breakfast?"

"We have time." Harry flips his unruly hair to the side and sits up. "Anything will do."

"Cereal it is then." Giggling, Louis escapes Harry's attempt to grab him as he ran into the kitchen.

In actual fact, Louis knew how to make a decent breakfast. He switched on the wall radio as the shower began to spray water, turning up the bubblegum music that radios often played in the mornings. He visited Bolg and Bundy in Harry's studio first and checked on their cages.

"Morning, boys." He opened the gates to their cages and couldn't help thinking that he needs to get them bigger ones for more comfort.

After thoroughly washing his hands he found bacon strips, eggs and a bread roll from the fridge. The bread roll was pre-packed and needed to be baked but Louis placed several chunky pieces in a frying pan with butter, thyme and garlic. He fried six eggs as Years & Years came on the radio with *King*. 
"I can smell this in the shower." Harry's spooky technique of appearing anywhere without a sound still makes Louis jump a little.

"Thanks." Louis looks over his shoulder to watch Harry approach him.

All that he has on is the brace and arm sling that's necessary, with his jeans for the day. He managed to look like a poster boy who needed a cigarette and effortless hair without trying. The tattoos were just the cherry on the top because they complimented Harry's always hard and impassive look all day.

"Take over please?" Louis stuck a bacon strip in his mouth and handed Harry the spatula. "I feel dirty."

"Ironic." Harry set the utensil down and held Louis' hip so he couldn't move away again.

"Hmm?" Louis offered Harry the remaining half of his bacon strip.

"We did nothing last night." Harry hardly chews anything and Louis bites his lip at the way the man's Adam's Apple shifts to accommodate his swallow.

"Because we were tired." Louis points out, locking his arms around Harry's neck. "That includes you."

"That was yesterday." Harry has the infamous heated stare on, igniting the green so it glowed with arousal. "Are you open enough for me, princess?"

His large hand snuck down to Louis' pants and slipped under the loose waistband to drift along bare skin. Warm, wet lips pressed against Louis' pulse point on his neck and he bared his neck in submission and Harry's experienced fingers reached their destination.

He moaned and had his focus clouded with the heady scent of Harry's body gel as a firm hand cupped his behind.

"Um." Louis' blush is always accompanied by a shy smile and Harry's fallen prey to its beauty each and every time. "I think so."

Harry's wolfish grin spreads to convey the light of his arrogant excitement. "We have to be fast, Lou."

Louis didn't like quick morning sex and he told Harry that, but sometimes it couldn't be helped. To him, mornings were calm and slow and full of something else other than fucking.

"The stove!" Louis sighs and wiggles around when Harry pins him to the mattress.

"Strip." Harry nips at Louis' collarbone briefly before going to tend to the abandoned food for breakfast. "I'll be back and I want you naked."

With arousal and wonderful sparks of interest blossoming inside him where only Harry knew to trigger, Louis tosses his sleeping attire away like it burned and waited.

It wasn't long before Harry returned, smirking proudly at the boy as he laid back and let Louis settle on his hips. The disability presented by his left arm left Louis to be on top most of the time now until Harry's finger stub healed over completely.

"What are you doing?" Harry knew that look of mischief too well glistening in Louis' eye.
"Shh." Louis unbuckled Harry's faded skinny jeans and connects their lips reventially. "We're going slow."

"We're going to be late, princess." Harry frowned and used his free hand to grab Louis' wrist. "We won't be."

Louis starts to grind down on Harry's bare fattening erection, knotting his fingers in Harry's hair and rolling his hips as they kissed. Harry's hand finds the slightly gaping entrance between Louis' cheeks and slips a dry finger in. It's easy enough now that they have sex so regularly and Louis hardly ever needs to be stretched.

"Fuck Lou." Harry's head falls against the pillows and his feet flatten on the bed to give Louis something to sit back against. "Get me inside you."

The butterflies return to Louis' stomach as he lifts himself up on his knees and positions Harry's fully erect length after lubing him up. With a bitten lip and deep breathing, he sinks down with little ease. Harry is stil big and fills Louis up perfectly, but getting there would always sting a bit.

There were times when Harry's paranoia gets the better of him and he slams into Louis' hips to speed things up. Like now, when Louis screamed at the ceiling because the stretch felt so great and burned in the best way.

"So good, baby." Harry presses Louis against him and breathes in that flowery, citrus smell from Louis' soft hair.

"Daddy." Louis' arms wrapped around Harry's neck and he held their parted lips together.

Harry's tongue tasted Louis' lips and his mouth, his hand squeezed Louis' hip and he encouraged him to start moving.

"Fuck yourself on me, baby." Harry took Louis' earlobe between his teeth and jerked his hips upward.

"S-Slow." Louis was insistent and stubborn when he wanted to be. It got Harry going every time.

"I want you to be sore." Harry mumbled. "So fucking sore that when you sit, your pretty hole remembers me."

Louis' never dabbled in dirty talk because he lived for the filthy words that sprang from Harry's mouth, the desire that was raw and desperate in each mutter. He sucked in a sharp breath and leaned all the way back with his hands on the mattress, his body flushed from his neck to his belly button.

"So pretty, angel." Harry's lips latch onto Louis' dusky nipple and he scratches down the boy's back as he sucks. "Can't wait to actually taste you here."

Gasping, Louis opens his eyes to the warm sensation in his lower abdomen. He feels Harry thrusting into him deeply and with precision. Harry's the master of Louis body and universe, the man who controls Louis' actions.

"D-Deep."

"I know, baby." Harry pivots his hips, listening to the wet skin sound and Louis' mewling noises.

"Show me where you can feel me, princess."
Louis puts one hand on his stomach and he feels Harry's thrusts punch the air inside him. "H-Here, Daddy."

Louis' quiet, little voice of shattered confidence spurs Harry on. He holds Louis' hip still and fucks his hips upward, using the boy's body for its warmth and wetness inside. The tightness was phenomenal and Louis cried out in Harry's name at the brutality. It was sweet but bit hard at his insides.

"Harry!" Louis shrieked at a severely hard thrust that did hurt against his pelvic bone. Louis was fragile and small and meant for gentility. Harry's body was hard and ready to handle anything, which made rough sex difficult because Louis didn't know what he's getting into when he offered himself up so willingly.

The crack in Louis' voice, the high-pitch of the scream that gave away hints at Louis' slight pain made Harry slip and he came into Louis' body with a shudder. The thrill and rush of blood that was forced out by Louis' weakened state was Harry's flame. When he was blinded by lust and thirst, he didn't see the face of the person he was with.

"Ow." Louis was still hard because he hadn't gotten off at all, but the ache where Harry was still buried was stinging. "Out."

"What?" Harry's eyes were glassy and unfocused as he tried to hear Louis' words.

The boy whined and sobbed when his body started to send shooting throbs that felt like fire on ice. "Daddy, please. Pull out."

As soon as Harry obliged, Louis felt for if he was bleeding down there because it felt like he could be. He wasn't and that was a relief, but he also felt as though he couldn't close his legs.

"Let me see, darling."

Louis shook his head but Harry caught his hands when he tried pushing him away. "Wasn't a question, Lou. Lie down."

He wasn't bleeding but his rim was gaping, unable to close at all as it struggled to. Harry cooed and kissed the insides of Louis' thighs as a calming gesture. It was red and puffy from the vigorous treatment, almost like punishment.

"It's okay, baby." Harry inserts two fingers and the circle of tight muscle snaps closed around them. "My princess."

Louis gripped the sheets, the sensitivity driving him back up a wall. He arched his back and curled his toes as Harry continued to thrust into him. It was nothing in comparison to what Harry actually felt like, but Louis' climax was fast approaching and not particular.

"Come, baby. Make a mess for me." Harry took Louis' weeping length into his mouth and suckled the head.

With a shout, Louis came down Harry's throat and clamped down on his fingers. He panted with wide, blown eyes and he tugged on Harry's hair.

"Did so well." Harry covers Louis' mouth with his own, sharing the sweet taste between them.

"Sore?"
"Tired."

"I'm sorry, precious." Harry kisses his temple and closed eyelids. "Love you."

"Love you."

* * * * *

"What's this?" Louis looks over the back of his seat to see Harry putting a large, covered drawing pad into the back seat.

"Our sketches are due today for Art. It decides our fate." Harry rolls his eyes and gets in the driver's seat.

"In what way?"

"If mine is good enough, I could get an entire gallery to show my work off at a festival this year."

"That's exciting. How come I never got to see this one?"

"It's a surprise."

"I hate surprises."

"You love surprises."

"I love surprises but that's not the point."

"Why don't you come visit me in my Art lecture today? You can see it then."

"Maybe I will. What time's that?"

"One."

"I'll stop by."

Harry helps Louis gather his things from the back seat and reluctantly bids him adieu. It's raining with a cruel vengeance and Harry's worried sick about Louis being outside in this weather. The day is the last of the week and they'll have the entire weekend to themselves if they get through today.

"Have fun." Louis kisses the corner of Harry's smile that curves into a smirk.

"How can I without you?" Harry turns his head and unites their lips, bending slightly so Louis didn't have to stretch.

"Don't forget Bean."

"I'll miss Bean too." Harry rubs Louis' tummy in circular motions. "I love you both."

"We love you too. See you at one."

Louis finds Niall waiting at their usual bench, under the safety of the building's covered hallways so he just had to venture from Harry's sheltered parking to here.

"Morning." Louis taps Niall's shoulder as the boy was staring off in the other direction.
"Shh!" Niall grabs Louis' hand and pulls him down to sit next to him.

The collision causes Louis to hiss because his sensitive behind should not be falling on anything for all of today. He yanks his arm free and follows Niall's line of vision.

"Why are we staring at him?" Louis leans in close to Niall's ear.

The sudden voice spooks the blond and he clutches his chest as if given a heart attack.

"Because-" He spares Louis a glare. "-he's pretty."

"I can't see."

"You're already taken by psycho boyfriend with the jawline." Niall waves away Louis' comment.

"We're trying to get me a date here."

"I'll talk to him if you want." Louis sets his chin on his best friend's shoulder. "Tell him-"

"You will say nothing." Niall covers Louis' mouth with his hand.

"Then what do you want to do?"

"Ask him out myself."

"Go on then."

"Did I say today?"

"Then when?"

"Soon."

"You're nervous." Louis grins and pinches Niall's cheek. "So cute."

"Shut up."

"Go on, Niall. Valentines Day is coming up."

"I still have fifteen days."

"You can do it. He won't say no to you."

"How do you know that?"

"I just do." Louis shrugs. "Go!"

"Come with me."

"Yes, and I'll be there on your wedding night too."

"You have to be anyway." Niall scoffs and takes Louis' hand before beginning the trek down the hallway.

Niall's victim slash crush was definitely on the attractive side. He had slightly deep cheekbones that creased whenever he smiled or laughed, the laugh itself was very masculine and slightly intimidating. He had hazel brown eyes and bushy eyebrows that worked so well with his tan. His
hair was black and long but shorter than Harry's. Louis applauds Niall's choice and taste, but he's far too in love with green eyes and chocolate curls himself.

"Stay." Niall tells Louis once they're about three feet away from Mr. Mystery.

Louis tries not to spy but when Niall interrupts the boy's shuffling with his papers and pencilchewing, he feels sucked into a soap opera. He also feels protective of the innocent blond.

*ZAYN'S POV* (Told you so :'( )

This new person stops me from trying to find the Art building, and I glance up expectantly with the bitter taste of rubber in my mouth. "Yeah?"

"H-Hi." He's adorable, I let myself admit. The blond hair with brunette roots and blue eyes. "I'm Niall."

"Zayn." I raise my eyebrow at his stutter but don't antagonize the boy.

There's a soft sneeze from somewhere behind him, and it could belong to a kid. God please don't let him be a single dad or something. Against those horrors, we both happen to look at the wall at his back, where someone was stood looking frightened by the change of attention.

This boy is beautiful.

Better brunette hair than my newest acquaintance on his head, and brighter blue eyes that felt like two oceans. He looked like he needed someone to always take care of him, with a purple large jumper and skinny jeans.

He looked soft.

"Sorry." He spoke like an angel but there was all the temptation of a dirty angel behind his eyes. Niall seems to forgive him easily, as they are probably friends, and looks away. How could anyone stop looking at someone so radiant? It was criminal.

"Z-Zayn." He clears his throat and I imagine that it could never sound as melodious as the stranger who keeps shyly looking away from me.

I glance at him just so he knows I'm still here before looking back at the new treat. How adorable can a person be? It's fucking lethal.

"Who are you?" I ask when Niall doesn't speak up fast enough and the pretty stranger looks like he's going to run away. Never.

His head snaps up and his eyes fill with alarm, going straight to Niall with a plea in his eye. My chest rumbles at that look. Pretty shouldn't be apologising to anyone.

"He's Louis, my best friend." Niall answers and Louis sags with relief. "He's taken."

I chuckle and bite at the irritating feel of dry lips against my tongue. His boyfriend is probably as delicate as he is, and won't even put up a fucking fight. Pretty deserves better than that of course.

"Niall." I say, a strange lilt in my voice. "You wanted something?"

"Uh- Ye-Yeah." He looks back at Louis, who is smiling with such a light that it stirs up something inside.
"What was it?"

Maybe I should play Niall's boyfriend for a while, as it could get me closer to Louis. I shouldn't though, because that would just be a delay when I can claim lovely Louis with just a few words now.

"A couple of us are going to Nandos later. Would you like to come?" Niall rushes his words and they tumble out really fast.

Louis' supressing a laugh - a giggle - behind his best friend and it's probably because there was never any Nandos plans. This could end badly.

"Sure."

Niall blinks rapidly at me as if I did not just consent. "Really?"

"You asked."

"I-I did. Thank you for...you know, agreeing."

Louis does giggle now and it's silent so I can't hear it but my mind conjures up a musical sound to go with that face. It's magical.

The moment is ruined when Louis glances at his phone and his blue eyes get wider. They're probably late for a lecture. Louis takes Niall's hand his eyes meet mine momentarily before he smiles and runs off. I watch them sprint down the hallway until arriving at a double door and slipping inside.

Louis is something to look forward to everyday.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Zayn eventually finds his Art class when the English Lit professor decides to walk in with a train of pizza deliver guys. Everyone cheers and Louis laughs at the probably catch behind this reward. "When I marked your essays, I found them all to be stellar and therefore I've bought Dominos for you idiots." The teacher explains, leading to many shouts and whistles.

Class is filled with cheese smells and pepperoni delight, and at one Louis is walking to Harry's Art building with a water bottle. Niall was at lunch and all the other guys dragged him to iHop in this disgusting weather. Louis entered the Art building and chilly air whipped around him from within and outside.

The lecture is over when he arrives, but students are still milling about inside the room. Harry was at the window, taking photos with his Nikon of the rain through an opened window.

*ZAYN'S POV*

Packing up after Art led to a greater reward when the astonishing likes of Louis stands at our room door. What's he here for? I refuse to believe that it's for me because boys like him are always stubborn at first and it's very likely that he's here to rub his existence and wonderful arse in my face. He approaches the forever solemn guy at the window with severe attitude problems and no anger management - just one meeting with him told me that - and kisses his cheek. Expecting the man to lash out and tensing up in my chair, I watch an even worse result occur.

Styles smiles when he identifies his visitor, and bends down to kiss Louis on the lips.
I chew on the inside of my cheek, biting the layer of flesh until it rips and bleeds. The brush in my hand snaps and I toss it into a metal bin hoping to break up their communication, but I am ignored.

Louis whispers something to Styles and the much taller partner smirks, wrapping one arm around Louis' body. One. His other was injured in some fake accident and Louis didn't deserve that. He should get a whole man.

Styles' station is one in front of mine and when Louis follows him there, I make a note to change my station tomorrow first thing. Styles had won one of the galleries today when his sketch caught everyone's eye with its beauty and intimate detail. I'm disgusted by it now that I know who he's with in it.

"Bastard." I mutter but no one hears.

Louis blushes at the art piece and lightly slaps Harry's shoulder. He obviously remembers the moment they had sex and Harry had a fucking camera there. The audacity.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

"Harry!" Louis wants to be angry but the piece is truly amazing and he can't stop blushing.

"Do you like it?" Harry bends to kiss Louis' lips.

"It's lovely."

It was from the crazy sex experience when Harry fucked Louis in his art studio on the table of paints and brushes. Louis was on his back on the table's surface with Harry leaning over him, and he now remembers the camera being there and going mad with its flashing.

"Is this the photo?" Louis unclips the image from the corner of Harry's drawing pad.

"Yes."

"I can't believe you." Louis hides his face in his hands.

"I love you." Harry removes his hands.

"I love you. The sketch is beautiful, really. I'm so proud."

*ZAYN'S POV*

I cap my pencils and close up my paints with a silly slow pace just to watch Styles interact with Louis. The latter was happy with the art and they even whispered the three little words Louis should not be hearing from anyone but me. It's stupid really, how blind people can be. Louis sees me, catching me off guard in my self pity and hatred for Styles, over his tall boyfriend's shoulder. His smile is hesitant - because Styles seems like the kind to throw a fit - but he does it anyway. It's brave of him and I smile back to show his effort is appreciated.

Styles does something that I can't see to make Louis jump and giggle, then hide in his neck. He's got just one fucking hand, how special was it? He's telling me what we need.

Eventually they split and Louis stands on his tip toes to kiss Harry, showing off indirectly so I'd know what we could have.

Monster Styles sticks his tongue down Louis' throat because the boy doesn't move and he smiles into the filthy kiss. I grind my teeth and look away at the ground as the anger bubbles and simmers.
Louis' arms reach around Harry's neck and his eyes close. The beauty of the moment is stolen when I clear my throat.

They don't fucking move.

Harry's arm stays around Louis and Louis' lips stay hooked on Harry's. I had to do something.

"Styles!"

Harry pulls away to look at me, death glare in his eye and hand on my Louis' tummy. "We've got that Photojournalism class now, mate." I see Louis pressing himself against Harry in the fake demand for warmth. "Gotta go."

He just nods and goes back to Louis, who seems pleased by this. He says something that makes Louis stick his tongue out, then hide it when Harry nips at it.

It's fucking disgusting to watch Louis with someone he can't love for real, someone he doesn't belong with because they're broken and pointless lives.

"Louis?" He needs to know I'm here for him, ready to take him when he needs me. When his eyes dart from Harry's mouth to me, a bit of his smile fades. He doesn't want Harry to notice our connection just yet.

"Hey-"

"We've got that Photojournalism class now, mate." Harry blocks Louis off from seeing me, a sick frown on his face and the blackness in his eyes getting worse. "Gotta go."

Chapter End Notes

Thats the end of chapter nineteen by ss98. more chapters soon
Chapter Twenty

A person is, among all else, a material thing, easily torn and not easily mended.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

"Princess, sit still." Harry's been struggling to keep a hyperactive Louis from wiggling off his lap during Photo-Journalism for the past ten minutes or so.

"My bum's asleep." Louis glances down over his shoulder between Harry's chest and his back. He squirms a bit more and Harry groans when the perky behind belonging to his exquisite boyfriend rubs harshly against his crotch. With a firm hand - and the other that's plastered inevitably to his chest - Harry wraps a binding arm around Louis' middle.

Nobody could blame Louis for being fidgety and irritable. His latest appointment with their new doctor, revealed that he would actually be lactating and his body needed to start adjusting earlier. That meant nipple pads from the drug store bought by Harry when Louis started feeling the dampness and told the man when he found him in Art.

"Enough, darling." Harry scolds, rubbing Louis' thigh soothingly and feeling the boy lean back against him.

Pout on full blast, Louis throws an arm over Harry's steady shoulders. "Sorry."

Niall was trying once again to chat up his latest acquaintance, and didn't at all feel stabbed in the heart by the way Zayn's eyes travelled to Louis every two seconds. The tanned older man felt personally betrayed by Harry's fond interaction with Louis. He couldn't stand it.

"Hungry?" Harry turns Louis in his lap.

Louis shakes his head and faces the desk as the professor walks in. His legs are shorter than Harry's so of course they dangle off the chair as he swings them childishly. Harry nuzzles the back of his nape and draws nonsensical patterns on Louis' tummy where the pudge remained prominent.

"Bean's cold." Louis whispered in Harry's ear, tone soft and gentle like he was when he wanted to be taken care of.

"Is it?" Harry takes his jacket off the back of his chair and drapes it over Louis' shoulders. "Better now?"

"Bean's warmer now." Louis gratefully kisses Harry's cheek. "Thank you."

"Welcome, baby."

With the loud screech of a heavy chair against the wooden flooring, Zayn wakes up and storms off. He doesn't wait and doesn't look back at Niall's heartbroken expression, only wishing that Louis would have it instead.

He was doing this on purpose to Zayn, throwing his cool exterior way off with his innocent temptation. It got Zayn even hotter for the boy when the game became a chase.
"If people are done dramatically exiting my class-" The patient teacher eyes the swinging door that Zayn exited through. "I'd like to get us through this semester."

There's faint laughter before everyone settles again. Harry is vigilant and always two-minded, able to keep track of Louis' fidgeting whilst taking notes. Niall and Louis turned their pencils into swords to battle in boredom.

"Pay attention." Harry confiscates Louis' pencil and receives a pointedly aggravated look in return. "You're misbehaving."

"I'm bored." Louis argues.

"We must all do things that bore and annoy us."

Zayn re-enters the room with a new, solid resolve. He takes his seat next to Niall again and even smiles at the smitten boy when he asks what's wrong. Louis' proud of their progress but he doesn't trust Zayn with Niall, his especially sensitive but chipper best mate.

"You okay?" Niall asks him and Harry's dead eyes with pearls of hard black onyx dare Zayn to utter a single inappropriate thing.

He's been on to Zayn's case from their first moment of sight. There's no doubting that the male has found interest in Louis, but Harry's been serving as a jealous and protective boyfriend long enough to develop a reputation. He will skin Zayn before the lad's allowed anywhere near his princess.

"Just fine." Zayn's glare fires back at Harry with a lifted chin of pride and arrogant smirk. He was getting to Louis' trophy boyfriend.

"Bastard." Harry mutters under a hateful breath.

"Shh." Louis' eyes widen in outrage at the foul word, then he giggles at how Harry said it. "That's mean."

"Kiss?"

Louis leaned in and connected their starved lips for a moment, then another and a following one until Louis was smiling and blushing with swollen lips and flushed cheeks. Harry gripped his middle tightly, possessively as he stole some of Louis' taste and memorised it because Louis' body was his to enjoy.

His alone.

"Love you." Harry squeezes Louis' bum encouragingly.

"Love you too."

The lecture ends and Harry's up after counting to five when Zayn leaves, letting Louis grab their things before dragging him out the door. The heat of hatred, of denial and disgust was livid in his body. He wanted to own and claim Louis, mark him up where Zayn could see and step back. He understood people like Zayn, people who wanted things they could never have because it belonged to someone else already. He loved to destroy people like Zayn because they deserved it.

"Haz?" Louis questioned Harry when they entered the restroom.

Harry said nothing and pressed Louis' back up against the door, keeping it unlatched because he had a fool-proof plan here right now. He cupped Louis' cheek and shoved his tongue past those thin lips.
He was running with discomforting thoughts of Zayn and how he's supposed to manage staying fucking calm when that bastard had eyes for his favourite thing in the world. Harry groaned when Louis' little tongue fought with his when the air became scarce and they needed to breathe.

*You shouldn't need air, just each other.*

That poisonous voice spat at him at the back of his mind. He frowned and took Louis' hands in his only able one, pinning it behind the boy's back. It expressed dominance, Harry's control over Louis' body and Harry loved that he wasn't fought on it. Zayn was a man who thrived on control, and he had to see how Harry already had that.

He knew exactly where Zayn was and he knew this display of affection would be driving him up the wall.

"Leg up." Harry can't support that position and so relies on Louis to keep it hitched.

"I want to touch you." Louis pants, wild eyes blown bright blue and whimpers.

Nodding with a proud smirk that exposed one of two sharp canines, Harry releases Louis' leg and grips his thigh with a fierce need. The fire in his eye doesn't die as he connects their lips again, hunger and desire burning bright as Louis tugs on Harry's hair.

"Good boy." Harry loved that Louis never questioned his motives. "So soft and warm."

Louis' jaw goes slack, his libido spiking but he kept the bulge in his jeans tamed. Harry attached his teeth to Louis' neck, widening his jaw and sinking the molars into soft flesh.

"Yours." Louis presses Harry closer to him, gasping when the pinch of shock ran through him.

"Darling." Harry sucked one big love bite into a very open area on Louis' neck.

Zayn hit the wall with his fist, clenching his teeth until they hurt and made his knuckles bleed with the sharp tile impact. He wanted the door to break when he knocked it, shatter in his hands to grant him some will of power. He felt helpless, drowning in this deception.

He held the stall door open slightly and peeked out, instantly regretting but also not being able to look away. His eyes fell on the couple pressed against a wall, Louis' head thrown back and Harry's hand roaming all over his body. Louis' body is a temple and should be revered, looked after by gentle hands.

Harry bucked his hips and Zayn glowered at their connection, he gripped the lock with a hold so tight that his index finger and thumb nails broke. They bled and he didn't care.

Louis' noises were magical, filling the otherwise empty bathroom with his arousal and permeating scent of desire. Louis was so innocent and Harry was so fucking good at controlling him. Zayn hated it.

"Ha-Harry." The crack in Louis' words brought Zayn's hand to his crotch, wanting to hear Louis say his name like that too.

"Princess?" Harry's got his large palm kneading Louis' behind in such a sensual way.

"Take me."

"Not here, angel." Harry growls, lunging forward to capture Louis' skin again. "We're not alone."
That's when Louis' eyes fly open but close halfway again when a wave of exhaustion runs through him. He sees Zayn but knows Harry won't go too far. He trusts Harry with his life.

"Harry." Louis' head is against the wall, lip caught between his front teeth and little fingers twisting through Harry's hair.

Their intimacy was going through Zayn like ice. They were almost trying to become one, blend into each other the way Harry clutched Louis' body like a drug he craves.

"I love you, princess." Harry stops before they go too far down this road. "And I'll take care of you later."

"N-Niall's party." Louis bends his neck so Harry can have more access. "We have to go."

"I can't help it, darling."

Louis whines and wraps his other leg all the way around Harry's waist. "Daddy."

Zayn couldn't know why but that word disgusts him and he instantly loses the inflation of his boxers. The fragility in Louis' voice made him shudder in the worst way and the distaste for such a dependant, reliant soul.

Why would someone want that? To spend every waking - and possibly otherwise - hour just looking after someone else? Where's the break?

"I'm here, sweetheart." Harry's voice is smooth and not at all annoyed. "Love you so much, baby. Gonna take care of you as soon as we're alone."

"Now." Louis whined and Zayn couldn't help but agree. "Daddy, now."

Harry started this and he got Louis all riled up even in the middle of a school day! Louis snuck a hand between their compressed bodies and undid Harry's fly hastily. He deserves this and all the attention Harry silently promised to him.

"Fuck, okay." Harry carried Louis into a bathroom stall, Zayn long forgotten, and latched the lock.

Louis scrunched up his nose before sneezing softly at the pungent smell of detergent. He closed the lid and made Harry sit on it, wiggling to affirm his place on the man's lap.

When he was comfortable, Louis had his short legs swinging over Harry's hips and his trousers hung up on the door's hook while Harry kept his around his ankles.

"You look so perfect, darling." Harry slips two fingers between Louis' cheeks and presses down dryly on his hole.

"Lube!" Louis rolled back but shuffled away, his body confused by the friction.

"Here, angel." Harry loved fussy Lou because he knew only he could sate such desires.

Harry extracted a sachet of plain lube from his jeans pocket and squeezed some onto his fingers. Warming them up, he waited for Louis to strip off his boxer briefs before speaking.

"Turn around. Face the door." Harry pulled Louis' hips down to grind against his aching member. Moments of a desperate Louis has made Harry throb with greed.
"Daddy." Louis laces his fingers through Harry's silky locks and throws his head back on the man's shoulder.

"Baby." Harry slips one finger into Louis' body, then another. He kisses Louis' shoulder and nibbles on his ear lobe.

Concentrating on not hurting his boneless boy, Harry pumps two fingers and out of Louis between his legs to feel the slippery warmth envelope them. He groans into Louis' sweaty neck and jabs wickedly at Louis' prostrate with his fingertips. Louis' body jerks and twists but he stays as still as he can for Harry.

Louis goes still when the bathroom door opens and someone's light footsteps start getting closer, but Harry's grown too impatient to wait. Besides, their stall was locked.

Zayn has his bloody nails digging into the metal divider between his stall and the horny couple's. The discouragement of a daddy kink has worn off and he can once again focus solely on fucking Louis like Harry gets to. He imagines himself where Harry is, doing what he's doing to make Louis so pliant and well behaved.

"Get up for me, doll." Harry rubs Louis' sides, knowing how much Louis enjoyed encouragement rewards.

Zayn almost had the urge to just film them, then watch it over later. It would show him Louis' face and how easily he crumbled, but there would be time for that later.

Louis sunk down on Harry's shaft with slight difficulty considering the angle was different but allowed Harry to go so much deeper. Harry's heated gaze stayed glued to where his length kept disappearing in Louis' welcoming body. Louis' hole stretched to accommodate him, and without a condom he could notice how the ridges and foreskin made Louis' muscle flutter.

Harry's hand snaked under Louis' shirt and peeled the tape off the nipple pads gently, sticking his dry fingers under to pinch the sensitive nipples. Louis half mewls and half sobs from the stimulation. He hates the spike of nerves and drip of the clear high-in-protein liquid leaving his body but loves the feel of Harry's calloused hands on him.

Harry also discovered just how much Louis enjoyed the first stages of being penetrated when the boy's back arched obscenely into a perfect curve and he started panting brokenly. His little hands clutched Harry's knees as he ground down lazily to stretch himself further and please his fiery nerves.

The bathroom door opened and shut again, alerting them that whoever their newest visitor was has left. Harry's reality snaps back when he remembers how he knew Zayn would be in here and how he got easily side-tracked by Louis' body and words.

He almost softened completely at the thought of someone watching them, hearing his Louis during sex. But then Louis rolled his hips in that sinful way, letting the head of Harry's dick press just rightly against his prostrate and whimpered as he goes mellow.

Harry knows they have to speed it up or risk catching an infection from this public lavatory. With shallow thrusts, he secures Louis' hips and lifts himself up to sheath himself in Louis' body. "Shh." Harry shoves two fingers roughly into Louis' mouth and makes sure the boy doesn't press too closely to his injured arm.

With praising eyes, Harry examines all of Louis' body. It's so tight around him with perfect skin and
baby soft texture. Harry wants to bottle Louis' scent and keep it with him forever.

"Gonna go shopping soon." Harry starts controlling Louis' hips as he lifts and drops them hastily. "S spoil you rotten."

Louis starts to shake his head but Harry extracts his fingers and holds the boy's jaw securely as he starts to fuck upward. It's rough and sloppy, the sound of their clammy skin sliding together and their mingled breaths makes everything hotter. Harry places his hand on Louis' tummy, as if checking on Bean just to make sure their baby is well, before slamming up into Louis.

With a ragged gasp, Louis puts one hand behind him in Harry's hair and the other he uses to guide Harry's mouth to his. The kiss turns languid and Harry slows his thrusts to a quick stab that has Louis panting into his mouth.

"Love you." Harry took Louis' neglected member in his hand and worked it roughly with the precome.

Louis comes before he can answer, vision flashing white as he tightens around Harry and feels the liquid warmth fill him up. Harry gives him time to recuperate, fucking them through their orgasms, before starting a biting trail down Louis' neck.

"What?" Louis giggles.

"I love you."

"Love you too." Louis pulls off and feels between his legs to where he's leaking. "Loads."

"Loads?" Harry was always prepared. He produced a small plug from his pants pocket and put it in place with a wet pop.

"I love you loads and loads." Louis laughs, smiling brightly in his post coital glow.

"Yeah?"

Louis nods many times and stands, organising himself again and hissing when his red and perky nipples are taped down again with fresh cotton pads. Harry is always honoured to do it for him.

"Far more than I deserve, I reckon." Harry gets ahold of Louis' belt loop and yanks him in his direction.

"Far less." Louis kisses Harry's nose and removes the man's hands from his back pockets. "We've got forty minutes left and Bean is hungry for a churro with ice cream."

Zayn's outside when Harry ushers Louis out of the bathroom before they could see each other. He's washing his hands at the basins and glances up to glare with powerful hatred at Harry, laced with envy and topped with disgust. Harry simply smirks and exits the restroom with his hand in Louis'. Louis consults with his food master, Niall, and finds out that there's a bakery just three doors away from their nearest off-campus cafe. Niall even volunteers to accompany them there but gets immediately turned down at the mention of Zayn.

"But Haz-"

"Louis." Harry gives his boy a stern look, one that ends a conversation before it begins.

"It's cool, Lou." Niall waves off the boy's pouting lip.
"Hazza." Louis turns away from his friend and the brooding other male who had his twisted gaze glued to Louis' back. "I want Niall to come too."

"Niall can come, darling."

Harry’s capable arm comes around Louis' body and he rubs his back in a soothing motion. "But he-" Harry gestures towards the fourth agitated component of their gathering. "-can stay the fuck away."

"Haz." Louis looks the beast of a man in the eye, lowering his voice remarkably. "Trust me. He won't do anything."

Harry’s reluctant to believe that Louis is actually willing to let a pervert near him, and his blind red rage that never really dies down makes him shake his head firmly.

"No." He forms the word perfectly, his accent leaking through and creating an echo. "I trust you but not him."

"I know that but I know you won't let anything happen to me."

Harry couldn't agree more.

"Our break's almost over, Haz. Please."

With a drawn out sigh, Harry decides to let Louis have this as his victory. He'd never allow Zayn anywhere near Louis and his Bean, but already agreeing to letting the creep just accompany them scares him.

"Alright." Harry doesn't nod because he’d like to maintain some of his proud hostility.

Zayn shows no emotion throughout the argument and even when his favour wins. He just follows Niall with an impassive grim expression, hands shoved deep into his pockets and mind just a few feet ahead where Louis walked under Harry's heavy arm.

In his mind, that was his arm that would occasionally tighten and bring Louis closer so they could kiss for long moments. Louis' hand would be in his back pocket and nobody else had what they had.

"Lou, look!" Niall calls out when they pass a music store with a bell on the door.

Louis glances back over his shoulder, looking at Niall then the poster he's directed to. It's pasted in the form of a collage on the music store's window, advertising the coming of an artist. A band named Four that neither Zayn or Harry knew.

"We should go." Louis has stopped Harry and all four look at the poster. "We have to go."

Louis kept his cool composure. He was not going to throw a fanboy fit over his favourite band in the middle of the street.

"We're going." He decides before anyone can say anything. "We are going to The Dome."

"I agree." Niall raises his hand. "Roadtrips are fun."

"Louis." Harry tries to intercept.

"Tickets release today!" Louis gasps and stares at his watch. "In an hour and a half. Niall, what are
"The university has Wi-Fi." Niall interrupts him. "We'll book the tickets in class."

"Lou." Harry has to take the boy's arm to make him focus this time. "What are you doing?"

"They're my favourite band and nobody's stopping me from seeing them." Louis is lit up with excitement and can't seem to make his threat sound real.

"I won't stop you darling, but The Dome is a ten hour drive from here."

"I don't mind." Louis smiles reassuringly. "Or Bean."

Niall stayed inside his head with cheering his best friend on. "Come on, Harry."

Harry's dark eyes dart from Louis' radiant face to Niall's expectant twitching.

"Psycho boyfriend?" Niall offers.

The man's unforgiving glare lowers again to Louis and the tense frown lines loosen up on his forehead.

"The show's next weekend." Harry blows out a heavy breath. "Will it just be you two?"

"Zayn?" Niall raises his shoulders as a chilly breeze whips around them.

Harry's mouth opens and Louis kisses his cheek immediately to stop any words from piling out. It works briefly when Harry looks at him with a strained sidewards glance.

"Never heard of them." Zayn speaks up with a crisp accent that could melt hearts. "Don't want to waste anybody's time."

The pity card was one played by many a person for none other than sympathy. Harry recognised the symptoms the second it slipped out of Zayn's poisoned mouth.

"Motherfucker." Harry's angry gaze is set on Zayn when he mutters the word.

Louis' used to Harry's foul words but he still lightly slaps the man's chest for saying it anyway. They could not have such slipping of the tongue with Bean on the way.

"You'll enjoy the show!" Louis immediately changes the direction of the conversation. "And we'll convert you in no time."

Louis was not completely oblivious. He knew Zayn saw him differently to most of the other lads around, but his innocently warped perspective kept him from discovering just how deep that went. He refused to take is seriously and just knew that Niall needed time to win Zayn over. He had happiness and wanted Niall to have it too.

"Harry mate?" Zayn has a viciously arrogant smirk playing on his lips. "What do you say?"

"I'd rather you fly up and crash." Harry spat. "There is no place for you in my car so you can fucking walk until you get there."

Niall is caught between laughing and wanting to scream at Harry's sourness. He does neither and
looks to Louis for help because he really wants to have a partner on the roadtrip too.

Louis can only reply with a helpless shrug and apologetic smile. There's no convincing Harry on this one and everyone knows it.

Zayn has more in common with Harry than expected because the blow to his ego just leads to his chuckle and shaking head. Louis and Niall are beyond their rate of tolerance.

"I still want my churro." Louis sighs, defusing the heat. "Please can I have my churro?"

"I'm with you." Niall takes Louis' arm and they reach for the cafe door.

"Wait, Louis." Harry pulls out something from his back pocket and hands it to the pair. It's his black American Express card. "Use it."

Niall's eyes widen at the sight and Louis shows his gratitude by kissing Harry on his jaw. The bone underneath can be felt against his soft lips as he whispers: "Be nice."

Louis gets dragged into the store afterwards and Niall points out several other options that are far better than plain old churros.

"I want a churro, Ni." Louis rocks back and forth in the queue.

Niall huffs but settles on his triple chocolate muffin and berry freezo anyway. "Can I ask you something?"

"Just did."

"Shut up." Niall laughs. "Seriously."

"Anything."

"Do you know why Harry hates Zayn so much?"

Louis looks at his best friend and is greeted with nothing but hope for honesty in his eyes. "Yes."

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

"I don't."

"I hate him."

"Harry?"

"Zayn. Harry too, but not right now."

Louis rolls his eyes and pulls Niall's arm forward in the line. "Niall, please don't do this because of me."

"You're not that important, Lou."

"I'm serious."

"So am I."

"Pay for your own muffin now."
"Okay fine you're my emperor, Lou-Lou. I love you so much." Niall points out an empty cashier and they approach it, then waiting until after their orders are placed to speak. "But seriously, I don't really feel comfortable around him."

"Zayn? Neither do I."

"Yeah but you have Harry to protect you."

Louis' face falls. "Niall."

"No, shut up."

Louis embraces his best friend anyway, hugging his waist tightly and waiting for Niall to respond. "I won't let anything happen to you." Louis promises. "Up until the moment you meet someone, then it's their job."

Niall smiles genuinely and it makes Louis so happy after this recent revelation. "Nutter."

"Blondie."

"I'm brunette!"

They carry the food to a window booth and Harry walks in, sans the gloomy presence of Zayn, to join them. Nobody asks for Zayn because Louis doesn't have a very pretty image in his head already.

"Want some?" Louis feeds Harry some of his churro with his fingers, only to get his fingers lightly bitten.

"Lou!" Niall throws a crumpled tissue across the table and Harry catches it before it touches Louis.

"Don't do that." Harry's tone is pissed and warning. He doesn't need to deal rashly with Niall after nearly snapping Zayn.

"Sorry." Niall quickly apologises. "Louis."

"Hmm?" Louis has an ice cream moustache because he usually cleans his mouth after eating, not between bites.

"Look." He points indiscreetly to the queue behind them.

"Ugh, Niall."

"Look!"

Harry growls inhumanely and Niall drops his urgent hand immediately. Louis looks anyway at whatever Niall's excited about this time.

"What am I looking at?"

"It's Coffee Shop Guy." Niall sits up straight and probably even crosses his legs under the table.

"Which one?"

"Brown hair, caramel leather jacket and a white shirt." Niall's eyes are about ready to pop out of their sockets and Harry's stressed at this prospect.
"Oh I see." Louis catches the male standing in front of a cashier, smiling politely with a birthmark on his neck. "Handsome."

Harry's silent and drinks his coffee, but drops it to clasp Louis' hand a little tighter under the table between his legs. Louis is still his.

"Name?"

"Liam Payne."

"Call him here." Louis suggests.


"He's here alone. Might as well introduce us."

"No."

"Fine. I will."

"I will disown-"

"Liam!" Louis notices the boy just about to walk off and waves slightly to catch his attention. "Hi." They're successful in calling him over, except Harry is now stiff with agitation and tension. Liam walks over, his smile never faltering even though he only knows Niall at the table. Niall, who is trying so hard to melt away.

"Hi." Liam lifts his coffee in a kind of wave. "Hey, Niall."

Niall's face is stuffed with muffin so he looks like a squirrel before hibernation. "H-Hey."

"I'm Louis and this is Harry." Louis can't really shake his hand because one has ice cream and the other is with Harry.

"Nice to meet you both." Liam doesn't bother Harry's default frown.

"Are you on break?"

"Yeah. Just came to get something to help me survive the rest of the day."

"Why don't you sit with us?"

"Would you mind?"

"Wouldn't offer if we did."

Liam slides in next to Niall and Louis relaxes enough to settle into Harry's side, feeling dreadful guilt at not speaking with him for so long. He turns his head and smiles innocently at Harry, who cracks a smile and kisses his forehead.

"No more shouting for other guys, okay?" Harry squeezes Louis' hand.

"Just you?"

"Just me." Harry pulls Louis' leg onto his lap so it hangs between his knees off the ground. "Good boy. Love you."
"Love you too. Loads and loads."

Louis goes to wipe his fingers on a tissue but Harry captures the free wrist and brings it to his lips. It's a habit of his now, and it's surprisingly more settling to Harry than Louis who is always taken aback by the action.

"We need to go or we'll be late." Harry links their fingers together. "You need to book those tickets." The realisation dawns on Louis and his heart picks up even more, but he's unable to disrupt the moment of Liam telling Niall something that makes him snort with laughter. It's Niall's pet peeve but Liam doesn't seem to care.

"We're going." Louis gets up with Harry and salutes Niall on the way out. By the time they get back on the sidewalk, Louis' curiosity has won. "Where's Zayn?"

"Gone." Harry's steps slow down so that Louis can keep up easily. "Can't do anything about him being on campus but he won't bother us."

"How do you know?"

"My sweet-" Harry smirks and a flash of something predatory passes through his eyes. "-do you know me at all?"

* * * * *

"Two more minutes." Niall whispers in Louis' ear.

It's their second Photojournalism lecture and Harry, Louis, Niall and Liam are seated all the way at the back of the hall. Liam's Engineering lecture was cancelled and Niall never really gives a person a choice in anything so the poor lad ended up in their group now.

Several other laptops were open too, all on the countdown page on Big Concerts' website where they can book the best tickets quickly.

"Can I have your card please?" Louis asks Harry, who willingly hands over his credit card - he has no limit on his while the others do.

Louis gives the laptop to Liam who seems to be as computer savvy as it gets, and writes the credit card number in light pencil on a page for him.

"You only get one minute to book 'em." Niall leans towards Liam. "There's only one show so the site might crash. Don't you dare give up."

Liam looks a bit stricken because Niall and Louis aren't to be messed with in this scenario, so he bites his lip and listens.

"Now." Louis whispers, as the countdown closes and the tabs open to book.

The professor is well aware of all the tapping going on, and knows that none of it has to do with his lecture today. He merely takes his time setting up a slide show until the keys slamming, curses muttered and sniffles end.

Louis was holding Harry's hand the whole minute, not letting the man actually take down notes for them. Niall bit his lip until it bled and his shaking leg jostled their bags.

"Baby." Harry kisses Louis' forehead. "Please calm down."
"I'm calm." Louis lies.

"Bean won't like the stress, sweetheart. I don't like it either."

"Sorry." Louis buried himself in Harry's cologne-scented jacket and stared at Liam until he closed the laptop with a heavy sigh that could go either way.

"We got them." Liam decides to tell the truth before Niall bites through his lip. "Four Golden Circle tickets."

It was four because Niall moved on quickly and invited Liam on their roadtrip instead. Harry wasn't too pleased but he liked Liam's complete disinterest in everything non-Niall.

The buzzer goes for the end of the lecture and Louis exhales to release all his stress. His face splits into a grin and Harry kisses him to celebrate. Niall hugs Liam when they stand up, mumbling several thank you's and holding himself back from kissing him.

* * * * *

"Hazza?" Louis wanders into the kitchen, where Harry's getting bottled water from the fridge, with Bundy following his bare feet.

Harry turns around with an irritated look that Louis cooes at. He puts Harry's arm around himself and kisses the spot between his eyes.

"What's wrong, love?" Louis holds on to Harry's shoulders.

"Being crippled is fucking annoying." Harry snaps, nails settling into Louis' skin. "I can't fucking do anything!"

Harry knocks something down and it crashes loudly just beside Louis' feet, widely avoiding Bundy who has spotted Bolg on the carpet and went towards him instead.

"Hey. Haz, love." Louis cups both sides of the man's face and stretches up on his tip toes just as the wetness reaches him. "Stop it. You're not crippled."

"This brace is a bitch."

Louis puts his hand on it to keep Harry from banging it against something out of rage. "You're perfectly normal, Haz. It's just a boo-boo."

Harry can't help his laugh that escapes through a thin crack amongst the rock of irritation. "A major boo-boo."

"Quite major." Louis brings Harry's mouth down to his. "But Bean and I love you so much, our booboo doesn't even matter. Now kiss me you fool."

"Fool?" Harry raises his eyebrow.

"My fool."

Louis parts his lips and holds Harry's mouth against his, giving up the battle for dominance immediately as he always does, and moans when Harry bites on his bottom lip. Harry presses his back against the counter and licks into Louis' mouth, curling his fingers to cup Louis' behind as he bent forward. Louis giggled and tugged on Harry's damp hair.

"Love the way you taste." Harry picks Louis' right leg off the ground and deepens the kiss.
Louis blushes and tightens his arms around Harry's neck, locking on greedily as their eyes closed to enjoy this moment. Harry's arm sling between them keeps their bodies apart but Louis refuses to let it become too prevalent. He lowers one hand to Harry's waist and keeps the other on his jaw.

They both draw back to breathe deeply, inhaling more of each other's scent than clean air. Harry's cologne clung to him as a reminder of his shower, his body gel and shampoo were strong, traces of nicotine from his latest smoke was still hanging around him.

Louis' body was clean of the tainting smells. He smelt of vanilla conditioner and citrus body gel.

"Your friend will be very unhappy if we're late." Harry rubs Louis' tummy in small circles.

"Or cancel."

"If this party shows the slightest sign of rowdiness, we're leaving."

Louis was assured that the party would be as calm and boring as a high school reunion. "Agreed."

"Let's go get ready then. Did you put lotion yet?"

Louis held Harry's hand and stepped around the spilt mess on the floor, heading to the bedroom. "Not yet."

"Naughty." Harry chuckled. "Lie on the bed."

Harry takes care of his Louis on as many levels as he can. They've never done this before but neither sees why they shouldn't.

Louis obediently sits on the bed and Harry fetches the lavender scented lotion he uses from their dresser. Louis drapes his legs across Harry's lap and lies back against the pillows.

"I don't want to stay long at the party." Louis says when Harry's cold hands make contact with the warm skin of his thigh. "I'm tired."

"An hour at the most, okay?" Harry starts with Louis' thigh and works his way down to the heel of his foot, massaging the muscle and peppering kisses on his hips as rewards.

"An hour's fine."

"What do you plan to do with the concert trip?"

"Meaning?" Louis switches legs.

"We're driving up to Eastland where The Dome is. Where will we stay?"

"We'll book a hotel."

"I'd like to choose one." Harry pinches Louis' bum to signal the completion of his task and that Louis should turn over. "Standards are very important to me."

"I believe that. You can choose one."

Louis rushed them both, with the reason of getting unfashionably late. He wore a white tank top with a black jacket and matching jeans. His Vans had red and black checked blocks on them and it was his favourite pair.

"You need water because you're drinking anything from there." Harry decidedly remarks.
"Okay." Louis chews his bottom lip and plays with Harry's Dodge keys.

By seven thirty they're standing outside Louis' old dorm - Harry had him moved out almost instantly once his stuff was gone - and waiting for Niall to pitch up. Harry stopped at McDonalds on the way here to get Louis dinner - however meagre and disgusting.

"Warm enough?" Harry's ready at any moment to up and leave if Louis got uncomfortable.

"I'm warm." Louis slips his arm under Harry's jacket, around his waist and leans into his side.

"Bean?" Harry's disabled arm stays stagnant while his other lightly squeezes Louis' hip.

"Warm too."

Niall shows up with Liam, exiting the dormitory and laughing together like they've known each other forever. Louis actually thinks that they have, since Niall spoke about Liam quite a while back. "Hi." Niall smiles and greets them. "Ready to go?"

"Yeah it's cold out here." Louis gets away from Harry's hold when he receives a questioning glare from the older male.

The party venue is Beau's brother's entire dorm - they are so conveniently brushing off the rules here - and the atmosphere is a lot less intimidating. The music is muted, the people are calmly mingling between walls and drinks. They're dressed more formally than the usual skimpy attire used at horrible parties.

"This is not what I expected." Harry throws an arm around Louis' shoulders and pulls him close.

"Hmm." Louis fits into his side snugly. "It's quite civilised."

"Eric's a business major." Niall says, and his discreet movements towards Liam don't go unnoticed. "Who's Eric?"

"Beau's brother. Lou, let's go get something to drink."

"Lou." Harry doesn't release Louis' wrist. "Don't drink anything-"

"I know." Louis jumps up and kisses Harry on his lips. "I'll be careful-"

"Be safe-"

"Love you."

"Love you too." Harry sends Louis off with a reluctant wave and tight smile.

While Niall leads Louis through the widely spread people to the kitchen, Harry walks away from Liam. He wasn't here to socialise, just look after his boy for the night. It was looking hopeful so far. He hated already being separated from Louis and knew that the feeling was mutual so he'd just follow them around for a bit.

"So, gossip then." Niall sits next to Louis on the kitchen island.

Louis takes a sip of his own water while Niall pours himself flavoured mineral water. "Gossip?"

"Yeah, gossip."
"What kind of gossip?"

Niall swallows his first giant gulp. "Sexy gossip."

Louis nearly spits out his Evian. "I-I don't have any sexy gossip."

"With a boyfriend like Harry you expect you believe you *don't* have sexy gossip?" Niall scoffs, sipping more water and listening to the song change to Kadebostany.

"Um....-" Louis' cheeks redden from shyness. He always thought Harry's and his personal activities were.....well, personal.

"Spill."

"Sp-Spill what?" Louis hugs the water bottle to his tummy, jacket enveloping it.

"Details. Tell me, your best friend and favourite human being, what you two do holed up in such a fabulous apartment."

"We um....watch my favourite shows on Thursdays and Sundays."

"I *know* you're not walking around as a virgin though."

With hot ears and shy eyes, Louis shakes his head.

"Aw." Niall bumps shoulders with him. "Does Psycho make you all shy, Lou?"

"Does not." Louis sticks his tongue out at him.

"He does! That's adorable." Niall affirms, laughing softly. "So tell me about him."

"What about him?"

"Since.....you know, Bean, has he been good to you?"

"He has." Louis smiles. "He loves Bean."

"I imagine he's very protective."

"Extremely." Louis blushes. "I like it."

"I can see that. Like someone controlling you, Lou?"

"Not *controlling* but someone who takes care of me."

"Harry seems like the ultimate guy for you then."

Nodding, Louis takes another sip and slowly sways to the beat of the music that's coming from the living room. He likes parties like this.

"What's he like in bed?"

"Niall!" Louis gasps, slapping his friend's arm. "That's rude."

"Is not. We're best friends."

"Still."
"Come on, Lou."

"No."

"Lou-Lou, tell me."

"He's.....He's nice."

"You're killing me, babe. Is he rough or does he like to caress?"

"Both." Louis shrugs slightly. "I.....I like rough sometimes."

"I took you for a slow vanilla person."

Louis giggles and swings his legs back and forth over the counter's edge. "I like that too sometimes."

"Does he push you around?"

"Huh?"

"Like does he hold you against a wall and-"

"What does his have to do with anything, Niall?"

"Nothing. Just like putting you on the spot."

"You're mean."

"That I am."

"I want my Harry now."

"Speak of the devil."

Harry walks through the kitchen doorway undetected but Niall spots him heading their way, and cuts short their conversation. Louis' smile brightens at the sight of his bigger, badder boyfriend. "Gonna find Liam." Niall hops down and disappears through the crowd once again.

"Hi." Louis makes a grab for Harry as soon as they're close enough to one another.

"Hello, darling." Harry kisses Louis' cheek and jaw, hand brushing Louis' back and waist. "I'm afraid I couldn't stay away from you for very long."

"I forgive you."

"What were you and Niall up to?"

"Talking."

Harry noses at Louis' neck. "Arms around me, angel."

Louis' arms lock around Harry's neck, under the flaps of his heavy trench coat collar, and his fingers lace together. The noise around them has picked up, meaning that more people have arrived at Eric's eco-friendly party to celebrate the end of another hard week.

"Are you really cold, lovely? Outside you said you were."
"I'm okay."

Louis set his chin on Harry's shoulder as the lights go down and neon patterns begin to flicker on the living room ceiling, paired with some unknown tracks from the speakers. "I wanna dance." Louis announces, jumping down from the counter only to land with lips pressed against his. "Dance with me."

"Alright, baby. Anything you want."

Harry leads the way to the edge of the dance floor, taking Louis' hand and dropping it on his shoulder. Louis' other hand settles on Harry's arm sling, touch as light and gentle as a feather. He smiles with admiration and adoration in his eye when Harry circles his waist in a steel-band grip.

"Turn around, Lou."

Louis faces the angle that faces the front door at the end of a hallway, his back pressed firmly to Harry's chest so it's tucked between his broad shoulders. With a nervous hand he reaches up behind him to run his fingers through Harry's hair, keeping it there.

"Never trust a man who can dance." Thin, wet lips press against Harry's throat. The outline of Louis' mouth stays there with faint traces of the water he was drinking.

"That shouldn't be-" Harry tugs hard on Louis' belt loop so the boy's moulded to his form. "-the only reason you don't trust me."

The music gets louder and Harry's lips find purchase on Louis' pulse point. His head lolls to the side on Harry's shoulder, giving him access to his neck as his lips parted and their sensual movements got lost in the music. Harry grinded forward against Louis' perky behind, groaning when Louis pushed back.

Louis' eyes close and his hips find their own rhythm, Harry's hand slides between their bodies and cups his bum unashamedly. His body jerks and he gasps from the sudden action, his fingers tighten in Harry's hair. The grip is smooth and still slightly damp from Harry's shower.

Harry's eyes open to land on the first thing he sees, the front door. Not just the door that more partygoers are entering through, but Zayn standing beside the entry way with his fists in his jeans pockets. He tries to appear calm but the stiff jaw, slouched shoulder and glare are dead giveaways. "Harry." Louis didn't see Zayn, and in his mind they're still alone.

Smirking smugly, Harry runs the tip of his nose along Louis' neck and kisses along the expanse of slightly golden skin. He ignores Louis when the boy moves against him, his warm little body shifting like personified temptation.

"Daddy." Louis turns back around to face Harry, pulling him down so they can kiss.

Harry forgets about Zayn and runs his hand down Louis' body, squeezing bum. "Baby. My baby."

"Pay attention to me."

"You possess every ounce of my attention and affection." Harry knows Zayn can see the way he's slipping his hand into Louis' back jeans pocket and nibbling on his upper lip.

Cupping the side of Harry's face and giggling to escape Harry's unwavering lips, Louis leans up to bump their noses. "Stop antagonizing Zayn. I'm already yours."
Harry doesn't let his surprise at hearing Louis knows his game show, and smiles with that same evil glint in his eye. "You surprise me, my dove."

"Do I?" Louis squeals when Harry nuzzles his neck roughly, unable to help the burst of laughter.

"Everyday." Harry looks up and Zayn is gone. He can't help but feel a somewhat disappointed.

"Haz!"
"Sorry, sweet." Harry chuckles into his ear. "All mine, aren't you?"

"Aha." Louis hides his face and their limbs tangle together as they keep away from others but still enjoy a dance.

"We're going shopping tomorrow."

"I don't like shopping."

"No whining, princess. We're going."

"What for?"

"To buy you lots of pretty things." Harry answers, the tips of his teeth exposed in a slanted smirk. His hands glide smoothly over Louis' bum and his fingers curl inwards to dig into the flesh. "My baby deserves that."

"I have pretty things." Louis argues, his small hand on the side of Harry's neck. "And I have you."

"I know you hate boxers." Harry pulls them aside and holds Louis flush against the wall, his only working arm above Louis' head. "I see you fidgeting in every chair you sit, when you walk. It's uncomfortable for you, isn't it baby?"

If the lights were on, the redness of Louis' cheeks in his blush would be visible. Harry loses himself to the beauty that is Louis' eyes reflecting the dizzying pattern behind them. They're like doors to unworldly dimensions filled with timeless beauty.

"T-They're tight sometimes." Louis grips the front lapels of Harry's coat. "They're not very comfy after I shower and I still feel hot."

"Yeah? We can get you something else."

Louis shakes his head. "It's fine."

"Hey. No." Harry says firmly, now unrelenting in his hold on Louis' arched back. "Whatever you want, you will have."

"Why would you do that for me?" Louis' earnest expression is one of true emotion. "I'm not....it's not making sense."

"What do you mean?"

"Why do you do so much for me? I can never repay you."

"You repay me everyday, love. The day you said you'd have me in your heart is the day I dedicated myself to your happiness."
"But, Harry....I can't do the same for you."

"Why do you say that?"

"I'm not wealthy and I'm not confident or brave. You're everything I'm not."

"My sweet, listen to me." Harry supports the right side of Louis' face. "My love is not a favour that needs reimbursing."

Louis had a very strong, capable gut feeling that threw up dozens of red flags at Harry's every word. He would normally doubt a man like Harry's ability to even love, to care about the smallest thing outside their own egos. In spite of this, Louis fell deeper in a more firm position in a hole for them.

There's no screaming and running anymore. He's caught in an impenetrable net in the form of Harry's arms.

Belonging to a monster - loving the beast inside a man - is the best and worst possibility. They'll drop you, and won't allow anyone else to pick you up.

"You're going to be disappointed." Louis shakes his head as the song in the background changes - absolving them of their own world - with a wry laugh. "I'm not going to make you happy all the time."

"That's not why I followed you relentlessly months ago."

Louis opens his mouth again, but a loud screech stops him. The easiness melts out of their surroundings as more shouts follow, shocked male and traumatised female following each other.

"What's happening?" Louis looks around him, hands fistng Harry's shirt.

Harry's line of vision snaps in the direction of where he suspects the noise is arising from. His trained senses enables him to seek out the source of almost anything without getting distracted. He looks to his left, and watches too many people crash through the window. The front door is flooded as well by scantily dressed bodies, flowing in one after the other. Glass cutlery and window panes crash all around them, the previous attending students are shoved aside by the hooligans piling in now.

"Where's Eric?!" The final man to enter shouts as he holds up a broken beer bottle. Louis' heart fails as he takes in that scene alone, feeling very exposed as several people brush past him while Harry's arm gets closer to squishing him around the middle. The barbarian with a bull piercing in his nose and a bald head winks at him before moving on, incidentally pushing a girl down to the sofa as he passes her.

"Niall....-" Louis breathes, searching the crowd of new and old perspiring figures for his best friend. "-and Liam."

"Shh." Harry is as stiff as a pole. "Don't draw attention to yourself."

"We have to find them and leave."

Harry nods, glancing back up around the room. Chaos has broken out in the once civilised party. To his right, the kitchen is trampled and people are fighting to get out before they're hurt. Girls who came here in groups are pulled from one another and tossed under the arms of these new-comers. To his left the dorm's living room is destroyed. The coffee table has been made into splintered logs
and Harry turns his chin up at the fight that's happening.

"Come." Harry takes Louis' hand but pushes him ahead first towards the front door.

"Harry, Niall!" Louis doesn't resist the pull of Harry's arm but he looks about to.

Before he can trip on a poor person's splayed arm, Louis' side collides with someone else's. He contains his scream from the tough impact and looks up with a stubborn reflex to apologise. The girl looks much weaker than what Louis received in his blow. She looks at him with an annoyed glare that settles into a sick smirk when Harry urges him on rather than stopping. Harry doesn't see her until Louis' already out the door, and when he does he has to remember not to stop and stare.

"Harry!" Louis calls for his attention, and Harry's forced to give it to him.

When the girl looks away from him to get lost in the riotous party, Harry turns back to Louis who looks a lot confused a little heartbroken.

"Who was that?"

"Not now." Harry pulls Louis in the general direction of their awaiting car.

Louis listens and climbs into the front passenger seat without further conversation. Harry slams his door a little too hard and Louis startles from the abrupt noise. The party's getting rowdier by the time Louis spots Niall exiting through the back and Liam running across the mini front yard. Without thinking, Louis jumps back down as Harry gets in the driver's seat. Harry sighs and gets off as well, standing guard at the hood of the vehicle while Niall jogs up to them.

"Lou!" Niall is breathing heavily and his pale complexion has turned red.

"You okay?" Louis puts a hand on his friend's shoulder.

Niall nods and Liam makes it to them just then. "What just happened?"

"That's Beau's cousin, Theo." Niall explains. "He dropped out of here and joined a gang."

"He's got quite a following." Liam makes a distasteful face, frowning back at the disrupted building.

"Probably just people looking to cause trouble he picked up from bars. Campus security will be here soon."

"There's a lot of damage they can do in the meanwhile."

Harry reaches out and curls his arm around Louis' frame, not expecting the boy to jump from the surprise. He immediately settled against Harry again and though about the girl Harry knows but won't talk about.

"I'll be back." Harry whispers gruffly in his ear before pushing off the car and walking away.

"Where's he going?" Niall asks, pointing to Harry's retreating figure.

Louis shrugs and rubs his own arms, hugging himself as the temperature continues to drop. He stares at his ratty shoes and sniffs, his nose begins to hurt after inhaling too many doses of cold air.

"We'll wait with you." Niall sidles up next to Louis, throwing an arm over his shoulders.

Harry went back into the dorm building bravely, with one intention in mind. None of the three others outside utter a word about just how strange that is, considering Harry dragged Louis and
himself out of there first thing.

Louis thinks he knows why and he gets sick thinking about it, imagining Harry finding someone else for whatever reason. That girl, whoever she was, got Harry *distracted* enough to forget Louis needed to get away and be safe. It made Louis think and feel insecure in a foreign part of himself.

"What is Psycho doing?" Niall exhales dramatically and his body sags.

"You can-" Louis pauses to sneeze. "-leave. I'll wait inside the car for him to get back."

"Are you sure?"

Louis nods affirmatively and even smiles to reassure them. Niall hesitates but his exhaustion also shines through after a long day. They depart after many waves and Louis goes around the side of the Dodge to climb in and hopefully put the heater on, only to find that the doors are locked.

It's ten minutes later that Harry returns, smelling of foul alcohol and cigarettes. His frown deepens as soon as he sees Louis standing alone next to the car, arms around himself.

"What are you doing?" Harry unlocks the driver's door and Louis gets in the back without a word.

"Lou?"

Louis looks at him but keeps silent, his irritation levels sitting on a very high peak. How dare Harry leave him out here where he was alone and vulnerable? He promised to keep him safe yet seemed to just forget. Harry just left him to go find some girl he won't tell Louis about.

"Don't ignore me." Harry's voice echoes off the walls of the car in a frightening boom.

"Sorry." Louis squeaks.

"Tell me what's wrong."

Louis shakes his head and looks out the window, knees drawn up to his chest so he looks as tiny as possible.

"Louis."

Said boy looks up and the emotions pour out in his gaze. He's confused, afraid and tired, above all else he's worried and needs to feel safe again. Harry's his only source of that since he first opened his eyes then lost his family in a car crash. By leaving him and going to find that fragment of his clear memory, Harry left him to feel uncared for.

"My sweet."

Louis responds to the endearment by looking up and smiling shakily before his bottom lip wobbles too much and he has to bite it but look away.

Suddenly there's the loud noise of Harry's sigh and his door opening hastily before shutting. Louis can't hold his tears back when he thinks about being an emotional little baby and Harry leaving him again so he can be away.

Things don't go that way and Louis' exposed to a gust of vicious cold air that makes his teeth chatter and goosebumps rise on his arms. He starts to crawl away on the seat but his waist is caught and he's dragged backwards onto Harry's lap.
"No." Louis wiggles and tries to escape the grip.

Harry's hold is a death grip as he keeps Louis planted on his lap, ignoring the resistance from his captive. Louis tries prying Harry's fingers off his tummy with both his hands, but the brute strength Harry keeps at bay comes out as a result.

Louis' angry and feeling betrayed, so he continues fighting Harry's arm until he gets somewhere. It doesn't really work and Harry just pins him to his chest, growling when Louis pushes his chest. "Harry, stop." Louis pleads through tears. "I want to go home."

It felt even worse, even more throttling, that Louis doesn't know what he means when he says 'home'. He has no family to run to and a baby inside him that needs care, the protection that Louis himself also needs.

"Leave me alone," Louis sobs but ironically, into Harry's chest.

"What's wrong, angel? So many tears from those beautiful eyes."

Harry wipes Louis' cheeks and catches all anticipated tears with his thumbs.

Looking away, Louis shakes his head and tries to scramble off Harry's lap. He needs to get away. "Baby please."

"W-Who was-" Louis chokes on the sobs caught in his throat.

"Shh. Breathe, princess. Talk after."

Louis takes deep breaths and calms his fired nerves enough to speak coherently. "Who was that girl you saw earlier and went back for?"

"No one."

Louis starts crying again, now that he knows Harry's all set for lying to him. He nods understandingly and doesn't allow Harry to hold him back when he tries.

"Stop it!" Louis didn't mean to shout but he couldn't contain it.

He can't take the constant fumbling and wanting to please - he doesn't mind it at all but when he can't handle getting stabbed in his heart like this. It's not their first fight and it's not the first time Harry's being evasive. He wants an open relationship and if he's handing himself over - body and soul - to Harry he wants something wholehearted back as well.

"Angel-"

"No. Just- Just leave me alone."

"Louis. Come on."

"You won't tell me. Fine." Louis crosses his arms and whimpers when his arms press harshly to his chest where the nipple pads are pressuring his sensitive nipples.

"Sit still, Louis. You're hurting yourself."

Louis doesn't reply and when he tries to open the door - his old dorm can be his home for tonight if Harry's going to continue being such a jerk - Harry captures his wrists and pins them down.

"You're not going anywhere."

Harry growls, the lethal seriousness is blatant in his tone. His
"You won't hurt me," Louis knew that for sure. Or he at least comforted himself with the fantasy. The sinister glint in Harry's eye, the same one he walked in with, only sharpens at Louis' soft voice.

"Princess, I won't ever hurt you."

"Then tell me the truth."

"I'd be causing you distress by doing that."

"Harry, you're hurting me by lying."

"I was tempted to break a promise. A promise I made to you and Bean." Harry looks down at Louis' front and releases the boy's hands to rub the slightly firm pudge. "I'm a monster so how will I raise my baby?"

"Harry, you're not being very clear. What promise?"

"That girl-" Harry's eyes are covered with a foggy layer of glass that makes him look intoxicated. "-was the witness I went after with Abrams. Her boyfriend too."

"Oh God." Louis covers his mouth and sits back on his calves. "What did you......-" He runs his hand through his hair and puts a protective hand on his tummy. "What did you do?"

"Nothing."

Louis exhales with relief but it is short-lived.

"But did I want to. Nobody was going to know she's gone. Got no family or friends. Her boyfriend's a-"

"Harry!" Louis forces the unfocused man to look him in the eye. "Stop, love. Please, you shouldn't be thinking about that."

The inner turmoil running rancid in Harry's head seemed to collect together and snap shut behind a solid door. Every emotion and doubt that accompanied Harry's under-developed sense of guilt and remorse evaporates. It leaves behind the creature that destroys and harms everything besides Louis. His eyes are blown wide and black when he answers Louis. "I'm sorry but sometimes I need it."

"What did you do to her?"

"I lit a cigarette-" Harry whispers the dark secret like an incantation into Louis' ear. "-and I burnt her right here with it."

He kisses a soft spot just below Louis' ear where any pressure made him gasp and squirm.

"She won't open her mouth about anything. Her losing something important is too great." Louis wasn't going to ask for him to elaborate on that statement because he's had enough for one hectic Friday and the drowsiness Bean is rendering paired with an odd craving has been reigning supreme.

"You can't need to hurt people anymore, Haz. Please." Louis can't fight the grasp Harry's enforcing on his wrists to move them from his face. "You promised you'd stop, try to stop."
"I can't stop." Harry lifts the hem of Louis' shirt to his shoulder and holds the fabric bunched up there with his hand. "I can never stop."

"That's what I'm here for. I'm going to help you."

"Monster." Harry licks his lips as something too fleeting passes through his gaze. "I'm a monster and you're what I crave."

"L-Liar."

"You're right. I also crave blood."

Harry smirks and lowers his mouth to Louis' chest, kissing the sweet smelling skin and soft texture as he went. He hears Louis' gasp when his teeth take the tape off and he removes the right nipple pad.

"I won't kill anyone for your's and Bean's sake-" Harry's warm breath cause tingling sensations in Louis' veins and across his skin. "-but I will fuck up anyone who touches you."

Before there's a slight chance to answer, Harry's already brought his wet lips to Louis' nipple and latched onto him. The boy groans and at first tries to push him off, not wanting the harsh sucking feel to continue, but Harry grips his tighter and rips off the other pad as he works.

His tongue darts out and teases the swollen nub, licking the droplets of extremely sweet transparent liquid and moaning. The vibrations course up Louis' spine and make him lean all the way back with a curves spine.

This is his life now

Chapter End Notes

the end of chapter 20
Chapter Twenty-one

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Maybe the wolf is in love with the moon, and each month it cries for a love it will never touch.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

The music is blaring and the lights were unhoned, powerful in the trance is delivered to everyone in attendance. The club was high-end and even the alcohol was pricey, with the perfect taste. The people smelt of expensive fragrances and dressed to the highest nines.

But it wasn't the atmosphere or the physical beings there that impressed Harry, it was the flushed but blissed out expression on his better half's face. Louis was close to him, pressed in a back-to-chest connection with only their clothes between them.

Niall and Liam were somewhere too, off galavanting after Louis asked for a dance on the posh wooden dance floor.

They'd started off with a slow dance that had Louis tossing his head back and giggling everytime Harry flashed him a smile under the strobe lights. Harry held him close, breathed in his scent and left a litter of hickies across the smooth skin. Louis let him, always let's him.

He moved his lips from Louis' neck to his mouth, tasting every inch of his mouth and tongue. Everything was so sweet and intoxicating when it came from Louis, made Harry lose his mind.

Harry locked his arms around Louis, and buried his nose in Louis' neck where it smelt of sweet flowers and citrus with talcum powder. He sloppily kissed Louis over his shoulder, tangling their tongue and are thankfully disguised by the hectic lighting.

The voice kicked off in his head, in the back of his hazy mind. His subconscious is one of the most powerful things about him, especially when it came out in a rash.

Touch.

He parted his lips and ran his hands all over Louis' body, reminiscing about the curves he so expertly memorised. With unselfish movements he squeezed Louis' thighs and grinds into him.

Bite.

He ran the tip of his tongue along Louis' neck, before he held on tighter and bit down hard on the plump flesh. He could never bite hard enough to taste blood but he did always get a rush of an undoubtedly honey-like aroma.

Mark.

With their fingers laced together, Harry kisses Louis' wrist and each of his fingertips before he nips at the papery skin. Louis smiles against his jaw, and leads one of their joined hands to his tummy where the bump has grown so well, displaying the reward for so much affection and healthy care from both parents.
"I love you." Harry recites the greatest mark - strongest *claim* - he can think of. Harry waited for his answer and when he didn't get the usual sappy response, he frowned and glanced down at the person he was holding so dearly.

Louis wasn't there.

He panicked and searched urgently for his boy around him, in the mass of human bodies that didn't recognise him.

Where'd Louis go? He was so close to him that Harry felt them as one person and now he isn't here like he'd vanished using supernatural talents.

With horror in his eye and anger in his heart, Harry frantically looked around him. His body was cold without Louis against him, completing the half he was missing for all his life. The absence was sickening to his heart.

"Louis?" Harry shoved through couples and groups of friends, forcing them apart. "Louis?!"

There's no way Louis had gotten lost in this place because Harry made him promise to stay close where he could protect Bean and him. Being five months into this pregnancy meant Louis had to have Harry around him or it wasn't safe, it wasn't healthy.

His hands pressed shoulders, squeezed the bone until he felt it shift as he pushed through people in the direction of the bathrooms. He even got punched in the side by someone with a brave fist, but physical injury wasn't on his mind because the pain was non-existent.

He entered the restroom and found it empty save for a few guys snorting something powdery off the countertop. He didn't ask them anything and proceeded to burst through each stall. He found nothing in any of them.

Once back outside he accidentally stumbled into someone so much smaller but who felt too familiar to be foreign.

"Harry?" It was Louis, speaking without his lips moving and his eyes red-rimmed like he'd experienced a tragedy.

"Baby, what happened?" Harry enveloped Louis' quivering form in a warm embrace.

There were people still around them but they seemed to melt into a mindless background screen and all Harry saw was the broken expression his boy was wearing, his short arms hugging his body. Louis was shivering and Harry suddenly realised why it felt different in this hug. There was no distance between them because there was no bump to accommodate.

Pulling back with trepidation, Harry looks between them to examine what had happened. Louis' tummy was flat. No pudge, no precious baby bump. It was there, Bean was there with them just moments ago, and there's no blood or time for some kind of operation.

His grip on Louis' shoulders tightened considerably as he goes mad with anger and worry. Confusion aside, Harry looked around them for any sign of a threat and he knew he had to do something. He just didn't know what because Louis doesn't have a bump anywhere and he's sick with concern over Bean's life. He also just wants his baby back.

Louis' voice was whispering in his ear, trembling like a leaf in winter. "Don't let them take my baby."
"Lou-

"They can hurt me but they can't take him. Please, Harry."

When Harry was about to stare at him at a profound loss for words, he noticed a mark he did not leave on Louis' skin. Just below his ear sat a cigarette burn still red and raw with burned skin oozing blood droplets.

It wasn't Louis, it couldn't have been. His face had changed and his figure did not belong to him. The clothes were the same but those eyes melted to brown and Harry's never felt more helpless. The girl was someone he knew, someone he'd seen in the past couple of hours. He pushed her away with enough force to send her falling, and he didn't care to help her up. She was the witness girl, whose name Harry still didn't know.

All monsters are human and you seem to be the greatest one of all.
With sweat pouring out his pores and soaking the sheets and his sleeping pants, Harry woke up. He stared at the ceiling as his heart raced and his uninjured arm fumbled around for the warmth that had to be here.

Dreams don't last and nightmares tell the truth.

He wanted to scream at the voice in his head as he shot up, ignoring the lack of support for his back and forced the sheets out of the way. Louis wasn't in bed with him, and his fists were clenched around the pillow he'd normally use.

"Lou?!" He shouted into the dark bedroom, filling with dread. Even his heart stopped beating to listen for an answer.

You push him away for long enough, eventually he'll leave.

He was panting in dire attempts at devouring what sanity he had remaining to stay calm. He needed Louis more than he needed to breathe air at the moment, had to feel his skin and hear his voice.

"Louis?!" His throat was dry and he coughed on the invisible thorn in his throat. "Lou, come back!" There's soft footsteps getting louder, padding across thick carpets as someone appeared in the doorway. Harry knew it was Louis from the figure itself.

"Hey." Louis tilted his head to the side - no burn mark, Harry noted - and came to Harry. "I'm here. What's wrong?"

Not coherent enough to understand so many words now that he's shoved into a animalistic craze with severe primal instincts, Harry mumbles to the voice in his head and it comes tumbling out of his mouth.

"N-Need...this." Harry brushed Louis' hands aside when he tried to calm him. "F-Forget. I have to forget."

"Shh." Louis didn't know why Harry held him so tightly but grumbled irritably when he tried to help.

Harry ceased Louis' waist with one strong arm and hauled him onto his lap, hiding in his neck where the structure felt normal and the scent was familiar. He kept pulling Louis closer, afraid that the horror isn't over, and rubbed the healthy pudge on his tummy.

"Sensitive." Louis hissed, putting a hand on Harry's torso. "Haz, are you okay?"
Louis was there, he was real this time but Harry was so far gone into a horrid reality that he wasn't all that sure. He had no way of knowing because he couldn't pinch himself to feel something.

"Haz, you're- you're shaking." Louis sounded concerned, and he pulled the comforter up over them as he shifted to kiss Harry's forehead. "Nightmare?"

Still muttering and grunting out words that made sense but couldn't form trains of thought, Harry lifted his large hockey shirt to expose Louis' tummy. He roughly kissed the boy's neck, scratching the skin with his prickly chin and making Louis gasp loudly.

Harry's mind was a pile of fog and all he had on his brain was comfort, comfort for himself and comfort for Louis. He wanted to forget and there's only one way to do that.

With force, Harry dug his nails into a small tear at the back of the sports jersey, and tore it open from behind. He tossed the shredded fabric aside and groaned, appeased at the state of Louis' body. Harry's fingers removed the nipple pads that Louis was wearing and he brought his mouth down to the perky nub. He found this to be truly relaxing to him, when he was worked up and antsy he just needed a connection to Louis that didn't leave a mess like when they had sex.

Surprised, Louis inhales sharply and tightens his fingers in Harry's hair. The sensitivity spiralled and he hated that it felt like he was having ice poured on an open cut. His nipples were always red and puffy now, and Harry finding reason to suck on them until they were raw wasn't helping.

"C-Careful, Harry." Louis hisses when Harry's lips form a tight suction and he begins to suckle. Harry's hand wraps around him without a care and he swallowed the insanely sweet taste. He felt it make him better, and the greed that crept up on him made him tear the other pad in half to get to more of Louis' pre-milk.

There's no term for it but their doctor assured them human consumption was okay - Harry had asked that question in private while Louis uploaded the newest ultrasound moving image to the Blackberry digital photo frame.

Louis' chest wouldn't expand and the very little supply of nutrition given to Harry wasn't enough. The gaping hole in his psyche that drove him up the wall needed more to fix itself. He gripped Louis tighter, so much tighter as he sucks hard enough to make himself hard in his pants and Louis cries out from a pained sob.

"Enough." Louis pulls on Harry's hair to extricate him from his chest. "Harry, you need to stop."

"Bean." Harry's glassy vision was trained on Louis' tummy. "Safe."

Louis hummed and combed through Harry's damp hair, unable to do much else. "Very safe."

Harry grunted and dropped Louis onto his back slowly, the rustling of the sheets all around them as he sinks into the soft, plush mattress. Louis looked like a vision to him, so beautiful and sensitive as he gazes up with curious blue, blue eyes. His hands fall onto either side of his head, his body arching before settling again with the underneath of this thighs hoisted up against the tops of Harry's.

"Hazza." Louis took Harry's hand away from where he's coming his fringe and cupped the side of his face. "Look at me."

Harry frowns deeply as he pulls Louis closer and meets his gaze. "No."

"Harry." Louis sounded exasperated and he fought the grip Harry had on both his wrists. "Tell me
"Later." Harry snarls, not meaning to sound so cruel but the edge comes out anyway. "Wanna forget. Need to forget."

"Haz. Forgetting won't fix anything."

Harry covers Louis' words with his mouth, harshly biting at his lip and spreading Louis' legs so he's as exposed as can be. He digs his nails into Louis' thigh and yanks him downwards, closer to him. Louis' small hands grab his shoulders as his boxers are ripped into two pieces of cloth.

"Get me inside you." Harry takes Louis' hand while his injured left one dug into the mattress. Listening to Harry without arguing, Louis extends his arm between them and removes Harry's length from his pyjama pants. It's shocking how erect he is, riled up by Louis' body giving him what he needed. Now he was going all the way.

Louis was also open to fit Harry inside him, and it's a feat Harry's always so glad about. "Good boy." Harry kisses Louis' fringe and removes the boy's hand so he can thrust once precisely enough to bottom out.

Keening, Louis scratches Harry's back and the sudden fullness translates into bloody half moons. He let's out a scream and throws a hand over Harry's shoulders as he gets pounded into. Harry liked going slow, but he loved fucking into Louis' wetness so his mind focused on that alone.

"Tighter." Harry took a patch of Louis' skin below his ear between his teeth, making it red and leaving his teeth imprints.

Louis clenched as hard as he could around Harry, so that he could feel exactly how deep inside him he was. He fell back onto the sheets panting as Harry continued, groaning into Louis' neck. He found Louis' lips and connected their mouths. Louis' lips part to let Harry in, parting his knees simultaneously.

"Baby?" Harry opened his eyes, locking gazes with Louis' wide cerulean saucers.

Louis' body was flushed and sweaty, his lips wet from constant licking. Sweat gathered at his clavicle and his skin slid with friction against Harry's. He looked up at Harry, watching the darkness slip further and further away. Harry looks between them, down at where they're joined, and when his head rolls back up again his eyes are screwed shut with his bottom lip bitten.

He stops thrusting altogether, then spreads Louis' legs further apart with his knees. Without warning he slams back into Louis' awaiting body, making them both groan in unison. He pries Louis' lips apart as he starts to gyrate his hips in figure eights.

"My Harry." Louis whispers in his ear, clinging to Harry's body as they moved together. "I love you."

That stirs something in Harry's chest, and the closeness of their proximity allows Louis to feel the course vibrations of Harry's rumble through their chests.

"Oh God- Harry!" Louis screams and releases all over his tummy.

Harry holds Louis through their climaxes and he feels the boy's breathing even out. Eventually Louis' tiredness and the disruption in his sleep gets the better of him, so he falls asleep with his head turned to the side after a few silent moments.
Moments pass and Harry separates their bodies when a clap of thunder roars somewhere down the street. He kisses Louis' lips once chastely before settling him into a cradle of warm pillows and cleaning him up. His muddle of emotions get loose at the frayed ends as he admires Louis' sleeping form.

He had his arms wrapped around Harry's duck feather pillow, his leg exposed from under the fluffy white duvet.

"I love you." Harry presses his warm lips to Louis' temple.

Louis' slumber is roused when the blaring of a football match wakes him up. He groans and feels around for Harry's chest, but comes up empty and saddened. There was no better feeling than waking up next to Harry's green, electric eyes.

"Harry?" He rubbed his eyes with the ball of his palm, yawning as he stretched.

The digital clock called the current time two in the morning of Saturday. He huffed and slid off the bed with a thin black sheet usually hidden under their comforter, wrapped around his shoulders for warmth.

"Haz?" He opened the bedroom door and padded into living room.

The TV was on full blast - that's why the bedroom door was shut - and Harry was seated on the L-shaped couch, but he was staring blankly out the tinted window. He resembled someone trying to fix something internally, and by the time Louis sat next to him he'd almost snapped out of it.

Harry is staring, unblinking, out at the storm around their apartment. His fists are clenched and all he's wearing are those Hollister pyjama pants from earlier. Louis feels like crying at the sight of him so frozen, out of control. Harry always knew what to do, what to say and how to handle things. It's who he is.

"Harry?" Louis gets as close to his side as he can get, offering silent solace.

Harry was lost in a haze. He snapped out the trance to watch Louis shove his feet between his legs but all he could do was rub his palm over Louis' tummy where he knew Bean still was. He cracked a smile but it was dead, as he felt inside, and didn't reach the black in his eyes.

"It's you." Harry kissed Louis' neck right over a love bite he knows he put there. It frightened Louis to see Harry so torn up over a nightmare, over something not real. "It's me. I'm okay."

"Bean?"

"Bean's fine, Hazza." Louis wrapped his arms around Harry's neck. "In fact, he wanted some milk earlier on. That's what I went to get."

"Don't leave next time." Harry clears his throat. "Wake me up first. Always."

"You need to sleep too, Haz."

"It was my first nightmare." Harry confesses. "I never had one before."

"Really?"

Harry nods and lifts Louis onto his lap, cupping his bum to bring him closer and keeping the injured
left arm against his chest. Harry's shaken up but he's good at locking up everything that's vulnerable about himself.

"Tell me." Louis curled up against Harry's chest. "It's not good to keep it bottled up."

Harry smirked but it was lifeless, and squeezed Louis' shoulders to bring him closer for a kiss. "Bottled up is what I do best."

"Stop it." Louis exhaled loudly by accident when Harry rearranged him in his lap, spreading his legs so he could wrap them around Harry's waist. "Tell me now or I'll never speak to you again."

"Feisty." Harry blows warm hair into Louis' neck so that it tickles him.

"Seriously." Louis covers Harry's mouth with his hand and gives him a dead serious look.

Harry sighs and kisses Louis' bent knee, massaging his thigh as consolation. "She was in it. The girl witness."

Louis kept silent and listened, he sometimes chewed his bottom lip but he was obediently aware. "We were dancing somewhere. A club. You were five months pregnant but then-" Harry felt like he needed to reassure Louis so he kissed his neck with firm lips. "-you disappeared. I looked everywhere for you and when I did you were......-"

"It's okay. You can tell me." Louis caressed the side of Harry's face, feeling his stubble under his fingertips.

"You had no bump." Harry rubbed Louis' bump protectively, warming up the skin. "I don't know what happened to Bean and when I held you....you weren't you anymore."

"Who was I?" Louis presses.

"I don't know her name." Harry's eyebrows knit together. "The witness girl. The one I burnt."

"Oh."

"And you kept telling me to not let them take Bean away from us. I don't know who you were talking about."

"The girl, maybe?"

"It's possible." Harry looked at him indifferently. "But it's not as if she'll ever get close to you or Bean."

"Exactly. Haz, it was just a nightmare. They're there to scare you but they're just dreams."

"Nothing scares me." Harry's malevolent aura speaks boldly, before he flinches from the bubbling voices rising in his head.

"Harry." Louis senses the start of his emotional withdrawal. "Everyone has something that scares them."

You're slipping.

Your control is gone. You're nothing now.

Find a way to get out. Go back to our old life together.
You're strong but you're not expendable.

You'll crack and it will destroy you. This baby is not yours.

Harry let the vicious words go on up until it started pertaining to his unborn baby. He knew the voices got pretty bad, terribly cruel at times, but he was getting better at letting them rave while he went on as normal.

"Talk to me." Harry knew clapping his hands over his ears and rocking his body would work. Many failed attempts as a lonesome teenager proved that.

Louis hardly had time to breathe deeply before he was yanked forward and held uncompromisingly close. Their breaths are shared and the space between them is unbelievably annihilated.

"Talk to me, please!"

"Okay, okay. Shh."

To keep Harry from further harming his buggered left arm, Louis puts one hand on the brace. "Haz, look at me." Louis cupped the side of his face. "What do you see?"

Harry takes a deep breath, so he wouldn't have to while speaking. "I see the only thing I let get close to me and steal my heart when I thought it didn't exist."

"That's what I was going to say." Smiling, Louis bumps their noses together and grins when Harry's lips seek out his.

"The voices get too loud sometimes." Harry kisses a high point on Louis' cheekbone, close to his eye. "I can't silence them anymore."

Then stop trying.

Harry frowns with his eyes closed and fingers digging into Louis' thigh.

"Listen to my voice then." Louis brushes Harry's hair with slow movements of his fingertips. "There's so many. I can hardly think sometimes." Harry slips a hand between Louis' legs and hums approvingly at the warmth he's greeted with.

"What do they say?" Louis straightens his back and covers them both with the sheet he brought with him.

"They say I'll hurt you. You and Bean. It's a lie, Lou. You know I'd never hurt you."

"I do. I know." Louis insists, nipping Harry's jaw and keeping his teeth hooked their for a few moments. "Those voices aren't real."

We're real. We're all real and we've been here from the start.

"I'm real." Louis takes Harry's hand and laces their fingers together. "Listen to me. Your baby is also real and they need you. I need you, Haz."

Harry hid in Louis' neck, forcing the despicable serpent's voice along with all the others to the depths of his mind. It almost gave him a headache that he won't feel but make him regret ever trying, but Louis was an excellent distraction.
"Drink this." Louis had gotten the abandoned milk from earlier and warmed it up in the microwave. 

"You need to sleep."

Tipping the mug towards Harry's lips, Louis shared his cup of warm and essenced milk with the man. When milk dripped down the corner of his mouth, Louis wiped it with his thumb before kissing the same spot.

"Animal." Louis teased. "I can't hold the mug if you're moving so much."

"Don't tell me what to do." Harry playfully growls into Louis' ear.

"I very well will tell you what to do." Louis gets tossed onto the sofa and Harry crawls over him.

"Careful!"

Shedding the cover Louis brought with him, Harry relies on the thermostat to keep them warm. Harry's hand comes over Louis' on his tummy as his lips slide into place with Louis' and every trouble that plagued his mind disappears. He hears the thud of Louis' empty mug hitting the carpet, at the same time as he entered him in one swift thrust.

Chapter End Notes

The end of chapter twenty one
The strongest love is the love that can demonstrate its fragility.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

"Honey, I'm home!" It could be none other than Niall barging through their front door on Thursday afternoon.

Louis giggled when Harry fell back against the bed sheets with an annoyed, disgruntled frown. He popped off Louis' right nipple with his wet lips and held onto his hips. He'd just gotten his arm sling removed and wanted to celebrate before Niall decided to pitch up for Louis' and his planned sleep over.

It was especially infuriating because Harry was already buried to the hilt inside Louis' tight warmth, with a throbbing erection and no other way of getting rid of it.

"B-Be right- there!" Louis' voice rises several octaves at his last word, because Harry had grown stubborn and thrust up into Louis.

Niall sniggers softly as he invades their kitchen, glad the bedroom door is closed. He's impressed by the lack of noise but forgets about it soon enough when he stumbles across a bag of spicy rice cakes.

"I'm going to be in the studio working tonight." Harry presses his cold lips to Louis' temple, taking advantage of the use of his arms as he holds him close.

Louis smiles and wiggles his hips to make Harry groan because of his soft length still nestled inside Louis' body. "What will you be doing?"

"I have to prepare for my gallery." Harry leans into Louis' soft touch on his cheek. "If you need anything, I will be right here."

"You can come spend time with us." Louis gets lifted off Harry's lap, so that he can have a plug inserted snugly between his thighs. "With me."

"I'd love to. Maybe later I will." Harry pats Louis' thigh and encourages him to stand up. "Go have a reasonable amount of fun."

Louis giggles, the magical sound is music to Harry's ears. He watches the boy he's given everything to scramble off the mattress and go into the bathroom to clean up. When he returns, Harry hasn't moved from the bed.

"When do you plan to get up?"

Louis wouldn't dare touch the bags he's already packed for their trip tomorrow, so he takes one of Harry's tank tops off its hanger. Their shopping trip has produced many articles of feminine underwear that Louis' too afraid to wear with nothing else on now that Niall is around.

"Don't tell me what to do." Harry bites his bottom lip as his hungry gaze follows Louis around the
room, the sheets pooling at his waist so he looks like a sex vision.

"I will very well tell you what to do." Louis jumps back onto Harry's lap with a hand braced on his tummy. "Say goodbye to Bean."

"My baby better not be going anywhere." Harry cranes his neck to take Louis' bottom lip between his teeth. "Bean too."

Grinning with a blush colouring his cheeks, Louis let's Harry tackle him down against the sheets. His lips are pulled apart by Harry's tongue and he moans against the invasion of taste.

"Go on then." Harry stands Louis up and swats his behind. "Your friend awaits. Don't forget!"

"What?"

"I love you." Harry plants one more kiss on Louis' scrunched up nose.

"Love you too." Louis retaliates by kissing his chin. "Loads and loads."

Niall's flipping through TV channels when Louis walks in, and goes straight to the front door to lock it.

"Hey." Niall waves a messy hand at him.

"Hi." Louis plonks down next to him, then hisses at the digging of his plug at his insides, and shifts back to cross his legs comfortably.

"Sensitive?" Niall eyes him suspiciously.

"Shut up." Louis steals one of the chips from Niall's bag. "So what are we doing tonight?"

"Where's Psycho?"

"**Harry** is sleeping."

"So he is mortal."

Louis rolls his eyes as he steals the remote from Niall's hand. "You're unbelievable and unable to answer simple questions."

Niall steals it back. "I'm phenomenal and unable to answer simple questions."

They end up staying awake until eleven watching DVD's of Louis' favourite shows then Niall's favourite scary movies. Harry's had to walk out of the studio to casually check on the pair everytime the screaming went on for too long and drove him up the wall.

It also ends up being the worst night ever for Harry because Louis chose to fall asleep on the couch with Niall. He asked to sleep there because he didn't want to offend his best friend by sneaking off in the middle of the night.

"Why do I feel like we're sneaking around?" Louis asks in hushed tones when he heard Harry enter the dimly lit kitchen after him.

It's two in the morning and Harry couldn't sleep in one long stretch without Louis there, so he woke up after hour-long naps.

"Because we are." Harry whispered back over Louis' shoulder in his ear.
Louis smiles incredulously as he turns on the stove. He's been incapable of sleep without his mug of warm milk to soothe Bean. "Feels exciting."

"What do we have to fear with Niall?" Harry scoffs, reaching for the cinnamon on the highest shelf. He put it there specifically so Louis couldn't get it without him.

"I don't know about that." Louis sets a stove on the hot plate and fetches the milk. "He can be pretty grouchy."

"So can I."

"No need to convince me."

His hip is caught in a firm grasp and he gasps when he's spun around to face Harry dead in the eye. The mask Harry wears for the public eye melts away and the black abyss turns to frosty green. It's as soft as it gets for a man like Harry.

"What's that supposed to mean, princess?" Harry blocks off all of Louis' vision lines.

"It means that I love you." Louis' leg is hitched up on Harry's hip, now that he's able to hold it up even though it's only for a short while.


"No it doesn't." Louis giggles and lifts himself up high enough to kiss Harry's lonely lips. "But don't feel bad. I really do love you."

"So very naughty." Harry mumbles into Louis' neck before exposing his teeth by biting the warm flesh.

Louis' breathing hitches and his jaw falls open in a silent moan, the pain coursing through his body and lighting sparks everywhere. He grips Harry's hair and turns his head to the side.

"I should fuck you here." Harry kisses each indent left by his teeth on Louis' skin. "Punish you by making keep quiet. I know you love being loud."

Louis shakes his head at the sound of that. "N-No."

"No?" Harry turns them around again so Louis is facing the living room over the counter and he's behind him. "Princess, since when do you tell me what to do?"

Panicking, Louis grips the counter until his nails hurt and he feels Harry extract the plug. He's looking right at the couch Niall's sleeping on, so all his friend has to do is awaken and sit up to see them.

"Harry." Louis whimpers when long, agile fingers enter him three at once.

"Shh." Harry curls his fingers and feels his release from earlier lube up inside Louis' walls. "Our bed's cold without you."

"I know." Louis' whine catches in his throat when Harry draws his hips back so he's bent over the counter and no pressure is on his front. "I'm sorry."

"What colour are you?"

"White." Louis' hand sneaks up to tangle in Harry's hair.
"What colour is not good, Lou?" Harry slips into the clenching heat that's always just for him.

"B-Black."

"Good boy." Harry kisses Louis' neck. "We forgot about the milk, baby. See how distracting you are?"

"Oops."

Harry chuckles delivers a gentle pinch to Louis' pink backside as he pulls out slowly, letting the friction he knows Louis is feeling madden him. He places his forearms on either side of Louis' as he begins to thrust slowly and carefully so each one meant a brilliant punch to Louis' prostrate. The boy against him is whining and moaning but rolling back against him nonetheless.

"Lou?" A groggy, half-asleep voice joins the sounds of skin slapping skin in a desperate race. The lovers pause and Louis glances up in fear, staring at the couch where Niall is shifting. Nothing happens for two minutes but none of that time was wasted as Harry kept up his brutal rhythm. His body is used to Harry's roughness and he lives for the undying love that gets buried inside him in each thrust.

"Sweet boy." Harry kisses Louis' nape, slipping his hand around the front to rub his tummy and check on Bean. "You're so full of me. My baby. My c*ck."

Louis squeezes his eyes shut and bites his lip, moaning in a low pitch as Harry thrusted harder.

"StStop."

Harry obeys immediately and starts spreading kisses along Louis' neck. "Baby? Did I take it too far? What's wrong, lovely?"

"Just wanna see you."

Harry's worry melts to smugness, and he pulls out to hurriedly pick Louis up. He let's his thighs slide across the counter and spread open.

"Wait for me." Harry kisses Louis' lips firmly before moving away. When the boy starts to fret and sits up with pain and depression in his eyes. "I'm here, darling."

Hastily, Harry pours milk into the pot and smiles at the cinnamon pods when Louis takes his hand from behind. When he's done, he covers the pot with a lid and goes back to him.

"So beautiful you are." Harry thumbs the skin covering Louis' cheekbones with his bandaged left hand, while the other guides his length back past Louis' fluttering rim.

* * * * *

Harry's manly ego refuses to admit out loud that Louis' paranoia at this moment is endearing to him. It's Friday morning and Louis was bustling about as he got their bags packed for the concert on Sunday.

It's thus far been a week of trying not to laugh at Niall and Louis, and being forced to accompany Liam while the two best mates wandered off. Niall stayed over last night since today neither of the two had classes today. Liam will be joining them as soon as his nine o'clock class ends and Harry's did at twelve.

"Stay safe." Harry kisses Louis' forehead on his way out. "I'll lock the door and don't go anywhere."
"Promise." Louis hands him his coffee. "Love you."

"Loads, I presume?"

"Don't get greedy." Louis laughs and combs a hand through Harry's hair. "But yes, loads." Harry's smile is infectious but disappears before Niall comes out of the bathroom.

"Morning." Louis slides a plate of French toast and scrambled eggs across the counter - that he spent extra time wiping with bleach - to his awaiting fork and knife.

"Good morning." Niall grins. "Where's the boyfriend?"

"Class." Louis hoists himself up onto a bar stool and starts on his own breakfast. "Yours?"

"We're not official."

"You should be."

"And we will be." Niall does his horrifying trick of waggling his eyebrows. "After this weekend."

"Ugh." Louis gulps down his extra sweet tea. "You've given me visuals I was doing fine without."

"Like you're one to talk with all the noise you and Psycho make."

Louis' fork freezes mid-air and his cheeks turn rosy pink. "We d-didn't-"

"I'm glad I didn't look for you when I woke up in the middle of the night. I heard enough."

After that it's all about packing and second-guessing and doubting. Niall brought his bags here - bless him - so Louis could check that they both had everything they needed.

"Why do you have an extra set of clothes?" Louis points at the offending pile with a horrified expression. "We're coming back on Monday."

"Just took it in case." Niall shrugs.

"So it's not necessary?"

"Lou, sit down and calm yourself. Bean doesn't need you stressing over nothing."

Louis nods, taking deep breaths and falling down on his back onto the mattress. He stares at the ceiling for a while as Niall takes their bags to the doorway.

"Brought you this." Niall sits down next to him with a bottle of water. "Don't forget to pee before we leave."

"This is so stressful." Louis accepts the offering and sips from it as he leans on Niall.

"It's just excitement." Niall rubs his arm. "Wish I could say it'll die down soon."

Laughing, Louis fidgets with the nipple pads under his shirt until they stop rubbing against him.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing." Louis sighs. "I'm fine."

Louis' pregnancy is predicted to be a very different one from common female pregnancies. It's
possibility of lasting only seven months are staggering, and longer than ten months further startling. It all depends on whether his body is going to want Bean out as soon as possible, or continue to see to the foetus' well-being internally.

This is still his first trimester and things are especially dodgy for him. He is said to experience respiratory problems and a weak bladder all through these three months.

"What snacks do we take?" Niall has his merchandise bag of Four in his hand.

"We'll be stopping on the way, you know."

"Yeah but what about in between?"

Exhaling as he pushes himself up into a seated position, Louis runs through what they have in the apartment. "Raid the kitchen then."

That was Niall's cue to go crazy and he takes the bag with Louis' hand, into the kitchen. He opens the cabinets and extracts an array of sour sweets, chips, chocolates and cookies.

"Niall." Louis stares at Niall's - originally their - confectionery collection. "It's just ten hours."

"Shh." Niall waves away his doubts.

He packs his bag full of sugary delights and keeps it with him at all times. Louis finds himself moving around Niall's hovering as he makes himself a sandwich of mustard and pickles. He felt the need to bake but he wanted red velvet specifically and that would take at least an hour to prepare from scratch.

"Do we have muffin mix?" Louis talks to himself but Niall hums and shrugs anyway. "Can I move in with you two?" Niall flicks through TV channels.

Louis smiles down at his sandwich, suddenly disgusted by it. "It's like living outside the world, isn't it?"

"Yeah. It's amazing up here."

Louis ditches the sandwich and hunts through their cupboards until he finds what he's now looking for. Chocolate chip muffin mix by Robertsons. He claps his hands when he finds it, and earns a fake annoyed eye roll from Niall.

"You've got to be joking." Niall scowls at his best friend.

"I want muffins."

"We don't have time to make muffins."

Louis pouts at the white and yellow paper bag of dry mixture. He really wants a muffin.

"The first stop we make can be at Mugg & Bean, 'kay? They have huge muffins there."

Mugg & Bean does have extra large muffin sizes and Louis' been in love with their tea system for years now. The suggestion wins him over and he settles for nibbling at a tablespoon of peanut butter instead.

"They're late." Niall mumbles when the clock strikes twelve exactly.
"Ni." Louis giggles. "You have to give them time to actually drive back here."

They gave Bolg and Bundy to the dorm for the weekend so they can be taken care off in their absence, which eliminated one stress factor for Louis already.

Harry walks through the front door first, then followed Liam who looks a bit spooked. The expression is one Louis is familiar with already as he's seen it on anyone alive who has spent time with Harry alone.

"Hi." Louis follows Harry into the bedroom and hugs him around his neck. "We missed you."

"Hello, my sweet." Harry picks Louis up by the backs of his thighs. "I've missed you quite a lot today."

"Don't forget Bean."

"I missed Bean too. Can I have a kiss now?"

Nodding without hesitation because it was Louis too who had to go through the day - or half of it - without Harry's kisses, they connect their eager lips that fit together like perfected jigsaw pieces.

"I want muffins." Louis whispers against Harry's mouth.

"We'll get you some for the road then, okay?" Harry chuckles at the random interruption to a moment he was quite enjoying.

The grin on Louis' face makes it all worth while after that.

They take Harry's Dodge obviously because it's the biggest vehicle out of their four. The bags fit into the trunk and Niall and Liam occupy the back seat. Louis hated Chicago's weather and because the storm left with a merciless heat wave, he knew they'd be putting the air conditioner on in the car so he took a thin white blanket with Spongebob thumbnails on it with him.

"Have we got everything?" Turns out Liam is more paranoid than Louis. He knows they can be good friends now.

"Calm down." Louis feels Niall's head thumb against the back of his headrest. "Please drive, Psycho."

Harry's been stiff and silent behind the driver's wheel for twenty minutes now, tapping away on his phone while everyone piled in. He looks up at Niall's words and everyone is very much at ease knowing he's not peeved by Niall's nickname for him.

"We're stopping for Louis' muffins now." He hands Louis his phone, unlocked. "Anyone else want something?"

There's a murmur of things that flies right over Louis' head and the Dodge starts to move. The AC kicks in and Louis huffs before turning the fan away from him, right on Niall's shoulder behind him. "Wanna come in?" Harry asks Louis when they park outside the coffee shop.

Louis had just made himself comfortable with just socks on his little feet, his legs crossed under the comfy blanket on such a big leather seat - or maybe he was just small.

"No thanks, I'm comfy." Louis replied with a smile.

"Alright." Harry kisses his forehead. "Stay here with Niall. Anything besides muffins you want?"
Louis thinks for a second before shaking his head. "You know what I like."

Harry spoils Louis and that's usually not a grand thing, but the younger boy knew his limits and never wanted anything extravagant. It was mainly food he asked for or cuddles, both of which he always got promptly.

"You can recline your seat a little." Niall offers after Harry's departed.

"Thanks." Louis slowly adjusts the back of his seat so that Niall had a weird support system and he could lie back without trouble. "Are you good?"

"I'm fine." Niall plays with the corner of Louis' blanket when he turns on his side to look at him.

"Excited?"

"Understatement of the century." Louis grins. "I'm scared too though."

"Amen. I've never seen 'em in person before."

"I'm nervous." Louis bites his lip. "The website said the queuing starts at ten in the morning."

"Ask Harry to bribe someone and get us to the front."

Laughing into his wrist, Louis shakes his head. "I don't see dollar signs when I look at him."

"I do." Niall combs his fingers through Louis' hair.

"That's mean. I love my Harry."

"I can tell Psycho loves you too. He's all non-Psycho around you. He becomes Papa Bear."

"He has to." Louis rubs his tummy. "He is a Papa Bear."

"Have you guys been to the doctor about Bean?"

"Yeah we wanted to go before this trip to clear it with him."

"And?"

"He said I have to be under minimal stress or it could complicate things. Male pregnancies have a higher track record of miscarriages because of the extra hormones confusing the body."

"Oh Lou."

"Yeah. I don't know what I'd do if I lost my Bean."

Louis looks down at his steadily growing bump. It was common for male baby bumps to start forming early to make room for the baby. That's why he would start lactating early too.

"Do you need anything from the back?" Niall asks after a while and Liam and Harry haven't returned. "I think we're not going to stop until we're five hours in."

"Not right now. Thanks." Louis pulls his blanket up over his shoulders when the entire car has dropped to seventeen degrees Celsius.

Harry and Liam return in the same tone that they left with, unspeaking and unfamiliar. They get in and Louis gets his red velvet muffin with cream cheese icing as wished. He pulled out the cup
holder for his Evian water bottle - they were massive but Harry didn't seem to buy any other brand - and Harry's black coffee.

He knows the bitter way Harry takes his coffee and feels bad enough that he shares his muffin with him.

"I brought albums." Niall tells Louis as soon as they pull onto the freeway. "Which one should we put on first?"

"Imagine Dragons." Liam picks one out of the lot and hands it to Louis.

"How ridiculous. We're going to see Four but we're listening to Imagine Dragons."

"I brought Four's CD's too."

"I already put this in." Louis tells Niall after stuffing the muffin wrapper into his dirt packet. Radioactive begins and Niall opens the can of fizzy fruit juice offered to him by Liam. The humming begins and Louis even catches Harry frowning at their off-key singing.

All around them is empty open road with a sea of purple and white flowers. Harry sped up above the speed limit at some places and kept a good speed where the police were pulling people over. Niall never seems to stop eating but he doesn't gain a thing which makes Louis laugh hysterically and become envious because of such a high metabolism.

"Lou?" Harry doesn't take his eyes off the road as he calls the boy.

"Hmm?" Louis brings his knees up to his chest under the safety and warmth of his blanket.

"Can I have the gummies please?"

Harry's big and tough but his somewhat escalating addiction to gummy bears has made him look very adorable in Louis' eyes. It wasn't just regular gummies he went after, it was the big packets with salty outsides.

Louis had a stash of his own that carried his and Harry's specific tastes, now he retrieved the acquired gummy bears. With a smile, he tears open the packet and extracts one. Harry opens his mouth unnecessarily wide and Louis pops two of the sweets into his tongue.

"Thank you, love." Harry nips at Louis' fingertips before they are extracted.

The albums change and the singing gets louder while Liam bothers himself only with completing his assessment on his laptop. But of course Niall closes his computer and puts it in the back with their luggage so Liam can't reach it without leaning over him. Something a gentleman like Liam would never do.

They make a stop at the first mini town they find. Louis asks for a toasted chicken and mayonnaise sandwich and got it with an orange juice Again, he and Niall wait in the car while Liam and Harry go inside to order. When they get back everyone steps out to stretch their legs.

"Hazza?" Louis has his door open but his shoes are in the trunk.

"I'll get them." Harry already knew what Louis was going to ask for when he folded his blanket and put it on the dash.

He put them on Louis' socked feet and closed the car door after he stood up. There was a sense of
pride in Harry's chest, knowing that he was taking on the role as father and boyfriend with strong shoulders.

"How much longer do we have drive for?" Louis asks Harry, face hidden from the sunlight in Harry's neck.

"Four hours, give or take." Harry puts out his cigarette and embraces Louis in his arms. "You can nap for the next few hours."

"I am tired." Louis admits. "I need to pee."

"I'll take you to the restroom now, darling." Harry releases Louis' hip and takes his hand with their fingers linked tightly on his right. "Does anyone else want to come too?"

Louis asks Niall and Liam but they both say they're fine, so the two walk off together. They pass an antique store and Louis' eyes light up, but his lips stay sealed.

"We can go in there when you're done, okay?" Harry whispers in his ear smoothly, smirk playing on his lips.

Blushing, Louis shakes his head and picks up his pace heading towards the gents bathroom. Harry follows behind and waits for Louis near the counter of basins. When the boy finishes, he goes to wash up at the basins.

"Don't touch anything, my dove." Harry warns Louis when they're inside the antique store.

"Why not?" Louis' fingertips withdraw from the small table pendulum clock.

"We don't want you getting sick from touching dusty old things, Lou. You know there's that nasty flu going around."

Louis nods and keeps his hands tucked under his arms as he shuffled down the short isles of tables with his Vans on. There were many little trinkets - none of which he planned to touch - with shiny edges and dusty hinges. Lockets. Hair brushes. Dolls, even. The items sealed in glass cabinets caught his eye faster than anything.

"What's this?" He asked to store manager, an elderly man with a double chin and grey cardigan, about the wooden box on display.

It had double doors and stood up straight, big enough to keep Louis' Evian water bottle. It had wooden legs that were once carved beautifully and polished but now one was missing and the designs were scraped off.

"That's not for sale." The eldest immediately answered in an urgent tone that came out too loud.

It caused Harry to walk over with his heavy boots making the floorboards creak loudly as he appeared behind Louis. He hated when anyone spoke so rudely to his boy.

"I-I apologise, Sir." The old man stammered but it wasn't from fear, Louis could detect the croak in his voice and the red veins in his eyes.

"It's a wine case, isn't it?" Louis knew what this was. He's no expert but he's spent enough time on eBay to know something.

"Jewish too." The owner clarified. "A dibbuk is said to be living in it."
"Really?" Louis tilts his head at the object, almost expecting something to fly out of it.

"The first owner was a woman who survived the Nazi concentration camps. She came here and after her death it was sold to a man who collected antiques. He tried to get rid of it but everyone who had it experienced.....troubling things."

"What kind of troubling things?"

"Lights flickering. A common one was the smell of cat urine in the air."

Scrunching up his nose, Louis nods as he listens. "Have you had any of those?"

"If you believe in such things, it'll only affect you then." The man coughs into a plaid handkerchief. "I've been atheist for sixty years now."

Louis smiles politely at him. "That's one way of looking at things."

Next, the man shows them a mirror that's covered with a thin black sheet so the light is still easily reflected off it.

"This is a mirror from one of the most haunted homes in America." He explains. "You see, in the early years, they believed that when a death occurred in a house all the mirrors had to be covered so that the spirits didn't get trapped there. A mother and her son were poisoned to death and this mirror wasn't covered."

"So they're living in the mirror now?" Louis feels Harry's arm snake its way around his waist. He puts his own arm over Harry's.

"It's what they say."

"Why is it covered up?"

"Sorry?"

"You said you don't believe in any of this. Why did you cover it up?"

"My wife did." He smiles without missing a beat. "Before she died a year ago."

"Oh. I'm sorry to hear that."

He dismisses Louis' pity with a wave and brief smile. "Let me show you something more.....appropriate."

Despite Harry's tightening of his arm and boredom, Louis follows the store owner until they come to an old wooden cabinet with glass doors. He opens the left one and retrieves a silver bracelet. It's mostly silver, with the exception of one bronze book charm and a few black or red. There were no diamonds and the chain was a simple black string.

"It's beautiful." Louis holds it up with his index finger and thumb. "What is it?"

"It takes someone special to appreciate simplicity." He is told by the older man. "It belonged to a French young lady who lived in the 1500's."

Louis starts to examine each charm and he finds that each one has different properties, so they weren't made by the same man and with the same materials.
"Her name was Marie deBluse and she was born poor, to a blacksmith and his baker wife." He goes on. "Everyday the blacksmith brought home different charms for his only daughter using whatever extra metal he had from the day's jobs. When their town was invaded, she gave it to a warrior so he wouldn't rape her mother or her.

"The warrior gave it to his wife, who gave it to their daughter. The daughter thought it was disgusting and threw it away. Their stable boy found it and he spent a year working to get the red horse, black heart and silver stick charms done to give his lover. She left him before he could. "In his grief he invited many women to spend the night with him and one of them stole it from his dresser. The girl was Marie deBluse."

Being enraptured by the story left Louis both impressed and saddened. This poor bracelet's been through so much over the centuries.

"How did you come across it?" Louis puts it in Harry's palm and let's the man inspect it for himself. "My wife bought it online and researched its history."

"It's an impressive history." Harry comments, flicking his nail against the groove of a charm causing it to snap in half. "Except that's not wrought iron or steel, it's nickel. Nickel's currently one of the weakest metals."

Their guide/teacher of antique history is flabbergasted by Harry's accusation and Louis' not quick enough to stop Harry before he goes on.

"Also-" Harry uses his nail to remove a strand of the rope. "-this is nylon rope. If it came from the sixteen century then the only rope materials would have been sisal or coir."

Harry was ideally accusing this poor old chap of being a fraud and Louis couldn't find fault in his argument either. The nylon was new and he hates that he hadn't noticed it himself. He takes the bracelet back and in his urgency, nicks the pad of his thumb with the broken charm.

"Lou?" Harry grabs the object and tosses it onto a table. "You cut yourself."

"I'm fine." Louis wraps a Kleenex around the cut. It felt deep and the blood flow was taking a bit longer to slow down.

Leaving the man sputtering and extremely angry, Harry walks out with Louis' arm looped through his.

"You were going to buy it, weren't you?" Harry pulled Louis under his arm as they crossed the parking lot in a hurry.

"It was a sweet story." Louis inspects his injured finger once more.

"Where have you two been?" Niall calls out. "It's been a year."

"It's been thirty seven minutes, Niall." Liam corrects with a chuckle. "What happened to your finger, Lou?"

Harry opens the trunk and glares at Liam when he asks the question. He still despises all outsiders who pay attention to his Louis, so he's extra graceful when hoisting Louis onto a perch in the boot.

"Show me where you're cut." Harry holds out his hand.

Louis hesitates. "Are you angry?"
Harry shakes his head and frowns down at the street, not looking at Louis. "Hand."

"You're angry." Louis puts his hand in Harry's larger one.

Harry exhales slowly and says nothing as he disinfects the cut and wraps a band aid around it.

"I'm sorry." Louis whispers when Harry takes off his shoes.

"You hurt yourself-" Harry slams the trunk door closed. "-not me."

Chapter End Notes

the end of chapter twenty-two
chapter Twenty three

I love you as certain dark things are to be loved in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Louis quietly sits in the back with Niall for the second leg of the journey. Liam stays put because his gut doesn't give him a great response in Harry's respect. He feels the man is too dark for Louis' good, and too full of secrets to be in proper order. He's either a walking train wreck or has a stronger mental capacity than anyone Liam's met before.

Harry wasn't expecting Louis to abandon his seat in the front so readily in favour of watching movies on Niall's iPad. Except, that's what Louis did. They shared the Spongebob blanket and Louis got a glaring everytime he rustled the little chocolates packet for too long.

"How much farther, Harry?" Liam had retrieved his laptop to work on and the question popped out, bypassing his brain-to-mouth filter.

Harry glances at him using the rear-view mirror, and his gaze is not something you want to remember. The man takes a deep breath and answers anyway, hoping that Louis will notice that he is in fact trying to be nice here.

"Two hours." Is all he says before turning back to the open road, where in the opposite lane there is a hectic amount of traffic. "Lou?"

Louis' eyelids lift from their half-closed state to meet Harry's dissolved green in the mirror, striking down his anger with his innocent shade of ice blue. Harry never could deny Louis' eyes their beauty and he could spend all eternity just describing them, staring into them.

"Aren't you tired, love?" Harry didn't have to speak loudly because Louis sat in the middle and leaned forward slightly. "You said you wanted to nap."

Surprised at Harry's mercurial manner and ability to just fixate upon many things at a time - moods, atmospheres, circumstances - he inclines himself towards Harry's seat.

"I'll sleep at the hotel." Louis answers softly.

Except, he knows Harry wanted to go out when they reached the hotel. They booked somewhere really expensive - Louis and he had an hour long argument about it - where there was a mall, casino and theme park practically walking distance from them. Harry was mechanical, Louis had observed over time, and driving for ten hours was not enough to tire him.

"Fine."

Harry's jaw went rigid again and Louis sat back in his seat next to Niall. This time Liam joined them in watching the remainder of Sherlock Holmes while Harry boiled in his seat. He hated anyone being so close to Louis, when Louis could have been sitting next to him and keeping him company.

You fucked up again and you'll have to clear it up again. You're wasting your time here, Harry.

To silence the demon that lurked in the blackness of his heart, coming closer whenever he was alone
with his own thoughts, he looks at the mirror and sees Louis almost asleep on Niall's shoulder. He feels the tingling on his own shoulder where several L's are carved into the muscular flesh as a reminder that he as a whole belonged to someone. He'd given Louis is cross necklace back in Middleton but he hasn't seen him wearing it recently, which is preposterous and must be rectified. When they arrive at Southern Sun Hyde Park - the hotel Harry chose - it's almost half ten at night and he gets out to go check them in when Louis decides he wants to go too.

"Wait for me." Louis uses his meagre burst of adrenaline from his power nap to squeeze past Niall and stumble into Harry's arms. "Hi."

Harry is sceptical and raises a questioning eyebrow at his boyfriend's sudden change in mood, but cracks a smile for him anyway. Louis slips his hand - cold fingers to the touch - into Harry's gigantic one and follows him into the lobby. He couldn't hold Harry's left hand just yet because the brace was still on but he was healing quickly and hopefully could do so soon.

"Isn't it a bit late to check in?" Louis asks Harry when the doorman greets them.

"We're an exception, sweetheart." Harry brings Louis' hand up to his lips and kisses the knuckle of his middle finger.

The concierge is very polite and has a very fake French accent. He gives Harry two room key cards, two copies of their Wi-Fi access card and asks for Harry's special details for something else. "What's this for?" Louis asks while he holds the other cards.

"The casino is part of our establishment and the theme park is one of our partners. Master Styles is applying for our black membership card." Comes his answer from their posh attendant, looking like it's his birthday and he's won the lottery.

On the pamphlet he swipes from Harry, he reads that the black card is basically a VIP Pass. Harry gets a temporary card - that's as flashy looking as the real mccoy - to use everywhere. It's not just for this area because Southern Sun is international and this black card can be used anywhere. "Why do you need a black card?" Louis asks Harry when a few bell boys are called to get their luggage from the car.

The concierge looks like he's ready to have a stroke at Louis' words. Harry plays it off with a smirk and arm around Louis' waist. "If you can have something, why hold yourself back?"

Giving him a brownie point for honesty, Louis follows him back outside to the car after the bags are unloaded. They park in the residents' parking and take an elevator up to their floors. It just so happened that their rooms are next to each other and Niall's never glowed so brightly before.

"I'm too tired to go anywhere now." Louis yawns, leaning all his weight on Harry. "We can go out tomorrow."

"They have a theme park." Niall suggests.

"No theme parks." Harry interrupts.

"Louis' pregnant, Niall." Liam explains reasonably. "He can't go on thrill rides."

Once they're in their room, Harry is impressed to see their bags there waiting for them. The room had an enticing double bed, spacious bathroom and excellent view of night life in this city. He inserts one key card into a white slot to activate the electricity and other novelties.

"I'm making tea." Louis tells him. "Want some?"
"I'm fine."

Louis fills the small kettle with water and sets it to boil while he puts a Rooibos teabag in a mug. The mug has the same design as a painting on their wall. He couldn't help but feel eyes boring into his back.

"You're staring at me." Louis turns around and leans against the dark wooden table. "What's wrong?"

Harry's sat on the bed, having just hooked up all their devices to the Wi-Fi connection. "You're beautiful."

Taking his warm mug over to Harry with a nervous blush on his cheeks, Louis settles down on his lap. "You're not so bad yourself, Hazza."

"You're not angry."

Louis stirs his tea soundlessly. Everything about him was graceful and soft. Harry could never handle ever losing him now that he's had a taste of him.

"I snapped at you when I shouldn't have." Harry goes on. "It wasn't your fault. I'm sorry, love."

"I didn't listen to you. It is my fault." Louis rubs the thumb with a plaster on it across his mug. "But you were mean."

"I know. I was a moron and I'm terribly sorry." Harry sighs and wraps his arms around Louis' waist. His clothing was cool cotton and the skin under was even softer. He was a sleepy dream vision that Harry was keeping all for himself.

"You're not a moron-" Louis frowns at him. "-and I love you. I don't love morons."

"I love you too, my dove." They share in a sweet kiss that tastes of Rooibos and neither can bring themselves to mind. "Let's get clean then sleep before Niall attacks again."

Louis giggles that musical giggle and slides off Harry's lap. The shower is quite big and Louis manages to spray Harry in the face when he opens the tap. He snorts trying to contain his laughter before just erupting in a fit of giggles when Harry attacks him.

"Now I have to wash my hair too." Harry cages him in against a wall. "It's not funny."

"I'm sorry. I'll wash it for you." Louis bites his lip and presses his palms to Harry's chest. "It is funny though."

"My little menace." Harry growls into his wet neck, tasting the body gel and nipping at the warm water droplets. "I'm too tired to punish you now."

"Raincheck?"

Humming, Harry sets to work washing Louis' body first. He kisses his lips and sends him off to get dressed for bed while he washes his own hair. Upon re-entering the bedroom he finds Louis fast asleep, curled up in the middle of the bed on top of the covers.

"Hey." Harry whispers in his ear after drying his hair with the complimentary dryer in the bathroom. "C'mon, princess. It gets cold here."

Louis grumbles and let's Harry set him under the covers with pillows all around him. Harry sits at
the table for a while longer, drinking the coffee given to them and watching Louis sleep so peacefully.

He thinks he's come quite far from where he started in Middleton. He still has money and means to survive but that's all he was doing with Louis, and now Bean. Surviving isn't living. What he used to do to people was.....was a hobby and something that gave him pleasure before. Then he met a boy with the bluest eyes in the world and sold his soul to him.

Maybe Louis is right. He doesn't need to hurt people anymore because that hardly gave him satisfaction. Hearing Louis laugh at something he said or did, coming home to Louis being pregnant with his baby, those were satisfying circumstances. Nothing else.

When he feels his eyes drooping, he takes off his shirt and joins Louis in their bed after closing the curtains. He hardly has any space because Louis is in the middle.

"Haz?" Louis' muffled voice speaks against a pillow.

"Shh." Harry uses Louis' slight consciousness as an opportunity to pull him onto his chest. "Sleep, love."

"Love you too." Louis says drowsily, obviously having not heard Harry very clearly.

Harry puts off all their alarms and plans to sleep for as long as they both need. The curtains are thick and very helpful in blocking out all the sunlight. Louis doesn't move from Harry's torso and Harry's arms don't move from around his middle. At ten in the morning, Harry awakens to Louis stirring.

"Good morning." Harry kisses Louis' button nose and rolls them onto their sides.

Louis huffs and keeps his eyes closed, leg thrown over Harry's hip and face buried under his chin.

"You slept for twelve hours, darling." Harry rubs Louis' back. "The breakfast buffet closes at half ten."

"Can you smuggle me an omelette?" Louis mumbles against Harry's 1957 tattoo.

"We can go get one from the chef." Harry tries to sound alluring and his sinful bedroom voice was helping. "It'll be warm and fresh."

"You're trying to seduce me with food." Louis giggles.

"Is it working?"

"I do love food."

Chuckling, Harry presses a firm kiss to Louis' cheek before sliding out from under the warm sheets. He goes over to Louis' side and picks him up without warning.

"Excuse me, Master Styles." Louis is suddenly awake and being carried into the bathroom.

"Yes, my one and only love?"

"I was sleeping and you went all caveman on me." Louis doesn't sound convincing now that he's got a blush colouring his cheeks and a warm fluttery sensation in his tummy.

They brush their teeth and Louis does everything he can to avoid Harry's gaze in the mirror because
nobody should look so attractive with bed hair and a frothy smirk.

Louis doesn't want to change into proper clothing after that, before having a shower, so he decides to go downstairs in his sleep wear. Harry merely puts on a shirt and changes into joggers.

"Harry." Louis groans.

"Louis?"

"We're late and I'm hungry." Harry has been delaying in everything this morning which is not okay with Bean or the mommy.

"Why didn't you say so?" Harry pecks Louis' lips and at once opens the door to leave.

Louis texts Niall in the elevator and gets a response informing him that they're already waiting in the lounge outside the dining area.

"They serve dinner as well." Harry tells Louis, arm around his middle and thumb brushing against Louis' bump.

"I want to go out for dinner." Louis sneezes into a tissue he grabbed before leaving the hotel.

"Are you well?"

Louis nods. "Just cold."

The tip of his nose was red and his eyes were watery but not tearing up just yet. He wiped his nose and dried his eyes before Harry could ask anything else. They found Liam and Niall sitting on black couched browsing through the hotel magazine, Equinox.

"Lou!" Niall jumps up as soon as the elevator doors slide apart. "Look at this."

Louis goes to his friend's side and listens to him talk about an article in the magazine. They were advertising for the Four concert as an entertainment option.

The breakfast buffet had Louis drooling and Bean tumbling about. He didn't want to be greedy so he took small portions each time. He put strawberry yogurt, vanilla yogurt, muesli and cranberries in his bowl before drizzling it with chilli honey.

"You still up for that omelette?" Harry asks.

"Please?" Louis chews his lip and asks. He hadn't eaten supper and that was irresponsible enough. Harry nods, kisses his forehead and walks off to meet with the chef. Liam had croissants and an omelette too. Niall stole the croissant from him since it was chocolate. Louis looks around at the tables carrying food, unable to locate where the croissants came from.

"So what do you have planned for today?" Liam asks, getting fed bits of pastry because Niall felt guilty and nobody was getting in the way of him apologising.

"Theme park." Niall answers immediately. "We'll do the water rides and eat strange food."

"I have to be careful." Louis interrupted. "I can't exactly eat everything."

"And you can't go on any dangerous rides." Louis nods with a smile. He takes a bit of muesli and wraps in yogurt before eating it. "How did you two sleep?"
"We had two single beds but I woke up to Niall sitting on me." Liam sends Niall a knowing look.

Niall shrugs. "This hotel is incredible. Did you order room service?"

"Not yet. I was too tired to order anything yesterday."

Harry takes a seat next to Louis and the boy pouts when there is no omelette in his hand. "They'll bring it to us." Harry assures him.

He did come with jam croissants and his own bowl of yogurt. Louis breaks the pastry in half to taste.

"You should taste this." Harry gives him a small glass of water. "It's infused with granadilla."

"Where did that come from?" Niall asks, eyeing Louis when he drinks it.

Harry nods in the direction of the glass containers. Niall is up and going towards it. Louis eats a full breakfast and Harry is very proud to see that he didn't waste anything. A waiter asks what they'd like to drink and everyone murmurs their orders for him to take down.

Afterwards, they make their plans for the day since their entire day was open. "I would like to visit the casino." Harry puts forth first.

Louis sticks his tongue out at Niall when his friend does his signature eyebrow wiggle.

"We're going to the theme park." Niall is adamant.

"I'm staying in." Liam adds.

"No you're not."

"I am."

They argue softly and Harry turns to Louis with an annoyed look in his eye. "What would you like to do today?"

"Um." Louis bites his lip. "I can go to the theme park then we can maybe have dinner? The hotel magazine said there's a lovely restaurant in their casino building."

"I like that plan." Harry takes Louis' hand under the table. "I can take you shopping too."

"You already took me shopping, love."

"We didn't shop here."

"I doubt this mall has anything I don't already have or need."

The shopping plan is scrapped but Harry uses a very stern tone when he tells Niall to let Louis sleep for a few hours before going to the theme park. He doesn't want Louis over exerting himself and he must not walk for too long distances.

While they had their talk, Louis had crawled back into bed and stuffed his face in a pillow. He loved duck feather pillows and was extremely thankful that Harry had them at home. When Harry comes back, he starts digging in their suitcases for his clothes. Fresh, sophisticated clothing.
"I hope you weren't mean to Niall." Louis tells him, smile playing on his lips.

"I cannot say that I was or wasn't." Harry crawls up the mattress, his left side faltering a bit as he leans. "I'm a caveman, remember?"

"You're my caveman." Louis kisses Harry's lips, slow and careful. "You also taste like coffee and chilli."

"Hmph." Harry presses his lips to Louis' jaw and neck. "And is that appealing to you?"

"It's very sexy, yes."

Louis bursts into a loud giggle when Harry exhales against his throat, creating a ticklish ripple on his skin. Harry pries Louis' legs apart and settles between them.

"Weren't you in a hurry?" Louis' heartbeat picks up and his blood turns to racing horses that thrum in his veins when Harry grip his thighs and rounds his hips.

"I never neglect my princess." Harry bucks his hips and squeezes Louis' bum simultaneously, leading a drawn out gasp from the boy. "Let's get you out of these clothes, yeah?"

Louis lifts his hips off the mattress so Harry can take his sweet time dragging his sleeping pants off his trembling thighs. His lips press soothing kisses to the inside of Louis' thighs, his hand rubbing warmth up and down the length of his leg. He dots Louis' slightly risen belly button with gentle pecks, just to let Bean know that he's here, and all around the growing taut skin.

"We've always been very quick, haven't we?" Harry's forearms dig into the mattress and their chests press together to eliminate all hope of space. "I haven't taken care of you properly in a while now."

Louis whines and locks his ankles around Harry's back, ankle socks still on and still navy blue. He bares his neck, knowing how much Harry loves to mark him up there. Feeling a large hand glide downwards between their bodies, Louis' eyes fly open and his jaw slackens when Harry takes his length in his hand.

"We'll take our time now, darling." Harry pumps Louis' length, getting him to full hardness and tugging on the head gently.

As much as Louis loved Harry's attention in all respects, he mainly went after the inexplicable explosion of want when Harry was inside him. He loved being filled and connected to Harry more than anything else in their sex lives. Mewling, he uses a surprisingly firm grip on Harry's nape and waist to roll them over.

"Eager, princess?" Harry let himself be rolled over because with the amount of heat he packed there was no way a boy of Louis' physique could pin him.

"You tease too much." Louis breathed heavily.

He kept Harry's grey joggers on him and as he rolled his hips, planting his palms on Harry's chest and grinding with a little extra strength. Harry groans and grips Louis' hips forcefully, directing him in his motions until the bulge in his pants was too noticeable and painful to ignore.

"Lou."

Harry swatted Louis' behind to get him to kneel. With the extra space he removed his pants and released his throbbing erection from its cruel confines. Louis bats his hand away and uses his smaller one to tease Harry further. The room was hotter, the air so much thicker. It was already
smelling of hot skin and sex, of them pawing at each other like they're starved of touch.

Propping himself up on his elbows, Harry watches Louis position himself over the bulbous head of Harry's member for the hundredth time since they met. They've been intimate so many times, and each time is like a new exploration of each other's bodies.

"Wait." Harry suddenly remembers. "Lube, Lou."

Louis bites his lip to keep his groan in his throat. He could seriously have hurt himself if he went on with his ignorance. Silently he gets off the bed and finds their special bag with lube - it was an embarrassing moment when packing - before straddling Harry again.

"Love you." Harry had his injured left arm around Louis' waist while his right hand warmed up some lube on his fingertips.

"Love you."

One finger slips into him and Louis tosses his head back between his shoulder blades, rolling back onto Harry's digit and moaning. He feels the firmness of Harry's arm locked around him, ready to support his entire body mass at any given moment, and it's the feeling of being small and looked after that goads him on now.

Another finger joins the first one and together they curl and stretch Louis open as much as is needed. Harry didn't make him wear a plug recently so he needs to take a bit longer opening Louis up despite the boy's objections.

He drops Louis onto his back and gets between his legs, pumping his long fingers knuckle-deep past Louis' rim. Louis fists the sheets and curls his toes at the constant jab at his insides. Harry ignores Louis' member in favour of drizzling more flavoured lube - Louis didn't care to check what it is this time - onto his fingers.

"Ready for me, darling?" Harry whispers in Louis' ear, voice thick like honey and gruff as always. Louis nods, unable to form words with his mind high-strung and heart galloping in his chest. He bends his knees and keeps them risen on either side of Harry's hips. His fingers grip Harry's shoulders, over the most prominent 'L' carving and tries to relax as Harry slowly buries himself inside him.

"You're amazing." Harry breathes. "You're always so warm and tight for me."

"Just you."

"Yeah." Grunting, Harry swivels his hips to hit all the sweetest spots hidden within Louis' body at the same time.

Louis screams and isn't quick enough to muffle it with pillow, duvet or skin so it bounces off the hotel room walls and blocks out any other sound that could distract Harry from the bare squirming boy underneath him.

It is then that they realise - after minutes of being so enthralled by just the presence of the other - that Louis' shirt is still on. The soft fabric is dampened at the front at two spots on his chest and the sight of it makes Harry growl. The vibrations in his chest echo into Louis' and the boy turns into a rambling, babbling mess.

"H-Haz." Louis pushes Harry's hair back for him when the long strands dangle over his eyes. "Haz, please."
"I'm here, baby." Harry closes the distance between their lips and partakes in a union involving too much tongue and teeth to be deemed a kiss.

Louis' arm moves from Harry's shoulder to around his neck, pulling him down as the thrusting of his hips get more urgent. He digs the nails of his other hand into Harry's side, leaving angry red marks and indents in his wake.

Allowing himself to let go of whatever hesitation he possessed in order to just feel what Harry was doing to him, Louis' eyes close and he whimpers at the hard, deep thrusts resulting in him jolting further along the mattress. His head rolls to the side, lip bitten until it's bleeding from at least two cuts and arches his back whenever Harry slams into him, positioned just the right way.

Harry hastily removes Louis' shirt, hating that it kept skin from meeting skin, and flings it across the room. The smooth skin underneath is heated but not riskily so, turning pink everywhere and causing Louis' nipples to harden. Without wasting time Harry attaches his lips to one, moaning at the burst of warm sweetness in his mouth. It doesn't last long because Louis' body does not create an endless supply of the protein substance, just enough everyday to help make space for when its ready to produce real milk.

Harry sucks on the other nub while Louis whines and writhes beneath him, unable to stay still because he's being attacked in so many ways.

Louis can sense the way his body is rising to an end, and Harry's thrusts become more desperate as they continue. He speeds up and holds onto Louis' thigh, pivoting his hips to go deeper each time because Louis has to finish before him.

"Come for me, Lou." He says in Louis' ear, blowing warm air on the flushed skin. "I need it, baby. Come on, princess."

Not being able to do much except lean up towards Harry and cling like a vine to him, Louis tries a different tactic. He was so painfully close and the slow drag of Harry's length inside him so intimately, rubbing against his sensitive walls so that it just brings him to the edge was driving him mad.

High-pitched, breathless little noises escape Louis' lips as Harry pounds into his slowly tiring body. The room's cool air meets Louis' burning skin and it all adds up to the pile of effort put forth to capsize his control. The air is punched out of his lungs and the muscles in his work twice as hard when he arches off the mattress into a perfect C. His orgasm rips through his body and tires him out effectively.

He feels Harry's clammy left hand fall onto his tummy where his pudge that protects Bean has toughened. Harry continues thrusting, building up a burn in his thighs and abdomen as it twists and falls forward after a powerful climax. To avoid landing on Louis, he pushes himself to the side so just their legs are tangled and their more private union is maintained.

"And you said we'd go slow." Louis combs his small fingers through Harry's hair.

Harry chuckles into Louis' neck and kisses his shoulder as a sort of reward. "My dove, whether we fucked or went slow, I still consider it making love."

"Such a charmer." Louis giggles, blushing not only because of the tug on his insides by Harry's softening length.

"I'm a charming caveman now am I?" Harry lurches forward and connects their lips for a languid
kiss that stole the air from both of them.

Louis' arms found themselves wrapped around Harry's shoulders, holding on for dear life when the man chose to position himself over him again. They parted to breathe but didn't take up too much time apart.

* * * * *

"Love?" Harry sits on the bed by Louis' hip and he feels the bed sink.

"Hi." Louis turns onto his back and blinks up at Harry, the power of his blue eyes on full blast.

"Liam and I are going to the casino now." Harry tugs on the pillow covering Louis' front. "I want to say goodbye."

Understanding, Louis moves the pillow and Harry removes the comforter so he can sit.

"I want you to take your phone with you." Harry has Louis' Samsung in his hand. "And I have something to give you."

Louis sits up and folds his legs to the side under the covers, giving Harry his attention. He's a little confused by the seriousness in Harry's voice. "Give me?"

"This-" Harry produces a necklace with a thin metal chain and simple closed circle pendant. "-is a panic button."

"Harry." Louis' lips curve into a laugh. "Haz, those are for old people."

"Louis, please." Harry's eyes reminded him of every bad experience they survived apart and together, they were so mournful. "Humour me."

Louis didn't want to have a panic button necklace on but in light of previous traumatic events, he should have expected something like this. He nods and allows Harry to clasp the link around his neck.

"Thank you." Harry's most definitely never said it before and he silently vows to never use it outside their family. "It's a tracker and the button itself is in the center, okay?"

"Okay." Louis kisses Harry's cheek slowly, reassuring him in the gentle contact. "We'll be safe."

"I really don't want you to go." Harry looks so pained, troubled frown and guilty eyes. It was a horrid sight. "I want to keep you with me."

"Love." Louis fits himself on Harry's lap. "I love you, irrevocably and undoubtedly so. Remember that always. Nothing's going to keep us apart."

Harry takes Louis' hand in his right one, kissing his wrist where he could feel the striving pulse against his lips. "I just have a bad feeling."

"You can be paranoid, Haz."

"You're right." Harry chuckles. "Do I have your word that you'll be safe? No fucking around."

"You have my word."

Harry had to leave in about ten minutes because Liam was already in the parking garage, waiting
for him. He just had to order room service and make sure Louis ate a wholesome chicken salad with a kind of tomato bread roll and french fries.

"I called the park and got your tickets booked with my card." Harry laced his fingers with Louis', now so far gone for the boy and in love with the way their hands fit. "My other Express card is in your bag. Take it with you, okay? Some cash too."

"I have cash." Louis mumbles in his sleep.

"And you better not be spending it."

"Don't tell me what to do."

Smiling so his dimples were carved into his cheeks, Harry bends and kisses Louis' neck. "I will very well tell you what to do."

"Hmm. Bossy."

"We'll pick you and Niall up from the park at seven, okay?" Harry kisses Louis' forehead and tucks him into the bed with pillows and comforters creating oceans of comfort around him.

"Okay." Louis leans up for his farewell kiss. "Don't waste money."

Harry smiles and his cologne fills Louis' nostrils, the musky scent proving dominant over mint and alcohol.

"Bye, my love." Harry kisses him one last time, taking a long moment despite Niall's impatience at their door.

"Bye." Louis closes his eyes and settles on his side.

Harry let's Niall in and gives him yet another stern warning. "Don't wake him up."

Niall gives him a thumbs up and waits for Harry to be in the elevator before jumping on the bed.

"Lou!"

Louis, expecting Niall to completely disregard Harry's words, groans and hides under the warm duvet. He huffs when Niall kicks his legs lightly and puts the TV on.

"You can't sleep now." Niall takes the remaining french fries from their table and digs in. "We're going out."

"Are we taking a taxi?"

Niall scoffs and switches to a channel playing an animated movie Louis doesn't recognise. "Harry paid a guy to drive us there."

"Of course he did." Louis planned on sitting up but he felt a rush of blood to his brain when he started to and just fell back down. "I'm still in my pyjamas."

"I noticed, lazy bum. Go get dressed or we'll be late and I'll disown our friendship."

"You won't do that." Louis forces himself to wake up and gather clothes from one of their suitcases. "Whose french fries will you steal then?"

Niall glares at him, making Louis laugh proudly before going into the bathroom for a shower. He
feels refreshed after a good wash and the hotel soap leaves a lovely scent on his skin. Putting on his black chinos - elasticated and very comfortable - with a shirt of his that had lyrics from one of *Four's* songs, Louis decides that whatever mild symptoms hit him earlier had been washed away.

"Ready?" Niall looks up from his phone screen upon Louis' exit. "The car's waiting outside the lobby."

Louis grabs his own bag that's part of the official band merchandise, slotting two water bottles inside and a hoodie in case the weather takes a serious turn for the worst. He takes all the cash he has - ignoring Harry's money - but he takes the Express card.

"Let's go."

The theme park has a queue that starts from outside the venue. Hundreds and hundreds of locals and tourists are here to get a glimpse of and hopefully catch a ride on some of the scariest rides around. Thankfully, Niall doesn't skip a beat in walking right down the side of the queue to the Ticket Masters and collecting their wrist bands.

"Where do you want to go first?" Niall's studious face is on as he looks at the map, Louis peering over his shoulder.

"I haven't been here before."

"They have a scare scale." Niall cooes. "And the Anaconda is a 9."

"I'm not going near that."

"How about the Raging River? It's a 6."

"I suppose."

The line to wait in outside the Raging River ride wasn't hectic so they only stood for about three minutes. It wasn't a joke because it was an actual river that tossed them left and right - gently so because lots of kiddies went on this ride - in a sturdy plastic boat. Niall took Louis to the Kiosk to buy a photo of them in the midst of the excitement - a silent camera took a photo of them.

"Let's go to the kid's section." Niall proposes after that. "Or the ferris wheel."

"Ferris wheel."

They get to sit for four rounds on a pretty major wheel, taken up high enough that they can see The Dome where they'll be tomorrow for the concert.

It's when Niall decides to invade the Heritage Tour that Louis is at his wit's end. He's been walking for far too long and just wants to sit down on a bench with donuts from a little stand outside the live entertainment section.

"Niall." Louis whines. "I'm tired."

"Oh." Niall's face conveys the strong indecision he's experiencing. "Let's sit."

They take a break for about thirty minutes, then walk into three different historical landmarks. Homes of miners who worked here almost two hundred years ago were still there and well preserved.
"Where does this go?" Niall ponders out loud as he walks through the house, out the back door onto a kind of brick patio. "You know, I've always wanted to get lost."

"I haven't." Louis sits on the palisades with a relaxed sigh.

"There's a train track over here." Niall points to a section past the house's property onto a dirt road that's under a bridge and next to a warehouse. "Let's go see."

"Let me know what you find." Louis closes his eyes and leans against the cool pillar.

He ends up being dragged to his feet once again by his eccentric best friend who he is considering breaking up with, and over to the train track. It's not much to look at, he'll admit. They're still in the theme park's property but on a dirt road where no other people can be seen. On one end, there's a locked wooden shack with plastic curtains for doors and the other is a turn that they can't see beyond.

Just when he thinks Niall is giving up, he's being begged to just explore a bit. Niall's tone is pitiful and undeniable - he can empathise with Liam - so he goes along.

There's a mini train at the end loading people to take on a tour around the park.

"Let's go now." Niall is yawning. "It's almost two and we need to go on more rides."

Louis nods in eager agreement and they start walking back together, Niall now carrying the backpack on his shoulders. They hear the rumbling of a rollercoaster's tracks above them and the sound effects of the notorious Anaconda whizzing by. There are screams of excitement, thrill and delight. Children laugh and adults tease.

There are lots of footsteps, obviously courtesy of the long distances people have to walk to get anywhere in this place. But then there's heavier footsteps to be heard, as they near the gate that will put them back onto their previous route. It's one of the thousand plus workers who roam about checking on everything, Louis knows that, but he looks over his shoulder anyway.

He's glad he did but not so much that he did it a tad too late.

"Niall-"

The only thing he sees is a jacket clad shoulder blocking his eye's view of anything before his back collides with the rickety gate and Niall trips on something, sending him at once to the ground where he falls unconscious from hitting the train track rail.

There's a hand over Louis' mouth, so hurriedly positioned that it blocks his nose for breathing. His heart beats like a race horse and the dread starts to filter through his calm for the day, eating away the serenity like acid on flesh. He screams but the sound is muffled and he can't fight for fear of injuring his tummy, his baby is still in need of protection above him.

"Shh, will ya?" Louis wants to bawl at the familiar voice. Zayn.

Zayn in a black tank top and grey jacket, displaying what could be majority of his tattoos underneath.

Louis tries to calm himself down because nausea is arising with the bile in his throat, threatening to make him black out under pressure. He stops squirming and goes lax but stiff at the extremely close proximity between them.
Zayn's patient. He waits for Louis to calm down before leaning closer. They're touching everywhere except their faces and it feels so soothing to Zayn, so therapeutic for some reason. He uses his other hand that's free to wrap like a python around Louis' waist.

"Don't scream now, okay?" Zayn says, soft spoken but firm. "Do you promise?"

Louis nods slowly, eyes trained on Niall who isn't moving. Zayn's hand moves and it goes to join the other, keeping Louis pressed against him.

"Look at me." Zayn hisses.

Louis' eyes immediately snap back to his, met with a fuzzy hazel colour that narrowing and dilating after short intervals. He can see that with now close they are.

"Get him off the track please." Louis hears the shaking in his voice. "Please. He's hurt."

Zayn contemplates for a moment before smirking and not answering. "I heard all the things Harry calls you."

Louis gnaws at his bottom lip worriedly, beginning to sweat where his palms are against Zayn's torso. "Zayn please."

"Do you like those pet names?"

Zayn takes one arm away and brushes Louis' cheek with his fingertips. They feel different, wrong because nobody should touch him this way. Just Harry.

"Answering me will help keep your friend over there alive." Zayn chides.

"Y-Yes."

"You do?"

Louis nods. He feels the press of warm metal on his chest and the cotton pads he has scratches his sensitive skin where they're taped down.

"When I found out who your boyfriend was before, I was a little more than shocked." Zayn continues. "I mean, who knew you'd let a psychopathic serial killer fuck you so hard that you fell pregnant? I certainly didn't."

His breaths are trembling and Zayn seems unaffected by Louis' obvious fear, terror laced with disgust.

"There's hope for me though." Zayn's tone changes. "It was the best news I've heard since my family didn't press charges when I tried to smother my cousin."

Suddenly Zayn's roaring with laughter.

"Don't look so scared, Lou. My cousin was a bitch."

When Louis remains silent and turns his head away when Zayn creeps inches forward, he grows impatient. Zayn's chest rumbles and Louis can't help but notice how it's weaker than Harry's, more hesitant and not proud. The memory of his panic button - bless Harry's insanity and ever-readiness - on his necklace gives him hope yet.

He hardly focusses on the ill feeling that crawls up his throat and dips into his mind when Zayn
kisses him. He's more concentrated on pressing the button he's aiming for. His palms are already on Zayn's torso so he merely crooks his thumb and shifts himself before he hears the soft click of a rubber button and he feels relief bubble inside him.

That's when he realises Zayn isn't alone.

He manages to shove Zayn back with a frown full of hatred, but also notices the confusion in Zayn's eye when someone shows up a few feet away.

"Zayn?" Louis wipes his mouth but it just doesn't feel good enough.

It's not anyone Zayn knows judging by his reaction. He turns around and keeps Louis behind him. He's about to speak when another two people step out from the warehouse, then three more from the wooden shack.

Harry's phone vibrates relentlessly on the bar countertop. He left Liam to play with the machines while he drank a bit and missed his Louis. He frowns and picks it up, recognising the serial number appearing on his screen before a map pops up with Louis' location. Not bothering to pay or formally end anyone's conversation, he gets up and runs.

Liam sees him and starts to follow, not finding keeping up with someone with as long and fit limbs as Harry easy at all. Harry flies through the crowd, phone clutched in his tight fist as he dodges stations and pushes people aside in his haste.

"Harry?" Liam gets in the passenger side and sees Louis' blanket still on the dash.

"Hook this up to the GPS." Harry orders him and Liam does so immediately, connecting the tiny USB cord to Harry's phone.

Harry entertains the thought that this is a joke Louis' playing - the boy will be is so much trouble when Harry gets to him - but for now he just needs to get there and make sure. He pulls out of the parking lot and speeds onto the highway, impatiently tapping his fingers against the steering wheel.

"Harry?" He hears Liam call.

Harry glances at him but doesn't say anything. He fears what he will sound like in a state like this, panicked and in so much doubt.

"He's moving."

Harry looks at the screen and indeed, the flickering red dot is on the move. A fast one too. He's in a car and now Harry knows he's not joking. He wants to scream and beat something because he's not used to this feeling, yet it's happened before.

Then it hits him. How does Liam know he's following Louis?

When he turns to ask or just say something, there's a needle in his neck that goes too deep and even though he can't feel it he knows it's doing something to him. He swerves off the road as a black mask blocks out his senses.
Chapter Twenty-Four

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

*He who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby become a monster.*

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Each face is recognisable, belonging to people he's seen before. *Hurt* before. They're flashing images now in his corrupted mind, flying by one at a time to remind him. Remind him of what he'd done to them, their loved ones. To himself, most especially. With each face, each life that left blood splattered on his palms, Harry lost a little more of his humanity.

He can see nothing except for their faces, can hear nothing except their screams of peril and pleas for mercy. The only smell haunting him is that of crusted blood and other bodily fluids.

The women. Blonde, brunette, raven-haired; Harry didn't discriminate. The knives he used, blunt objects, scissors and ropes. His operating table and his shower. His tanks of blood and the special frying pan he used.

The men folk. Bald and fat or muscular and a heartthrob. What he'd done to them when he strapped them down and burnt them, cut them and make them scream until their lungs dried up along with their hope.

"Please. Don't do this."

"I'll give you anything you want!"

"Why are you doing this to me?"

The screams got louder in his head, making him cringe at how that beat around the edges of his skull. He wanted to scream too but he just couldn't.

When one awakens from what they think is the stage between death and the afterlife, one expects to be blinded with light. Light that will symbolise their destiny for Heaven or Hell.

That's not what happens when Harry opens his eyes for the first time.

The first thing he notices is everything is damp. Damp and dark. He looks up at the ceiling and doesn't recognise it, with all the memories flooding back to him so he gasps and tries to sit up. Something sharp digs into the skin of his neck but of course he feels nothing until the drip of blood reaches the thin gown he's wearing he is forced to halt.

Panic and rational worry flood his nerves, making he fight the restraints until he's declared it futile. He's on a bed with a thin mattress and leather straps everywhere except for around his neck. He's not sure what's around his neck.

Before shouting, he looks around him to observe and memorise the details of the room. The walls are solid grey brick with a dreary, depression connotation. There's a curtain to his left, blocking whatever is there behind it. It's too dark to even take a guess while his senses are still on fire. There's a metal table next to him, scraped up the legs and with dents on the top. Atop the surface is a paper plate of chopped fruit - golden apple pieces and peaches.
That's when Harry takes two deep breaths and closes his eyes again, listening to what's around him. He doesn't hear anything major so the room is soundproof. Until he picks up on the sound of another person breathing, he's almost lost hope.

"Who's there?" He asks the to air.

No response.

He's filling with dread and concern over Louis. Where is he? What could this be about? Harry hates not having answers and at this moment in time he is utterly lost.

The breathing stops and Harry wonders how that's possible. He frowns and tries to listen closely again, easily making out that the sound once came from his left side where the curtain was. He'd really like to know what the Hell is going on right now.

Suddenly the curtain is yanked out of the way by an arm that's got too much hair and a frightening giggle comes out from behind it. A person, wearing the same gown as Harry but clutching a teddy bear and smiling with crooked teeth, runs past him towards the door.

He figures it's a girl with the long black, matted hair and sound of laughter. She could be sixteen or eighteen but no older. Her face is contorted and her lips are cut, operated on and stitched so haphazardly that it permanently marred her face.

"Hey!" He shouts after her but she's long gone, out the door and turned left.

He can see the hallway now, or whatever it is that lay beyond that barrier he cannot reach. It's just another wall opposite to this room which didn't offer any insight. He doesn't know where he is or why he's here. He wants to know above all that where his Louis is, whether he's under the same conditions. Harry's going to really fuck up anyone who had a part in this, starting with Liam. Looking back at his left, he's partly relieved to see there's still a person there lying on the bed. Majority of him is red with rage and formidable intentions when he sees that it's Zayn.

Zayn? Zayn was not supposed to be in Eastland but maybe he's the reason Louis used his panic button. Forget Liam, he'll start with Zayn as a rough warm up.

"Zayn!" Harry had to wake him up, ask him if he knew anything. "Wake up, you bastard."

Nobody else comes into the room and there's no noise outside either. Zayn doesn't stir from his unconsciousness for another twenty or so minutes.

"Where's Louis?" Is the first thing Harry asks.

"Harry?" Comes Zayn's groggy reply.

"Where's Louis?" Harry repeats. "If you fucking touched him-"

"Where are we?"

"How the fuck was I supposed to know that?" Harry glares at Zayn who glares right back.

"Last thing I remember, these guys in black surrounded us."

Harry stays silent and Zayn says nothing more. They needed to get out of here first before Harry settled any of his vendettas. They're both waiting for the atmosphere to change, for them to wake up from this REM-induced nightmare.
They both hear footsteps and voices approaching but can see nothing until the group is close enough for their shadows to be cast within the room. Harry's head snaps towards the door and Zayn's been staring at it this whole time.

When the unfamiliar faces - save for one - enter the room, Harry ignores them all for the flood of relief that hits him when he sees Louis.

The boy is fine and he's wearing warmer clothing than Zayn and Harry. A knit sweater that needed folding at the sleeves and flowed down to his knees, warm pants that had to be folded up to his ankles because of the damp muck on these foreign floors. Louis has his arms wrapped around his tummy and he smiles faintly with familiarity, nervous but relieved still, as soon as he sees Harry. His hair is untidy and disarrayed with knots everywhere most probably, but he was okay and that was most important right now.

"Louis." Harry couldn't help himself.

Four other people had walked in with Louis; two women and two men. They looked the same, dark hair and brown eyes that were only brown because of the strong fluorescent bulb above their heads. All four heads snap towards Harry when he speaks, silent and observing.

"Lou." Harry tries again, this time fighting the restraints he's in more fiercely. "Louis, for fuck's sake!"

"Harry, stop. You're hurting yourself." Louis takes a step forward but one of the front women blocks him.

Harry directs his deathly glare at her, wanting nothing more than the beautiful sight of her gutted and shrieking. "What the fuck are you people doing?!"

"Louis?" This time it's Zayn who speaks and Harry growls at him because nobody had the right to be so comfortable with saying Louis' name.

"You've got fighters." Lady Number One says, she's holding a clipboard and has a white doctor's coat on.

"Attractive too." Lady Number Two says. Her eyes are brighter than the other three and she's got a dark lustful look about her.

"Rose, please." The first one scolds the other.

So Rose is the slut's name. Harry stores that information away for later.

"Pick." The first one says to Louis who seems to be prepared for this.

"And can I have the other one?" Rose is at it again. Harry is surprised she doesn't just stick her hand up her own skirt right here.

"You may. Now keep your mouth and legs shut."

This surprises Harry more than Rose. Zayn looks green in the face but Harry's fairly confident. If anyone touches him - this warning excludes Louis - he will end them and anyone they've ever loved.

"Go." The first one says encourages Louis again. "You need a room-mate and we need to get this day over with."
"What will you do?" Louis asks the grand whore of the gathering.

"Well fuck, Louis. How naïve can you be?" Rose snaps and nobody saw that fire coming from her.

"I just want to know if you're going to hurt h-him."

Harry wants to hold Louis. The boy must feel so small and unsafe where he is now. He needs Harry as much as Harry needs him. He decides against all the primal instincts in him that were abrupt, loud and dangerous, to say nothing at this moment in time.

"He won't be hurt." Rose assures him but Harry isn't going to say she's vouching for their dignity. Louis can't do much and he looks straight at Zayn with a look full of apology. It makes Harry's chest rumble and his fingers clench into lethal fists.

"What are you looking at him for?" Harry snaps, cold and harsh.

"Pick, Louis!" The boy is pressured by the first bossy woman.


Well, obviously he would. It's why Harry didn't get worried with doubt because he knew his boy would help him here to get out. They had to get out of this miserable place.

Louis and Harry really need each other equally.

"I shouldn't have gotten my hopes up." Rose shrugs noncommitedly.

"Shut up." Lady Number One snaps. "This is the last one you're getting so try not to maim him."

Maim? Zayn starts to wriggle and battle the straps holding him down, but Louis can't do anything right now to help him. He would try though, because he was the first to wake up and he knows what happens if you give up hope. He just had to tell Zayn that.

When the tension of the room is eased, Louis sighs and visibly becomes less uptight. He rushes to Zayn first before more men are brought into the room and supports his neck with a hand at the back of his head.

"Stay strong please. For me, okay? I'll get us out I promise." Is all he can say to him before two men in white are unstrapping and dragging away Zayn.

Louis then hurries over to Harry's bed with no more looks directed at Zayn to untie the leather straps that bind his limbs. He goes for his ankles first, then releasing his left wrist because it's the injured one.

"What did you tell him?" Harry asks, not even moving to stretch his tight muscles. "Louis, you better answer me."

"I said goodbye." Louis looks up at him, begging Harry with his eyes to shut up.

It's a good thing Harry's as indiscreet and sharp as it gets in the twenty-first century.

Harry waits for nothing more and wraps his left arm around Louis' shoulders to reel him in for an embrace. Louis let's go of the right arm's cuff to hug him back, hiding his face in Harry's neck and breathing shakily. He's shivering and stressed, scared out of his wits but Bean's safe and so is he.

"My baby." Harry kisses Louis' cheek where the tear tracks have dried. "My poor darling. I'm so
"I'm fine." Louis shakes his head but digs his fingernails into Harry's shoulder blades. "We're okay."

"Tell me where I am." Harry has a lethal fire in his eyes, tying up his mask and revealing every true emotion he's ever felt.

"You're at the Briarville Institution." Lady Number One answers for Louis. They'd forgotten the people in white coats were still there, their beady and dead gaze set on the reunited lovers. Harry watches Louis untie the last binding before stepping back so he can stand up. Frowning, Harry makes a grab for him again and whispers so softly in his ear. "None of that. You're not going anywhere without me."

"You've never heard of us." The woman speaking continues. "But we know all about you."

Harry looks up at the four officials - he isn't too sure but they must be of some standing here - with murder in his black eyes. "What the fuck do you think you're doing kidnapping people?"

"Here, you are patient number 165998." She continues without a care for Harry's spoken outrage. "Welcome, Mr. Styles."

* * * * *

"How can you possibly be so fucking calm about this?!" Harry has all but broken down the walls in their room enacting every twist of his rage. "This is fucking ridiculous."

It was hardly a room to start with, more like a cell. A cell with a set of bunk beds and small table with a lamp on it. One window - with burglar guards - and a door that's solid steel and impenetrable. "Because I have to be." Louis kept to himself this whole time. He hugged himself around his middle and kept himself small, wanting to be as invisible as possible.

"What the fuck do you mean?" Harry runs a hand through his hair and pulls hard on the ends.

"It's for Bean." Louis pleads with Harry using his tired eyes. "Th-They'll hurt him if I don't.....cooperate."

Sighing, Harry turns away from Louis and curses loudly at the wall. He shouts each one out and even punches the solid concrete as part of his parade. He'd already thrown the only chair they had with such force that it broke, he shoved the table so it hit the wall and had a large crack along the surface.

The reality of this situation, the heat of such a livid reaction will possibly never lessen to a simmer. He couldn't stand here and listen to all this bullshit being fed to him. He refused to. He demanded to be in the know and be told the truth about why this was happening to them.

What the Hell did they kidnap them for? Why was it so important that Liam had to lie to everyone about who he was? What operation is this? He doesn't know their intentions and what they plan to harvest from them.

Harry's a proud creature of beastly pride and dignity. He wasn't about to go around declaring his reservations and asking for pardon, but the truth of him being actually scared could not be denied. Louis was involved here and they were all in danger.

He doesn't even know what the Briarville Institution is!
“Louis, I-” Harry turned around to begin his apology and enquiries when he stopped short. The poor boy is being cornered by someone with long blond hair and crooked nose that's inching closer to Louis' cowering form with each passing moment. They looked to be sniffing as a dog would and held their hands to their chest, leaning so close that it began it boil Harry's blood until it was thick in his arteries.


Without hesitation he crosses the room and yanks this intruder away from Louis, hearing a pained cry that's cut short as soon as he snaps their neck. Harry didn't care anymore, he wasn't going to hold back a single bit if a threat got near Louis or himself.

“You will forgive me for that.” Harry tells Louis, kicking the patient's leg to get it out of the way of closing their door but it turned out to be hard enough that the limb slammed against a wall and a sour crack was heard.

Harry turned away after the sound of men pursuing the body broke out, shutting their door - he couldn't lock it however - and looking into Louis' wide and unadjusted eyes.

"I think we need to have a talk." Harry caught Louis staring at the ground near the door where Harry had just attacked another person. "Louis. Look at me, princess.”

Louis listened - always listens to Harry - and bites his lip nervously. Where was he going to start telling the truth from? He was afraid and the building anxiety for being locked down in a place he didn't know, was going to be his end.

"Up." Harry gripped Louis' thighs and drew them up to his waist when Louis jumped.

He walked over to a bunk bed and sat down with Louis fidgeting in his lap. The boy sneezed from all the dust and cold, turning the tip of his nose red and water to gather in his eyes.

"Tell me what you've been hiding from me." Harry instructs, authority leaking into his tone. "You told me not to ask questions in front of those people but we're in a fucking prison and you told Zayn something. You promised him something.”

"I-I did."

"Yeah? What was the promise?"

"That I'd get us out."

"Since when does Zayn fucking matter? I promised you that and I will make sure we walk out of here before I burn it to the ground."

"Harry, you don't understand."

"Because you're not explaining, Louis!"

Louis let's out a squeak at the thunder in Harry's voice. "Please don't yell at me."

"I was drugged and you were kidnapped. I have every right to shout as loud as I want and get as fucking angry as I want. Now tell me what the Hell is going on."

"I don't know!" Louis exclaims, one hand still on his tummy and the other letting go of Harry's shoulder. "All I know is I was the only one not drugged and was told that if I didn't cooperate they'd
take my baby away."

_Don't let them take my baby._

Harry's surprise is evident on his face when he fits two and two together. "Take?"

"They'd hurt Bean." Louis looks down longingly at his tummy. "Bean's our baby, Haz."

"I know that, darling." Harry rakes his hair harshly with his right hand. "Is that all?"

"They said I could only ask for one of you. Zayn or you."

"And?" Harry turns bitter.

"I chose you but-" Louis meets Harry's gaze without shame or fear of wrath. "-I know what they do to people here. Hardly anyone makes it out alive and when they do they don't live for very long afterwards."

"Fuck." Harry sucks in a sharp breath and sighs. "Fuck. Fuck. _Fuck._"

"I know." Louis wrings his fingers together. "This place is an asylum. I don't know what they want with all three of us but so far I know that they'll take care of us for as long as we do what they want."

"They can fuck right off, those cunts. I'm not doing a thing they say."

"You have to." Louis pleads. "Please, you have to. It's for Bean."

"This shouldn't even be happening." Harry throws his hands up. "We shouldn't be here but Bean is-" Louis' eyes widen and his body goes rigid with sorrow. "Say it."

"Nothing."

"What were you going to say?" Louis gets off Harry's lap and backs up. "That Bean is a burden to you? I didn't _beg_ you to come take care of us! You told me you were happy. That we'd be happy."

"Well then this is a big fucking surprise, isn't it princess?" Harry stands to his full height that towers well over Louis. "Do you call this happy?"

"Leave then." Louis frowns. He can't glare or scowl without it looking like he's an angry kitten. "Where the fuck do you want me to go?" Harry laughs. It's a mad laugh that borders on psychotic. "Ask for another room. Tell them that Bean and I are such _burdens_ to you and you never want to see me again!"

Harry's struck by Louis' outburst then the sudden change again when the boy whimpers under his breath and turns away.

"What's wrong?" Harry tries to remain firm and resolute but Louis is his princess and owns all of Harry. Heart and soul.

"Nothing." Louis is snippy but he's wiping his eyes and going to the broken table to look for
something in the drawer that's there.

"Lou?"

"I'm fine."

"No you're not." All of Harry's anger deflates at the sound of Louis' choked sobs, battling to come out but being held in. "Baby please, tell me what's wrong."

"I'm hurting, Harry!" Louis still doesn't look at him. "My back is always sore and my feet are swollen, I wake every morning to throw up and I have severe nausea. I'm so scared and I'm carrying our baby. You can't just change say those things to me because I feel like all the pain isn't worth it. I'm not asking you to stay, even now when all I can see and feel is either pain or fear. I'm not asking you to stay with me."

Harry finds his lack of a response crippling, emotionally and physically. Louis takes out what he wants - fresh nipple pads because his current ones were beginning to itch - and doesn't look at Harry as he leaves.

"No." Harry says it so softly whilst shaking his head that Louis doesn't even hear him, but gets pressed against the cold wall with gentle but firm hands. "No. Oh, my sweet darling."

Louis tries to resist Harry's advances but his wrists are held and so are his hips. "Please, Harry. Don't-"

Harry shakes his head again and drops Louis' arms so he can evade his resisting. He puts his bandaged left hand on Louis' tummy and the other keeps Louis' hands behind his back.

"I swear by the air I breathe and ground I walk on, that you and this baby mean more to me than all of that." Harry says, so soft and caressing to Louis' every raw nerve. "I say some things as I shouldn't. I don't mean it in the way that it sounds."

"If you-" Louis has to take several quick breaths so that he can speak without coughing. Bean's been pressing against his lungs even though he's just four weeks pregnant. "If you hold the fact that I can be completely dependant on someone against me then I ask of you that when you walk out my door you never look back."

It was killing Louis to say these things. No amount of pain will equate itself to the trauma he's inflicting upon himself. It felt like ripping open his chest and shredding his heart before Harry, letting him know that Louis is suffering but not giving up.

Before, Louis was going to step into a doctor's office and cut the chord that connected him to the baby inside him. Now, he was going to go through every phase of this pregnancy so that Bean can come into this world. Bean had done nothing wrong and Louis can't kill it.

"What are you thinking about?" Harry's forefinger brushes Louis' cheekbone delicately. Louis shakes his head and tries to step away again, but the effort is proved futile.

"Louis, stop it."

Whining in his throat, Louis obliges and let's Harry lean in close to him.

"You asked that I stop hurting people and I broke that promise. You told me you'd help me through it and baby, you have tried so hard. I'm not grateful enough and I don't deserve you."
"The theory of soul-mates is debatable but not the fact that everyone should be happy. Everyone deserves someone, Harry. Maybe I'm just not right for you."

"How can you ever say that?" Harry releases Louis' hands and crowds him against the wall. "You're all I ever want and need."

"We fight so much, Harry." Louis' crying again. "I could still lose Bean and I'm always under pressure. I don't want to lose my Baby, Harry."

*Don't let them take me baby.*

"I won't let them take our baby." Harry takes Louis' hand and places it on his face.

"I know you won't." Louis nudges Harry's jaw with his cheek.

They're so close that their scents mingle and their breaths are interlocked and their bodies feel like one. Louis kisses Harry's jaw high up near his ear, cupping the other side and pressing closer. When his lips start to shift, Harry huffs stubbornly and grips him tighter.

"I'm staying." Harry pulls Louis away from the wall when the commotion from outside dies down. "-but we're getting out of here."

"I know that too." Louis giggles but it's slight and soon dissolves into a small smile. "We need to be smart about it because they can't know."

"Who's they?"

"Those four doctors. I don't think they're even doctors, just extremists."

"I didn't like them from the moment I laid eyes on the first one."

"They're quadruplets." Louis tucks his head under Harry's chin after he's led back to the bed and straddles his lap. "They're um....seeing each other."

"Like they fuck?"

Louis makes a disgusted sound. "Yes."

"How do you know all this?"

"It's not hard to detect and also they told me."

"Did they? What else did they say?"

"Yeah. They said I would the first person in this situation and they'd like to observe me." Louis looks down at his hands. "I don't want them trying anything that can hurt Bean."

"You know I'll stop at nothing to protect you both." Harry fingers the hem of Louis' sweater, bunching up the fabric at his hips. "I won't be making a move until I know everything about this place."

"I'm scared of these people, Haz." Louis bites his lip. "They were so prepared when they took us, like they've been planning this for a long time."

"Don't think about that now." Harry pushes Louis' hair back, stiffens his legs so they're straight and forces Louis to look at him. "I will make every single one of them pay but I'm not reckless
enough to do it now when they have the upper hand."

Louis nods, wiping away the moisture from his eyes and nose. "I tried to stay awake for the trip so I'd have an idea where we were going."

"Yeah?"

He had to close his eyes and concentrate really hard for this one. "After we left the theme park-" Louis envisions the exit they took past the wooden shack. ":we got into the same van but there was another one ahead of us. I heard its door close." His mind raced past the part where Zayn's head fell on his lap and the bag over his head began to smell of sweat. "They made a circle when they drove so I assumed it was the taxi rank entrance. We turned left and stayed on that road for a long time."

"It's okay." Harry marvels at the way Louis' eyes narrow from their dilation as soon as they open. "You did very well, my dove."

"Thank you." Louis has gone back to gripping the nipple pads and making soft uncomfortable sounds.

"Sorry, darling." Harry snaps out of the road map he's got going in his head. "Let me help you put those on."

Humming delightedly - though the lack of enthusiasm and stunted high pitch was evident - Louis hands over the plastic package. Harry strips off Louis' sweater, cooing at the hiss the boy makes from the cold, and untapes the original pads on his chest.

"They put us just outside the women's ward." Louis goes on. "We were supposed to be separated but I begged them to let me have a room-mate. I didn't know you were here and that's why I felt bad for Zayn."

"I understand." Harry sets the soiled cotton pads aside and takes out two fresh ones.

Louis is looking at the passing shadows through the tiny glass pane on their door when he feels Harry's wet lips latch onto his left nipple. The sensation has gotten more desirable but Louis' mind is too foggy, too busy buzzing with thoughts of possibilities to let the arousal take over. Harry took his full - which was all Louis had to offer - before switching to the other and sucking a bit harder.

"H-Haz?"

"Hmm?" Louis' eyes dart downward from Harry's eyes to where he licks his lips.

"I know you hate him but-" He let's Harry put on his clean pads before continuing. ":I can't leave Zayn here."

Feeling the tension exude Harry's stiff as a branch body, Louis pulls his sweater back on tenaciously. "We're dealing with why you will have to when you wake up but for now, take care of my baby and have a nap."

"I can't sleep here." Louis' face falls, encompassing terror and weakness in one expression. "I'm scared! What if they come in-"
"Shh now, darling. I'm right here. If anyone tries to hurt you, I'll cut through them."

Harry stands Louis up so he can arrange the bottom bunk bed with two thin mattresses - the other taken from the above bed - and two pillows.

"Don't be afraid of anything." Harry picks Louis up off the ground and sets him down on the poorly presented bed, kissing his forehead when Louis keeps a hand fisting his shirt. "I'm here."

There are tears in Louis' eyes as he props himself up on his elbow, not letting Harry go as far as an inch away, his bottom lip wobbling but his emotions still stable. He whines and pulls Harry down to his level, hugging him around his neck so Harry can feel how afraid he is. The shudders, the trembling of his body and shaken mind.

"Oh no, baby." Harry looks into Louis' eyes and it feels like someone is slicing through his chest. "No, no, no more fear. Lou, sweetheart, darling. Stop this."

It was crippling - more than having just nine fingers - to see Louis in this state, distraught and unkempt with terror. He gathers the boy in his arms and lies down so Louis is on his chest under two thin blankets. It smelt of dampness from acid rain and mold in here.

"I don't like this place, Harry." Louis' small hands are under Harry's shirt where skin could greet skin and stay warm. "Bad things happen here."

"Stop it." Harry squeezes Louis' hip. "Stop stressing yourself out, Louis. I know this is scary but I'm going to protect you with every drop of my blood."

"What if...-" Louis sniffs and wipes his nose again. "What if you...f-forget?"

That brings a sick smile to Harry's face when he kisses Louis' hair. "I'll forget my own name before I forget to protect you."

It's good enough for Louis and the boy plasters every part of himself to Harry, wanting his mind to be at ease even a little bit as he slept. There was no way of knowing the time so Harry looked out their window to see that night has fallen, staying awake to rub Louis' back and sides. Eventually he too falls asleep.

* * * * *

"Fucking pull out, Reggie." Damon reaches behind him to pull harshly on his brother's hair.

"Yeah? Oh, sorry." Reggie - older by two minutes but more submissive by the mile - rushes to extract his flaccid length.

"Idiot." Damon says it with a fond smile, wrapping an arm around the man's head and pulling him against his chest.

Reggie turns into a pouting teenager despite his twenty-seven years as Rose enters the room and Eleanor stirs beside them.

"Hi." Rose crawls up the king-sized mattress and straddles Reggie's hips.

"Why don't you just fuck off?" Damon glares at his sister, pulling Reggie - who is almost asleep - closer and pushing her off.

"What'd I do?" Rose sees her sister shift and slots herself in next to her naked form.
"You ditched us for that newbie." Eleanor mumbles against her breast.

"Oh, babe. You know I'd never replace you."

"Is he still alive?"

"For the most part." Rose shrugs, kissing Eleanor's lips. "He's in the common room now."

"Why the fuck is he there?" Damon asks loudly. "The manwhore will never make it through the night. Not in this place."

Rose shrugs. She certainly doesn't care.

"Good." Eleanor huffs.

"She always does this." Damon has Reggie wriggling about trying to get comfortable, and is forced as he always is to hold on tight so his brother doesn't go tumbling off the bed.

"Does what?" Eleanor raises her eyebrow as she sits up, gently nudging Rose's arm away so she can straddle her older brother.

"Turns into a bitch about Rose finding a new toy." Damon smirks, his brown eyes reflecting the light above Eleanor's head.

"I do not." She removes Reggie's limp leg from Damon's hip so she can rock her hips down in a way that ran her sex along the length of his slowly hardening erection.

"You brought them here." Damon grabs her hips, and Reggie falls onto Rose's chest unceremoniously.

"Had to. That little one has a gift."

"A gift that we need." Rose adds, groaning when her brother Reggie falls asleep again on her chest. "What about the other one? Did you think he'll just let us have it?"

"No." Eleanor shoves her fingers in Damon's mouth to silence him as she moves her hips. "We'll be taking it all in good time."

* * * * *

Briarville functions against the gradient and standards of a usual state asylum. Every night when the clock above the kitchen stove hits 00h00 to mark the highest point of the moon in the sky, every lock, chain, bolt, door, window, gate will become unhinged. The central locking system has worked under that principle for the past two hundred years since Briarville's establishment. It was a control measure - *population* control measure.

Patients got out of their rooms and wandered into the night, creatures surrounding the area took them apart. It saved the heads of department a lot of trouble at the end of the day because nobody really gave a rat's ass about this institution.

Their private physician and doctor, Dr. Patterson, is a retired GP who once had a life in war crime. He has been conducting experiments on clueless individuals here for years now, and the creatures he'd made of them were the number one cause for deaths outside Briarville's doors. Sometimes inside.

Tonight, only four doors stayed locked after ages of it being just three. The room where the
quadruplets slept, the room of Dr. Patterson, the room leading to their solitary department where the worst of the worst lay and now the room Harry and Louis shared.

The quarters where the nun's slept would be barricaded because for the life of them they couldn't understand how patients got into their room at night to do unspeakable things. Many of the young ladies were attacked by the less suppressable patients and male psychopaths who hadn't laid eyes on a woman for years.

Louis woke from his sleep when the screaming started.

"Harry?" He was relieved to see Harry still there, holding him but asleep. "Harry, wake up!"

The urgency in his tone woke the man up immediately, and he looked up at Louis puzzled until the first cry of a woman caught his attention.

"What the fuck?" He slowly slid Louis off him and made his way to the door.

"Harry, no." Louis didn't want Harry going anywhere near the door when such a threat could be on the other side. "Please, come back."

"I'm right here, darling. It's fine." Harry looks at Louis and forces the howling laughter, feminine shrieking and the guttural noises out of his mind. "I need to see what's happening."

Louis sat curled up on the bed with raining terror in his heart that he tried to soothe. He was still early in his pregnancy and this could be detrimental to Bean's health. He tried to calm himself with thoughts of escaping and going home but if these people knew or now know about their Chicago apartment he doesn't want to go back there. He misses his pets, Bolg and Bundy. He misses them so much, them and waking up to make warm milk at night.

When Harry notices Louis' entered a safe enough head space that keeps him distracted, he looks back at the door only to get the shock of his life. There's someone looking back at him, through the small glass pane and their yellow teeth is visible with the grin they have on. Except they aren't particularly normal. Boils and scarred tissue are all across their face, bald head with the pores enlarged and oily skin reflecting light. Two teeth are knocked out and the corner of their mouth has the faintest trace of something crimson.

Harry doesn't scream or react as a normal human with a regular mental capacity would. He merely frowns and pushes down the surprise to bring over intrigue and hatred. Without stepping forward, he watches the creature tilt its head and stay that way for a whole minute before bursting into a cackle and slamming its hand against the glass. It leaves a sloppy hand print of blood, saliva and come on the surface.

The blood is from the woman in cell 204 who refused to get on her knees when his grunts informed of her of his request. The saliva was from his constant gesture of wiping his mouth whenever some dribbled down the corner. The come was from when he tied the woman from cell 204 up, had his way and left her there with a broken arm and slit stomach.

It was her fault for not listening.

"What is that?" Louis snaps out of his safe, comfort zone and starts to stand up.

"Don't move." Harry instructs curtly. He won't have this creature seeing his Louis at all. "Louis, stay there."

"Okay." Louis shrinks back onto the back with a confused frown on his face.
He struggles to see anything with minimal light and incomprehensible screaming *everywhere*. Chaos. Thoroughbred chaos surrounds him.

Harry's eyes find it difficult not to search and locate Louis, ensure that the boy is perfectly fine - almost. If he looks, the creature will look and Harry can't have that. He remains in a locked stare with the intruder that's locked out, the purple veins showing through transparent skin and bloodshot eyes standing out.

Suddenly Louis screams and Harry *has* to make sure he's okay or try to make it okay, so he looks and the regret doesn't come until after he's figured out the problem. Louis' spotted someone at their window - thankfully restricted by shatterproof glass - who looks like the other creature's sister. Her head snaps from side to side with her nose in the air like she's a rabid dog sniffing the breeze. Harry notes every bit of their behaviour down for later investigation but right now he needed to calm Louis down.

"Lou? Baby, I need you to look at me." Harry gets frustrated when Louis doesn't immediately obey but he does after a few seconds. "Don't look at them."

Hand on his tummy, Louis rushes over to Harry and gets caught with a strong arm before he can trip over his own feet. Harry manages to spin Louis around before he can look at the door and hold him flush against his chest.

"Look. At. Me." Harry says carefully, telling Louis with his tone all that he can't with words.

"O-Okay."

Maybe that wasn't his best idea because Louis' blue, blue eyes as bright as oceans and emotional as someone who loves being protected, being focused solely on him is very distracting.

The creature outside their door banged harder on it, three times one after the other with loud and vicious thuds, so that Louis let's out a shriek. He tries to turn around but Harry holds him straight and firmly.

"What did I say?" Harry held Louis around his shoulders, pressing the boy's face to his neck.

He was not going to get spooked by a fucking science experiment because he had Louis to worry about. He was shaken by the sudden appearance but he's long since managed to control his reactions.

But then there's the a loud noise and glass is spraying everywhere, some tiny shards getting lodged in Harry's back and narrowly missing Louis' face because of Harry's shoulder. The boy screams from the infinite amount of gutwrenching fear, into Harry's shirt with his hands squeezing Harry's arm that's around him.

The one outside their door is laughing with a frozen mouth and bleating laughter escaping. Their window was broken by a rock or broken brick piece, that avoids hitting either of the two occupants when it just dents the metal bars. The echoing beating on their door and shrill cries from outside their window go on for a minute before it just stops.

When they think the attack is over, Harry unclasps his hands from over Louis' ears and closes his eyes as he leans closer. Both their hearts are rabbiting in their chests, replicating the rhythm of the other as nothing but raw discontent flows through them.

"It's alright now, sweetheart." Harry kisses Louis' cold forehead and hugs him close as Louis sobs.
into his chest. "I've got you, darling. My sweet boy, you're okay."

Louis coughs from the rancid smells and cries harder because his throat is sore from a slowly developing flu. He's feeling hot in cold weather and his stomach is always in knots. His baby Bean is so strong.

"D-D-Daddy." Louis stutters and grips Harry's shoulders tighter. "I'm so scared."

"No, not my brave little dove." Harry pulls Louis' face out from under his chin and wipes his dripping eyes and nose with his thumbs. "You were so brave."

Louis starts to shake his head, fresh hot tears flowing down his cheeks. "I wanna go home, Daddy."

"I know, princess. I know." Harry pulls him back in because they both need this, each other's embrace, after such a long day. "We'll be home soon. I give you my word."

Chapter End Notes

read the beginning notes for next chapter as ive put trigger warnings
Chapter Twenty-Five

Chapter Notes

Trigger warnings for this chapter. rape (not Louis) bloody violence, torture, mutations, shock therapy, cannibalism - guess who's back - murder, incest, harryxwoman, straight sex/rape, vulgarity in language and actions.

>>Is it too much to ask for something great?

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Day Two.

There was nothing else to call it because in spite of it being just a day ago that they arrived at Briarville, it felt like an eternity of enduring ill-treatment. Time became infinite and hope dwindled when all you saw was cement walls and madmen.

Harry still put on a smile for Louis that morning when they had to leave their room. He had to make Louis feel safe if he couldn't make him happy right now. His princess is the center of his universe. Everyday, after clean-up for the mess of last night, was breakfast. Louis threw up into their bin the second he woke up, the smell of disinfectant and blood too much for his sensitive stomach to handle. They were mopping the floors outside and Harry noticed that each of the cleaners had gas masks on. He went to Louis' side and held a clean cloth over his nose immediately.

Breakfast was to happen in the common room and Harry watches them hand out pills to every other patient outside the double doors. He walks in with Louis pressed against his chest and takes a moment to notice everyone else already inside.

There's a woman by the window, staring out without blinking and a steady twitch in her finger. She's nearly bald and Harry frowns at the lock of hair peeking out from the corner of her mouth. The man in the corner of the room, banging his head against the wall and scratching his thigh until it's a bleeding gash. The attendant next to him doesn't seem to care.

Another woman has her tongue stuck out permanently and she's sitting on a bigger woman's lap. Harry doesn't dwell on that for too long when he sees that the bigger female's right hand is down the other's skirt.

After those he's done observing these crazies. There's no will of self-preservation, common sense or knowledge. There's hardly an atom of maturity in this room, from patients and workers alike.

"Zayn." He didn't say it. Louis did and now Louis' dragging him along to a double couch near the far left where a small window was.

Harry opens his mouth to keep Louis back but someone grabs his leg and stops him. With a frustrated noise, Harry tightens his hand on Louis' waist and kicks the obstruction away harshly. Louis is the only one who looks down in shock at the person's cry but says nothing. Harry probably broke something with the satisfying crack he heard first-hand.
Zayn is sitting on the couch with his head in his hands, shaking his leg as if impatient about something. Louis looks at Harry with such a worn out and tired look that the man can't deny him. Harry nods but there's a warning in his eye. It might be the three of them against everything else here but he would happily rip Zayn apart for stepping out of line.

"Zayn?"

Louis touches Zayn's hair and the hostile individual reacts by jerking and looking up. Relief floods his face and he rises fluidly to hug Louis like a starved man.

That's enough, Harry decides.

He pries Zayn's arms off Louis' back and pulls Louis closer to his side. While Louis talks to Zayn, Harry is looking around them and documenting all that he can. More patients were inside now and Harry counts at least thirty of them by the time the doors are closed.

"Are you okay?" Louis asks. Harry knows, from the traces of trepidation, hints of fear and feeling of something else, that Louis has been hiding something from him but it's not a vital information bit, rather just a feeling.

"No." Zayn shakes his head, sits back down and begs them with his eyes to sit too. He can't stand being alone. "They're giving them horse tranquillizers."

"What?" Harry sits first - he can see the disgusting stains and he wants to burn everything - and pulls Louis onto his lap.

"Outside." Zayn sniffs and rubs his eyes. He looks like a broken man already. "Those pills are horse tranquillizers."

He takes out one from his pocket and hands it to Harry. It's bright pink and the powder inside smells like chalk.

"What happened last night?" Zayn frowns and bites his lip like he's talking to someone inside his head.

"We should ask you that." Louis takes the pill and throws it over the back of the couch.

"I guess I survived." Zayn laughs brokenly. "What else is there to do?"

"I'm so sorry, Zayn." Louis touches his cheek. "It's my fault we're here and believe me I'd do anything to get you two out."

"Louis, no." Zayn takes Louis' hand and Harry let's him because Louis doesn't look uncomfortable.

"I don't blame you."

"I don't." Harry whispers in his ear. "Baby, you know I'll be following you wherever you go. This isn't your fault, princess."

"It is." Louis bites back tears. "If I wasn't....like this they'd never have come after us."

"What do you mean?" Zayn looks at him questioningly.

"Lou." Harry directs the boy's attention to him. "Bean is a gift. We're going to keep 'em safe and healthy because it's our baby."
"Baby?"

"Louis' pregnant." Harry snaps at him, an ugly hatred tinting his eyes.

"That's why we're here?" Zayn leans back and scowls at him. "You could have fucking told me."

"Nobody predicted a fucking kidnapping, Zayn." Harry wasn't going to fight him because Louis was already scared enough. "It wasn't any of your business before."

"It is now."

"And we told you. Louis' pregnant and that's why we're in this forsaken place. Do you think they'll let you walk out now because you didn't know?"

Zayn groans and throws his head back over the couch's backrest, hands running through his greasy hair. His exasperation is thick, but his exhaustion and sanity is at the brink of collapse.

"I'm sorry, Lou." Zayn apologises to the boy who has his eyes closed and body tucked under Harry's chin for warmth.

"It's okay." Louis smiles at him. "It's more my fault anyway."

"No, it isn't." Harry interrupts again. "Darling, it isn't your fault that people are cruel and thoughtless."

That struck too close to home for Harry and if Louis picked up on that too, he said nothing. He just smiled weakly and sat up straighter with his legs tucked under him.

Even with Harry's words comforting him, Louis still felt deep down where it counted like he was a big disappointment to Harry. He's the cause of this problem and it was eating at him. He didn't pity himself but there was a constant nagging in the back of his mind that said the world would be better - Harry would be better - without a person who trudged with so much baggage. Bean didn't deserve a parent like him either.

"Come back to me." Harry's sweet whisper invaded his thoughts and cut through them.

He looks at Harry briefly, afraid to have the emotions in his eyes noticed by the especially observant older male, before paying attention to the hem of his sweater. He had two, one beige and one white. They'd given him black cotton pants and he was grateful.

"Don't eat what they give you." Zayn suddenly says to them when the metal trays roll in. "I asked for kitchen duty so I'll get us something from there."

Louis looks at Zayn like he's a walking prophecy and it annoys Harry to the seventh pit of Hell. He turns Louis around in his lap, surprising the boy enough to make him gasp and squirm in his caging arms. When he's set back down he lets out a huff of air and rests his head on Harry's shoulder.

Harry watches over Louis' head as the other patients are fed or just handed plates of food. Some react by hurling back, others gobble the disgusting food and Harry's most smug about the chronic masturbator who bends the metal plate and jabs his attendant's leg with it.

"What do you know about this place, Zayn?" Harry asks, his lips hardly moving but voice remaining crisp.

"The four hounds run the entire operation." Zayn sighs and flinches at a memory that occurs to him.
"There's a doctor who came to see me this morning after the attack last night."

"Name?"

"Patterson. Grey hair and yellow teeth. He smells like cigars and ice cream."

Harry nods, scanning the room for anyone who matches the description.

"What was that last night?" Zayn looks from Louis' peaceful form to Harry's stone-carved face.

"That attacked us."

"Don't know." Harry glances at him. "Did you see those.....creatures?"

"It was dark when the screaming started after Rose left me here." Zayn replies. "Locked myself in the broom closet. Didn't help."

"One of those things broke our window."

"From the inside?" Zayn stiffens.

"Outside." Harry corrects. "Whatever they are they were once human."

"Can you be so sure?" The corner of Zayn's mouth twitches into a lifeless smirk. "After everything we've seen."

"We've seen nothing yet." Harry assures him. "But I'm sure."

"Look, Harry." Zayn sighs and reaches out to brush Louis' wrist where it was fist ing Harry's papery shirt. Harry frowns and pulls Louis away from the contact.

"Don't touch him."

"I know you hate me but there's just the three of us here and that means we only have each other to rely on."

"Don't lecture me when you're still learning to keep it in your pants, Zayn." Harry snaps at him.

"For an unfathomable reason Louis wants to help you and it's because of him you're not dead by my hand."

Zayn opens his mouth to say something again but Harry holds up his hands and silences him.

"I won't hate you for the duration of our captivity here but after that we are under no promise to one another. I will kill you the second you lay a hand on my Louis and if what I've observed about you says anything, it's that you're expecting nothing less."

An impressed and undisturbed look makes its way onto Zayn's face but it quickly disappears when an attendant comes to give them plates of food. Harry refuses him and it goes away, since there are direct orders to treat Harry and Louis with cordial respect.

"Why am I here?" Zayn covers his face with his hands. "I'm not crazy."

"Are you implying that I am?"

"Yes."
Harry chortles and he feels Louis shift against him, having fallen asleep so quickly with his arms squashed between them and head on Harry's shoulder. Louis brings his arms up to be secured around Harry's neck and he stretches his legs out in front of him, unintentionally resting them on Zayn's lap.

"I don't mind." Zayn interrupts before Harry can protest. "Let him sleep."

Giving in stiffly and ready at any moment to pull Louis back, Harry lets Louis' small ankles rest on Zayn's lap. It's harmless enough and out of this circumstance he'd have had thrown Zayn onto a busy street. He might have even held Zayn's head down under a speeding tyre.

Not much goes on in the common room during the day. The four siblings don't make an appearance and Harry watches carefully as suspiciously broken windows are repaired. He picks up on the scratches and bleeding bandages some patients have, their dirty nails still scratching away at the dry skin as they dragged their weight across the floor.

"Where do you sleep?" Harry asks when the question pops into his head, his eyes still scanning the room.

"Rose has a bed in her room but I'd never stay with her if I could help it." Zayn replies to him. Harry's absentmindedly drawing shapes with his thumb on Louis' tummy where Bean's pudge lay. It always calmed him down to know a little bit of him mixed with a little bit of Louis and now there's a new life growing up for them to take care of.

"When they took us-" Zayn and Harry were silent for almost two hours. ".-I forgot to check on Niall."

Harry looks at him impassively.

"I don't know what happened to him."

Harry had nothing to say because he wasn't psychic, so he couldn't reassure Zayn, nor was he there to give solid evidence of Niall's whereabouts after the kidnapping. As much as he hated anyone who drew Louis' attention away from him, Harry knows how much Niall meant to Louis.

Stuff only starts to happen around lunchtime when Zayn is forced to work in the kitchen and Harry's left on the couch with a drowsy Louis.

"Hello, my dove." Harry tries his utmost best to make Louis smile at the smallest opportunities.

Louis seems to only realise where he is and shoots up into a seated position with panic in his eyes. It gets dark in the common room and the noises generated by machinery or people is very frightening to hear so suddenly.

"Don't be afraid." Harry speaks like how one speaks to an injured bird. "You shouldn't be scared at all, darling."

"H-Harry." Louis realises that this isn't part of a mirage and he attaches himself to Harry's neck and chest once again.

There was nothing in this place for him except Harry. He was terrified of everything, irrespective of whether it moved or not. Everything seemed out to get him, harm his precious Bean and scar Louis' naïve heart. He only had Harry to rely on and it was yet another thing to feel guilty about. Harry had himself to worry about too.
"Harry, I love you." He whispered it with a dry throat and hoped it was enough to get him some comfort from the man.

"I love you too, my sweet." Harry's back was giving up from sitting straight for so long. It didn't hurt but even he could feel how tired he was becoming.

Louis looks ready to cry when someone crawls near his leg with a chicken bone in his mouth and teeth marks on his arm. He's too sensitive to be seeing this and Harry hides his face in his neck where it was familiar and safe for him.

"Did you dream?" Harry murmurs into Louis' hair that still managed to smell of citrus and vanilla. Louis shakes his head because he knows that mentally unstable individual was still there, looking up at them with childish curiosity. Harry was able to completely disregard them but Louis had a timid heart and wasn't of that nature.

"Let's make a dream then." Harry is firm in his decision to take as much fear off Louis' shoulders as possible.

"H-How?" Louis doesn't think they can. When a person's detained and stripped of hope there's nothing left to do.

"What do you want most in the world?" Harry nuzzles the spot behind Louis' ear where he's always gotten giggles from before.

"To go home." The sadness lingers in his soft voice.

"And I'll take you there." Harry lowers his voice and tightens his grip around Louis' hips as they straddle his waist. "Close your eyes."

Louis hesitates, biting his lip. "I-I'm scared."

"I'm here to protect you, okay?" Harry cups the sides of Louis' face with his large hands, cold fingers grazing Louis' cheekbones. "Not gonna let anything ever happen to my princess or our Bean. Close your eyes, darling. I'm right here."

Feeling braver through Harry's coddling, Louis let's his eyelids close over his eyes. Each time felt like he was shutting out the brightest light, keeping the world from the purest beauty there is.

"What would you like to do when we got home?" Harry wipes the traces of sweat from Louis' forehead and neck with his shirt, places gentle kisses on the dry skin afterwards.

"Shower. I feel dirty." Louis' frowning cutely with his eyes shut and a little worry gone from his mind.

Harry chuckles softly. "I'll be warming some milk for you with that special vanilla essence you can't find anywhere but at the tiny Indian spice shop down our street."

Louis giggles because he's the one who found that essence and wouldn't stand for a substitute. "But I want you to shower with me!"

"Alright then we'll make warm milk together afterwards."

"I wish it was real." Louis opens his eyes and the beast of a burden is somewhat lighter.

"It will be. Soon." Harry vows to make his words a reality. "How's my baby?"
"Sleeping." Louis smiles down at his tummy. "Hasn't been asking for anything."

There's a very good chance that Bean's been making Louis uncomfortable even slightly and experience some cravings, all that were withheld from Harry because the boy didn't want Harry to worry.

"And what about mommy?"

"I'm fine." A confident smile creeps onto Louis' face. He didn't want to say he was hungry. "Where's Zayn?"

"Kitchen duty." Harry curtly answers. It was just them and he hated having to talk about another person. "It's almost two in the afternoon."

"Oh." Louis was just about to ask that. "I thought-"

The loud bang of a door being shoved open and swinging on its fault hinges causes Louis to pause. Everyone else is too corrupt mentally to acknowledge that someone new has entered the room. Harry looks first then Louis turns his head to see as well.

Three out of the four Devil Siblings had just walked in, the ring leader woman with brown hair and her brothers. Louis cringes when he thinks about the fourth component and her obsession with anything of the opposite sex. He feared for Zayn sometimes though he's sure the man can indeed defend himself.

They're spotted by the three from across the room and Harry's body turns rigid with ample tension. His arms turn to bands of steel and he feels so indelicate with someone as soft as Louis in his arms. "At least he didn't bludgeon anyone yet." The woman, Eleanor now written on her badge, says to Harry.

"Good day, Mr. Styles." The first of the boys speaks up - Reggie.

"I thought I was nothing but a patient number." Harry looked pretty lethal as he glared up at the new arrivals. His eyes were blown - he's mastered the ability - until they were just black and the contrast of his pale skin with no sunlight made him look frightening.

"Reggie's always been sentimental." Eleanor's smile is a sickening one and Harry wants to have her do it at just the right time so he can cut it off her face.

"We have business to take care of here." The final component - Damon - rudely adds in. "Could you stop fucking around?"

Since when do doctors speak so disrespectfully? Harry stores this information away for later and stands up, setting Louis on his feet. It's obvious the boy didn't want to be put down by the way he grips Harry's arm and avoids the doctors' eyes at all cost.

"Oh yes. Could you come with us?" Eleanor is all smiles with them, which is a stifling contrast to her mannerisms before.

"What for?" Harry felt stupid asking that but that quickly deteriorated when Louis shuffled closer to him.

"We just want to talk." Eleanor said but the closer to demonic glint in Damon's eye said another story. "To you and Louis."
"We don't have anything to say."

"Are you sure?"

"This baby is none of your business." Harry glares at each sibling in turn, and even Damon's gaze softens. "

"Bit late to get defensive, Styles."

Harry should have seen the jerk of her chin earlier, because now he's being restraint by two men. Louis is yanked away from him by Damon's hand and Harry sees red.

His lip curls in a snarl and given his height advantage over his burdens, easily enough breaks free of them. They grab him again and in the confined space they're in, that too is easy enough. Someone's horrific laugh is echoing and it's driving Harry's levels of madness through the roof. Louis looks petrified and keeps pleading with Damon to let them both go.

That's until they try dragging Harry away.

"Take him to solitary." Eleanor waves her hand and the goons resist Harry's bucking fiercely.

Harry's strong but there's two against one and with an injured left arm he's not at his prime. He looks at Louis with an apology in his eyes but Louis can't seem to handle being separated from Harry any longer. The boy starts to scream, hot tears on his face as arms get wrapped around his middle to keep him back.

"Harry!" He's shrieking and nearly falls to the ground if someone new hadn't intervened. Harry's never been so grateful for Zayn.

Zayn shoves Damon back with outstanding strength - Harry did not see that coming from him - and forms a barrier between Louis and the foe. Harry destroys his inward feeling of annoyance at Zayn's sudden appearance, so that he can shake his head at Louis. He doesn't want the boy hurting himself over this.

"No! Please, please. You can't." Louis ignores him and pleads with the three siblings. "I-I need him. Please."

It didn't sound like when a person was just craving someone's usefulness or presence alone. Louis sounded stricken with desperation. He had a broken look about him, the air around him always exposed to his anxiety. Harry's captors had halted and he uses the opportunity to elbow one of them in the stomach. Methodically, he let's the first male crumble in an effort to keep his lunch down before turning to wrap both arms around the second. The crunch of bone is something musical to his ears before Harry releases the nurse, his neck broken.

Instead of the fumes of anger that should be coming from Eleanor and her posse, there's a very impressed look being housed. Harry feels something collide with his chest and looks down to see Louis hugging him around the middle. Their height difference is a truly wonderful prospect because Louis fits perfectly under Harry's chin.

"An arm broken and he can still do that." The beginning of a storm hits their closest window, not scaring Eleanor even a little as she smirks and Damon whistles. "Imagine what you can do completely able-bodied and on steroids, Styles."

Having witnessed everything, most of the patients are scared shitless as they screech and rock in their chairs. The smell of urine from probably more than one person is slowly filling the air.
"Leave them." Damon says when a couple other employees step forward. "You are not to separate them"

The goons nod in understanding and back away. Zayn looks gutted, swallowing his frown as if pained by the fact that he held Louis' hand once but was so quickly abandoned for Harry. "Ever." Damon reiterates one more time and Harry picks up on something faulty in his tone. "Our business needs completion so if you'd both follow us now."

Harry still doesn't want to be anywhere close with them but he doesn't see an alternative. Kissing Louis' forehead, he mumbles soothing words in the boy's ear.

"Shh, darling boy." Harry drapes his arms over Louis' shoulders and pulls him in closer. "We're okay now, love. I'm right here."

Louis' small hands held onto Harry's waist, gripping tightly like there's no idea more terrifying than being detached. Harry nods over his shoulder at Zayn whose lips twitch into a wry, meaningless smile as he stands there unmoving.

"We have to go with them, Lou." Harry pushes Louis' hair away from his eyes and presses his forehead against Louis'. "It'll be okay."

Louis' tears were dried and Harry kissed away the redness under his eyes, tasting the salt on both sides. He takes Louis' hand next, linking their fingers and encouraging him to walk forward. Louis obeys but doesn't forget to brush Zayn's arm and smile as thanks.

* * * * *

Harry took this chance trip to the siblings' office to learn. He documented every passage and hallway in his mind, creating a three dimensional plan in his mind because that's the only place it could be recorded.

They'd left the common room, went left instead of right - where the rooms were - and used the first staircase to their right. Seventeen steps down and they were now in front of a polished wooden door that's as blank as a sheet. Inside is brightly lit with four tables in front of a panoramic window showing the lawn area - Harry notices how the wrought iron gates run all around that lawn - and a cupboard by the door.

"Sit." Eleanor motions to the chairs in front of each desk. "Anywhere you like."

Harry stood and let Louis sit, guarding his chair because he didn't like not being against a wall where nothing unpredictable could appear. Eleanor sat at her desk, Damon and Reggie at theirs. Eleanor picked up the phone and pressed one number - six, Harry calculates.

"Come down. Bring my sister." She hangs up immediately after, tone clipped and thick with authority. "I take it both of you have a fat lot to ask and say. Go right ahead now before the doctor arrives."

"Why?" Louis speaks before Harry can, echoing his thoughts. "Why us?"

"You have a gift, Louis." Eleanor leans forward, soft smile on her features. "You too, Harry."

Harry frowns at her and makes a distasteful expression. "My gifts are acquired. You can't try harvesting them from me."
He wouldn't call them gifts so much as skills. They're abilities he developed over time, years of learning and mastering.

"No, but we can learn from you." She sits back again. The chair creaks and Harry notices how her posture's tilted to the right.

"I'm not a science experiment."

"You, Mr. Styles, we are not really interested in." Damon speaks above his sister. "Your better half carries something of much more value to us."

Bean. Of course they mean Bean.

"Allow us to show you something."

Eleanor stands and walks around her desk to the unsteady cabinet by the door. She opens one of the sides without a key and then unfolds the second half so that it expands into a five foot something display case, before turning it around. Louis gasps and Harry stiffens.

There were glass block cases filled with foggy formaldehyde. Floating unattached but restricted to the confines of their jars, are baby foetuses.

"One month-" Eleanor stands proudly by the case with the first months marker, a one inch being inside it. "-to nine months."

The last jar held a fully developed baby and it made even Harry feel sick to his gut. The pride in their eyes, the unashamed grins of accomplishment. Louis covered his mouth and looked at his lap, shaking with his revolted response. Harry put his head on Louis' shoulder, having to kneel to do so, and wants nothing more than to touch the boy's tummy.

"They're real, if that's what you doubt." She leaves the cabinet open. "One-"

"C-Could you please close that?" Louis doesn't look at her when he stammers his request.

"Since you were so polite." She latches the cupboard up with a small hook. "A few of our late patients had your gift as well. We didn't know until they fell pregnant. So of course we took these....specimens after their demise."

"You killed them." Harry's eyes were bloodshot and he had to fist his hands to keep them from shaking.

"They stumbled upon unfortunate circumstances." Damon barks. "We made their existence worthwhile."

"You fucking murdered them and took their babies!"

"I see Patterson's fascination with him now." Damon smirks at his sister, just as the office door opens behind Harry. "Speak of the devil."

In walks an older male ahead of Rose. Harry straightens up and inhales deeply to compose himself again, but Louis' hand on his makes his resolve soften.

Patterson is a mid-fifties man with a high forehead and blotchy lips. His skin is freckled and very thin. There's a mole on his left temple but the sideburns easily disguise it.

"I had to walk down sixty eight stairs and- Oh." The man in a white dusty coat stops short when he
sees Harry. "How'd you get him?"

Harry can't help but feel confused and annoyed as a result. He didn't like being the centre of the wrong people's attention. He felt like a helpless creature being identified and experimented on. It was unsettling down to his hard core and it turned his blood to ice.

"It was easier than you'd think." Damon watches Rose round his table and lean against his chair where he's sitting. "Liam did it."

"Thank Divine Providence for that boy." Patterson exhales in some kind of nervous relief. Oh yes. Harry forgot about Liam entirely but now he has a strong dose of revenge to administer.

"Take him and leave now." Damon sits forward, exuding very much an Alpha-like manner, and clears his throat.

"What?" Louis' heart rate picks up and he makes to stand.

Harry looks between Patterson and Damon, both of which seem to have ended their silent communication and are smirking. He doesn't know how to react to this but the quickly heating anger must be an indication of another lashing out session. He curls his fingers into fists, his hard expression turning cold as he resists being touched by anyone.

"Don't fucking touch me." Harry is seething and everyone falls silent at the livid undertone in his voice.

"Problem?" Damon laces his fingers together.

"You said you wouldn't separate us!" Louis cries.

"I said the attendants and nurses were to never separate you but my qualifications and salary set me above them, I believe."

"You lied!"

"I omitted certain facts but this can't be helped. Patterson, do something quickly please."

The doctor speaks and his voice is right next to Harry's ear when Harry hadn't felt him move that close. "He's already resilient."

Harry only saw the needle when it was coming out of his neck.

"What the fuck?" Damon blinks like a dumbfounded idiot.

Harry rushes to Louis who is just a foot away and secures him in his arms. Louis' crying again and his short nails scrape Harry's skin when he clings to the man.

"P-Please don't go." Louis tightens his hold. "I-I can't handle be-being a-alone."

Patterson nods and leaves only to return with four well-built male nurses in white uniforms. Louis sees them coming and he starts to act up again but Harry kisses his forehead - he can't fight this one and win in any scenario - and promises they'll be just fine.

Harry's arms are taken into the strong grasp of two nurses - he felt their reluctance but this is what puts food on their tables - and he shoves them back with it. They'd removed them from around Louis and Harry wasn't ready to let the smaller boy go.
"Hush now, Lou." Harry rubs his back. "You'll be fine."

Meanwhile, Patterson was in conversation with a newly interested Damon. "I gave him twice the dosage Liam used."

"He's fucking fine, Patterson." Damon hisses.

"Exactly! His body is.....unique. It's able to mutate itself and who the fuck can do that? It's never existed in medical history."

Damon glances at the couple briefly. "How'd you know it was him?"

"Middleston had a leak at their nuclear plant twenty years ago. There were only thirteen houses within the plant's hundred mile radius and all the other families are dead."

"That's fucking incredible." Damon sounds in awe. "Find out what he has and get us some. Got it?" Harry gets handcuffed behind his back and Louis cups the sides of his face with tears flowing freely down his own.

"I love you." Louis hugs Harry around his neck like that will anchor him here.

"I love you." Harry is yanked out of Louis' arms and the boy instantly feels cold. "It'll be okay."

"Don't go." Louis' bottom lip quivers again. He knows it's not Harry's fault, that he can do nothing. "I'm coming back. Wait for me, dove."

Louis watches Harry being escorted out of the room and his chest begins to heave from the flood of scary emotions coursing through him. He hugs himself and hopes this is all a terrible nightmare. He's scared down to his bones and all he wanted was Harry to make him feel safe even if it wasn't all that certain. He was hollow without Harry and he couldn't cope much longer with the separation.

"Louis." Damon snaps once the room is silent again. "Sit."

* * * * *

"Have a seat."

Patterson had Harry put into a straight jacket. It was single-handedly the most difficult task he's witnessed that ended in four bloody noses, one of the nurses going into cardiac arrest and one broken wrist.

Harry remains standing with his back facing the door, hair obstructing some of his face and a piercing glare in the forest of his eyes.

"Won't you get tired?"

Harry said nothing. His expression remained as it was - lethal and intimidating - with horrific dark eyes that made Patterson think of Satan's son.

"You don't scare me." Patterson lied. Of course Harry scared him.

Tilting his head towards his left shoulder, Harry contributed greatly to a frightening image of a seemingly harmless person who turns out to be the one drinking your blood.

"Let's get started then." Patterson sighs. "A blood sample please."
Harry was unmoving and the doctor was a little creeped out by this man's ability to be so still. The only sign of life was the blinking of his eyes when they got dry.

The clock ticked and Patterson's pendulum mechanism shuffled onward. Someone's screaming down the hall and Harry doesn't flinch at the sudden high pitch. It was female and getting softer, turning into grunts.

Eventually Patterson rose from his chair and approached Harry with a sterile syringe. He needed Harry's arm but wasn't sure removing the jacket was the greatest idea at this given time. Never minding that, opens his mouth to say what he wanted.

Harry's arms slid out the sides and he dropped the jacket like it was never hooked on him. "How-

There wasn't time to complete that sentence or even think about defending himself, because Harry tripped the doctor so that the older man's head collided with the concrete floor.

The cracking sound made Harry smile.

He climbed on top of the groaning elder, straddling his hips and pinning his wrists under his knees. Harry still had that haunted dark look in his eye.

"A person's opinion on someone else is never viable until you walk around in their skin." Harry mumbles, strung words slotting into one jumbled sentence.

Do it.

What are you waiting for then? We don't have all fucking day!

This is our fix after so long. Make it last.

"So many voices." Harry murmurs, shaking his head and shunning the contradicting ideas in his head.

Patterson watched the younger man above him, the furrow of his eyebrows and the biting of his lip. Harry catches him staring.

"I'm not a fucking exotic creature!" He roars, revealing the scalpel he'd nabbed off the doctor's table when he walked past.

Harry huffs irritably and tears the doctor's clothing - just his coat and shirt - into multiple shredded pieces. He presses the knife's blade to just below his collarbone where the wrinkled skin gathered in flaps.

"Let's start here." He presses harder and ogles the first few droplets of blood, smiling at the screams that beat against his thighs through the vibrations in Patterson's chest.

* * * * *

"How far along are you?" Reggie - he seems to be the most sensible of the four - asks Louis.

"F-Four weeks." Louis stutters. He's already got a bruise on his cheek from Damon and doesn't want another. "I'm sorry. I-"

"You don't have to be scared of me." Reggie reassures him. "I'm not a sadist like my brother."
Louis didn't trust that. Louis didn't trust anyone except Harry, and maybe eighty percent of Zayn. "You're lactating?" Reggie moves on casually.

Louis nods shakily.

"Since when?"

"Three w-weeks."

Reggie sighs. He knows Louis won't be confident around him. "You can't be sad. The baby feels it."

"I'm sad here." Louis replies. "Let us go."

"We will." Reggie even tries smiling. "I promise you that."

Louis shakes his head. "Your brother lied to me."

"I didn't know Damon intended to do that. I'm sorry."

Louis looks up through his eyelashes at the apology, blinking away his drying tears and sniffling. "You have beautiful eyes." Reggie comments.

Gasping, Louis looks back down and shuffles away. Nobody but Harry is supposed to be talking about his eyes and how beautiful - or not - they are.

"You don't like compliments?" He goes on and Louis whines internally. "Everyone loves compliments."

"I-I only like them from Harry."

"Is that so?" Reggie nods with a raised eyebrow. "How sweet."

Louis' interest has piqued, or maybe it's just his maternal instinct to save his baby that's says he should befriend this maniac to get out. "Do you like compliments?"

Reggie smiles at the question as he takes a seat on a rusty old chair with a faded leather cushion. He exhales loudly and watches Louis cautiously. "That depends on who it's coming from. I guess you're right then."

Louis forces himself to smile. "Can I ask you something?"

"I suppose."

"What did the doctor want with Harry?"

"Do you not want to know what I want with you?" Reggie admires this quiet boy's selflessness.

Louis just shrugs.

"Well, Patterson believes Harry is some kind of genetic God." Reggie starts with his hands braced under his chin. "Your boyfriend's cells have the ability to adapt and mutate itself so that once it's exposed to any kind of foreign drug once, it won't allow itself to be affected the second time." Louis did not know this and his eyes widen drastically at this new information. Did Harry know this about himself? He carried himself with great pride but never gave an indication of such a treasure before. Maybe he didn't, Louis concludes.
"It can do the world a great service." Reggie crosses his crow-like legs.

"Is he going to-"

"Kill Harry? No, no. We can't let the only host of those cells die."

So they intended to keep Harry here as a caged captive within these brick walls forever. Louis felt sick to his stomach at the thought of that possibility. He couldn't let that happen.

The telephone rings on a little black steel table next to the chair Reggie was sitting on.

"Excuse me." Reggie picks up the receiver and listens. "Fuck! I'm coming."

Louis jumped at the sudden exclamation, gasping loudly at the volume before settling down to slow down his heart.

"What's wrong?" Louis couldn't help his urge to ask after the call was ended and Reggie looked terribly stressed.

"One of our patients bled out." Reggie is up and grabbing his coat. "We're done today. I'll have someone escort you to your room."

"Not-"

"Not Damon." Reggie assures him without looking up as he dashes through the door like a lunatic.

* * * * *

Many things were happening at once but they'd all lead up to an anti-climactic end depending on whose side you were on.

Harry took care of Patterson. By that he means, he'd skinned most of the man's torso and used a small piece of the frail skin to choke him. The doctor lies dead now in his office while his entire wing is burning by the embers of a single wooden splint.

After setting the curtains and carpet on fire, Harry poured gasoline - he tries not to think about why it was in Patterson's cupboard - down the hallway and marched back down the route he first took with a lit matchstick. The walls burnt and the floor's stone was moistening. It felt like a vortex of some kind with live flames and bright colours of the Phoenix bird.

He checked the time. 17h00. With that knowledge, he hid in the doctor's office until the fire fighters arrived.

Louis was brought back to the common room and he hugged Zayn - now no longer against his better nature - tightly just because he wasn't all that alone after all. Zayn didn't hesitate in holding him back, twice as eagerly but just as delicately.

"What happened, Lou?" He asked. "Where's Harry?"

"P-Patterson." Louis wasn't warm enough and he would never be without the right presence. "I'm okay."

"Sure? Sit down, love."

Zayn helped Louis to sit but the boy hated being so far away from the only other person around he knew so he shuffled closer and sidled up to Zayn's side.
"Hey now." Zayn rubs Louis’ arm. "What about you?"

"I'm fine." Louis sneezes three times consecutively and whimpers at the shocking pain above his eyes.

"Did they give you anything?"

Louis shakes his head.

"What did they say?"

Louis thinks about the display with foetuses. Little innocent babies who never got to meet their parents who would have loved them unconditionally. It sickens him and creates knots in his abdomen the way an energy drink would with too much gas.

"I-I need to um..." Louis motions with his hands to his throat and the rising bile.

Zayn grabs a bin and holds it for Louis so the boy doesn't have to. Louis heaves painfully, throwing up nothing but his own fluids. Setting the basket down, Zayn gets a glass of water from a kind nun and a buttered bread roll.

"Drink." Zayn gives him the glass and Louis gulps it down, savouring the plain but wonderful taste.

"Eat this. You need to eat."

Louis devours the bread roll and smiles at the nun when she comes to check on him. He feels a minute amount better and doesn't even care when a fuss is kicked up all of a sudden.

"All patients to their rooms!" Eleanor rushes into the room, no formal coat and gashes on her hands.

"Right now!"

All employees run to grab ahold of someone and escort them to their rooms again.

"Come on." Zayn waits for the rush to be over, spending that time inspecting the grounds through his window. "We need to go."

"What's happening?" Louis asks, standing up and looking worried.

"Fire." Zayn hurriedly scoops Louis up off the ground, ignoring the boy's shout and leaving the common room.

"Zayn!" Louis squirms around. "I can move on my own."

"Stay still." Zayn knew where their room was and he quickly got there to deposit Louis inside.

"Where's Harry?" Louis got up from the bed the second he was set down. "I want Harry please-"

"I'll get him. Just stay here and don't open this door unless it's Harry or me, okay?"

Louis nods, understanding and closes the door as per Zayn's instruction after he's left. He waits, counting the seconds and waiting for the slightest change in the atmosphere.

Nothing happens and he's left alone for a half hour.

At almost six when everything's dark outside and the shadow of the tree outside stretched frighteningly across the floor, Louis got up and moved around. He rubbed his tummy with a small, reassuring hand. He didn't hear anything besides the usual rant of going shouts, screams and
Suddenly there's a hurried scuffle of shoes and something's being slammed against the door. Louis jumps from shock but quickly relaxes himself and goes to look through the glass pane. There's nothing to see and he remains there, chewing his lip and humming to the memory of a high school John Keats poem.

Outside where the fire fighters have just settled the flames, the nurses are struggling to keep any stories under wraps. Briarville is supposed to be just a kid's scary bedtime story and not pop up in the newspaper after a fire starts in their doctor's office. Eleanor pays the Sheriff and sends him off as quickly as she can. Damon sends every nurse away and says that it's too late now to handle any of the damage.

Louis' still alone when just before midnight strikes. He was asleep the last time and his body is tiring but there's a strong will to stay awake too. Nervously he approaches the door and peeks outside to see all the patients' room doors unlock and open. This is peculiar, especially when his doesn't open.

"I'm sorry, Bean." Louis finds that talking to his bump whilst sitting on the mattress in a dark room was more therapeutic than scary. "When we get out we'll both rest for hours."

He started to recite the poem to Bean, going on about Autumn when John on his last days because tuberculosis was winning over medicine in the early 1800's.

Then the noise outside picked up to near deafening. Louis closed his eyes, not even feeling secure behind a locked steel door. First it's a shriek amongst muted noises, then a string of screams from males and females alike break out. Louis' stomach drops when he thinks about Zayn and Harry. Harry, who promised he'd be back and now wasn't.

Heavy footsteps ensue outside his door but Louis refuses to get his hopes up. He stays where he is, hidden by the shadow of the above bunker and tries not to feel the emotions behind the tears welling up in his chest and eyes.

There's a loud thump and Louis can't fight the impulse to look anymore because the noise sounded so close like it was right next to him. He gets up, pulling his shirt down to keep the warmth around him as he looks through the glass pane.

Someone's looking at him, more like something. It's mutated with boils and scars all across its twisted visage. It bleats a laughter and sticks it's blue tongue out at Louis as if excited about something. Dread begins to fill his insides when they pull themselves aside and another face, bloodied and bruised into unconsciousness, is pushed up against the glass.

Zayn.

Louis takes a step forward, out of a protective reflex, to try and help Zayn but a funny taste fills his mouth and he retakes it backwards again. His baby needs more protection so he shakes his head at the ground, feeling absolute anguish at his cruelty, and releases a few tears.

There's another sound, an echoing thud of something solid on metal. Louis chokes on a sob and stumbles from shock when he follows the source to their window. Their broken window.

This time the foreign, mutated person is female and has he jaw permanently open. She screeches in exchange for a voice and draws back into the night for a split second before she shoves something against the window bars.
Harry.
If something quite unforeseen occurred to separate us, I was always to remember that I was pledged to him, and that he would claim his pledge sooner or later.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Louis looks from the horrific scene at the window to the matching one at his door. It felt twisted, much like the bunch of knots in his stomach. It felt like they were mocking him, goading him to make a choice. He hated the stress and he was bucking painfully.

The bleating laughter that came out in waves, the fading lights of a fire truck, the screams of tortured innocence from all around. His breathing laboured and the cold fear started to flood his body from head to toe.

They were still waiting when suddenly a brick came down on the male mutant's head. The woman outside saw everything and became frantic, dropping Harry's unconscious form and dashing off. Louis rushes to his door, unlocking it to reveal Zayn crumbled on the ground and a horrific scene on the floor.

The male attacker's skull was bashed in, splatters of blood sprayed across the walls and tiles. A woman had done it, a normal human woman who owed Louis and Zayn nothing. She straddled his back and kept on hitting until there was a dent in the floor. Her rage was too great and the adrenaline running through her was phenomenal.

What did they do to people here? This is cruelty.

The echo of a shrill cry coming from Louis' left had him snapping back to reality. The female mutant had her eyes set on this lady and Zayn hadn't moved an inch on his own yet. Louis has no massive strength and can't do much besides drag him into the room.

Flickering light bulbs in dish-like holders was above them, and blood from different creeds of people dripped at their feet. Louis felt a special kind of fear, of illness bubble in his chest as he just manages to get Zayn inside. He hears the woman's scream getting closer and she's probably coming for the patient who killed her partner, but Louis fell to the floor and started crying anyway.

These conditions are far past too much for him. What was he doing here? He should be at home where there's an alarm and security company. Where Harry is, safely locked up in circumstances they were both familiar with. The stress of Niall, who he doesn't know the whereabouts of, of an unconscious Harry outside that he can't get to, of being pregnant in such deplorable conditions, makes Louis grieve.

He wants to go home and would give anything for that.

When the woman starts to scream, finally at the mercy of the mutant's partner, Louis screams louder with hands over his ears to block it out. Block it all out.

In his wrecked state, he forgot to lock the door and suddenly it's being pushed open slowly. He doesn't even care about being dragged off anymore. Death sounds peaceful when staying in a place like this is the alternative. Louis leans against Zayn's side and sobs into his shirt, at a loss for everything coherent.

A hand touches his shoulder and he doesn't fight it. What's he going to do anyway? He's small and
"Lou." But fate had other plans.

Louis sighs in relief, overwhelmed by the warmth of this familiar voice, and jumps to his feet. It was the first intake of air after drowning and the feeling of relief when a beached sea creature makes it back home. It was undoubtedly happiness, and fond affection in its purest form.

Harry isn't smiling but he's not severely injured enough to reject Louis' hug. Louis ignores laws of personal boundaries and wraps himself around Harry, legs perched on his hips and arms locked around his neck. Harry's cheek is bloody and his bandage needs redressing but he's so strong and Louis owes everything to Harry.

"I wanna go." Louis mumbles into the man's dirty neck. "I wanna leave, Harry. Please."

"I'm getting us out." Harry inspects Louis for any injuries. Even when he's a walking mess, he puts Louis well above him.

"I can't take it here."

Louis' eyes sting from the salt on his hot skin but that's not pain. Pain is losing the only person you trust, watching them being taken away.

"I-It's not healthy." Louis swallows and Harry's shirt rips at the seam a little. "I want our Bean to be healthy and Harry, I don't trust these people. What are those things outside?"

"Look at me, sweetheart. Good boy." Harry praises. "Tomorrow there's a storm coming and the men who were here today are coming back to deal with what they left behind. I promise we'll be walking out those gates tomorrow."

Louis shouldn't feel like all the hope in the word is lifting his shoulders and all will be well after tomorrow. He should be guarded because if these people got him here, they can bloody keep him here.

"Okay. I trust you." But Louis' always one for a gamble.

"How's my baby doing?" Harry goes for a subject change.

"Fine." Louis sounds tired, emotionally unsatisfied and physically drained.

"And mommy?"

There's a soft smile that makes it to Louis' lips but the dead, broken look in his eyes overshadows it. "I'm so proud of you, princess." Harry knows how much Louis loves praise, needs it most when he feels like everything is caving in. "You've kept our baby healthy even through this. You're so strong, my dove."

"You took care of us, Haz. I'd never be able to do it on my own."

They hadn't showered in two days and Harry gave every bit of a meal opportunity to Louis because he knows Louis needs it more, that he's eating for two.

"You need to be in bed now, okay?" Harry says it and immediately Louis starts to fuss. "I'll be right here with you the whole time. I promise."

"Help Zayn!" Louis couldn't sleep when one of the two people here who had his best interests at
heart, was struggling to breathe on the ground. "Help him please."

There was a fine-tuned and well understated burn now being driven up Harry's nervous system to the pit of his mind where it will linger, fester until he's ready to exact revenge upon the motive. He nodded beside that burn, that crippling disposition, and helped Louis onto the bed first.

"Rest here, my lovely dove." Harry cradles both sides of Louis' face, pressing a firm kiss to his forehead.

Thankfully the traumatising noises from the without surroundings, has been muted by their heavy door. Just the glass pane allows a quick glimpse out into what they'd be apart of had that door not been there. It should end soon, if Harry's previous single observation of it lasting just a half hour is correct.

Harry hauls Zayn onto a mattress on the floor at the foot of the bunk beds. Zayn stays unconscious, even when Louis wipes the blood from his mouth and eyebrow.

"Come here, darling." Harry opens his arms for Louis to settle between.

Louis puts his head in his hands against Harry's torso, closing his eyes and just letting the darkness of a strong slumber take over him.

**HARRY'S POV* (It's been so long)

There are those who are built to survive. They are few, but that's exactly why they are survivors. Whenever there's a threat, something about to wipe out all that they love, there's a fire ignited within them that is powerful enough to keep them going and others, through the pain and devastation.

Then there were those who hesitated and got themselves hurt. They needed protection and very rarely did they end up in the arms of said suitor. They would succumb to the cruelty of this world, of the black innovation of this generation, and die alone.

No matter how much science spoke of advancement and of success in any aspect, every emotion and every feeling was deep-rooted in the primal instincts of a savage being. To survive. To fight and salvage. To save yourself first. To love and be loved.

They are emotions ranging from dark to pure, and we all have them. Each and every one of us irrespective of any difference will have those default instincts to rely on when push comes to shove. There aren't just two types of people in this world. There's over seven billion types, and counting, because an individual can be nothing but themselves even if it is just to emulate and imitate. There's also no such thing as hope. It's yet another feat of survival, and even for that it can only last so long. Struggle to live for a day? Two days? When you're worrying about two other people who depend solely on you, even less than that.

It breaks what hollow vessel of a heart I possess, to watch my Louis' heartbroken face each time we're separated. He's stopped screaming and trying to get me back to him, but when we're reunited none of the vigour is lost. He holds me just as hard, kisses me just as lovingly, and listens to what promises I make just as attentively.

The storm didn't come and chaos didn't ensue to a high enough degree that I'd be able to get us out. The fire fighters came, rebuilt the wing I'd torn down by flame, and left with a bribe to not inform the city. Louis didn't fuss or argue, he just crawled into my arms that night and told me he loved me. That was eighteen days ago.
Since Patterson's death, Zayn's been forbade from seeing us by the resident slut unless in the common room. Louis misses him and I see that, as I've grown used to Zayn's strange methods of comfort for my boy. When Zayn wasn't being a deplorable human being, he was quite simple. Louis' been to twenty appointments with Reggie and I've been there with him, now that Patterson is a no-show. The bastard had an arbitrary fascination that went with him to the oven and now I was no better than the rapist who licks his lips whenever he spots new meat.

Friday nights are movie nights but it's not compulsory to sit through a three hour documentary about how an almighty presence exists and how he fucking loves us all.

"Are you hungry?" I have a sleepy Louis caged in my arms where he was safe, his eyes closing slowly.

"No." His 'hope' became 'no' three days ago, when all he could do with a strong mind is rest and eat.

"Sweet boy." I hated - it's a given that I hated most things but this was the most gutwrenching - seeing Louis so lost for something that could make him content.

His nose nudges my Adam's Apple, signalling to me that he's listening, and looks away from the surrounding people. The air was thick with dust here, and he continually complained about how his eyes would itch then they'd hurt from his rubbing.

"Bed time?" I ask him and he nods. "Do you want to walk?"

He nods again, probably keeping in mind that a little exercise was good for him. Zayn is always sad to see us leave and I'll admit even I pitied the lad, for he had nothing to go back to. He'd just have his body used, abused until a little bit more of his dignity was placed on Rose's trophy shelf.

"Bye, Lou." Zayn released Louis' ankles that always rested on his lap, and no other region, a sad look haunting his goodbye smile.

"Night." Louis stands, one hand caught in mine and the other extended towards Zayn's cheek.

"Watch the movie. Tell me what it was about."

It was Louis subtle way of warning Zayn to spend as much time away from Rose's quarters tonight. Zayn nods, letting us leave him on the couch by his lonesome.

"Alright there, love?" I have one hand on the small of his back, urging him along the hallway first. Louis nods, reaching up with the ball of his palm to rub his eye. It's either triggered by tiredness or a fleck of undesirable dust that's fallen into his eye, but I stop him still.

"Darling, it's only going to get worse if you do that. You know this." I try not to sound like I'm scolding him because he's just gotten through the half mark in the first trimester, and Bean's still on shaky waters with the conditions we're under.

"Sorry." He mumbles, lowering his hand and trying to blink away the itch.

"Not your fault, love." I had to tell him, remind him that this isn't his fault. "Let's get that eye washed out, okay?"

He immediately shakes his head and tugs on my hand when I turn towards the bathroom.

"You don't want to go?" I question.

Louis had a bad experience in these bathrooms. He had gone in ahead of me and some lunatic
dressed as a clown - the red 'paint' on his nose was lipstick and his clothes were colourful because he tore several shirts and stitched it together. Louis screamed loud enough to alert the nurses and he didn't stop shaking until late into that night.

"I'm coming with you." I assure him. "You know I'll protect you."

The above has become a kind of default sentence, and it was far from intentional. All my vows and promises have been broken because each of my chances were stunted. It's a miracle that Louis still trusts me so much, even if it is hanging on by a gossamer thread.

There's no nightmare clown in the bathroom and Louis calms down quickly after I've checked every stall. He stands by the basin with his eyes closed while I fill a cup with warm water.

"Open up." I kiss the spot between his eyebrows.

I wash around his eye and since we don't have salt, I wet a ripped portion of my shirt with hot water and hold it over his closed eyelid.

"Blink." I tell him and he obliges. "Does it still hurt, love?"

"No." He smiles gratefully up at me and his blue, blue eyes are gems of pure minerals in this dark ditch. "Thank you."

"You're very welcome."

A clap of thunder rolls out and the bathroom is temporarily illuminated by lightning. Louis doesn't flinch like he used to whenever there was a storm. It's painful to witness him becoming desensitized.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

It's somewhere between the bathroom's entry way and the safety of their room door that it happens. First, what little service the dying lights hanging above them goes out. Then there's a cry. Not a baby's wail or a grown-up's shout, but a haunted screech that grows from broken musical note to bone-chilling cat shrieking.

Louis' lost a good amount of his sanity to the screaming he's done, and so when Harry's pulled off him he feels like his support structure's gone but he's too frozen to react. The paralysis proves to be more lethal than screaming, because something heavy and dense collides with his tummy. He falls to the ground in a heap of pain and tears.

The lights come on for a fraction of a second, and Louis sees a brick lying by his side, dusty from hitting the ground so hard. He screams and searches for Harry but a spidery hand grabs his wrist and it's not male at all. Harry's there, because he's shouting Louis' name.

Again the lights flicker and Louis wishes it hadn't. In that brief moment he saw Harry being restrained by two male attendants, bucking under their constraints and his eyes set on Louis. The last thing Louis sees before a comforting sleep - a promise to erase his pain - takes over, is a whole lot of red seeping through his trousers.

* * * *

Everything that happens to Harry after he's dragged - literally held by his arms and legs and shovelled through many corridors - away from Louis, comes in bright flashes. Like those lights are still flickering and only allowing him slight glimpses of what's happening, like the lightning outside
is being especially cruel.

Fuck Mother Nature, he concludes.

The first flash is not sight but sound. The noise of a machine too close for comfort, and leather straps around his limbs as he's tossed on a bed. It's too thin, no mattress and something's being fitted onto his head. He screams and moves erratically, violently shoving people away but they gladly take the beating because he's already tied down.

The light comes first when his vision returns after a long blackout, and he sees lots of people hovering above him, asking questions and there's even a nun here looking sympathetically at him. She's reading from her beads and Harry wants to hang her with them.

There's cold gel being put on his temples and Harry knows exactly what this is now. "Fuck-" He struggles more. "-get off me!"

Nobody listens and the nun closes her eyes tight, her prayers becoming louder. Harry's mouth is gagged so he can't shout anymore, and when he tries to spit it out they secure it around his head with elastic.

There's a sick buzzing noise and two prongs are placed on his forehead before the charge rushes through him.

He can't think, can't exercise his brain and because of that tiny bits of it start to slip away.

Memories, skills. They go down a black hole when his back arches and the veins in his neck stand out painfully. He doesn't feel the pain, because it's lessened to a shocking tingle at his spinal column but the effects are greater on him.

* * * * *

Louis wakes up to a dull throbbing on the inside of his skull, and a nagging stomach ache. He tries sitting up but it just worsens and then he decides to open his eyes.

The white surrounding him is blinding, cruelly bright and all around this strange bed he's on. The memories rush back to him and he gasps, throwing the cover back so he can inspect his tummy. There's a long gash across his lower abdomen, sealed neatly under a strong bandage. He starts to panic, worrying about Harry who he didn't see recently, who isn't here now. He looks around and sees someone bent over an empty medicine cart, hiding their face in their arm.

"Zayn?" Louis' voice is a croak and his throat hurts like sandpaper.

The person shifts and looks up, indeed revealing Zayn's relieved face. Leaving Zayn to scramble to his feet and come to his side, Louis starts to realise that he hasn't been inside this room before. The bed is comfortable and the pillows don't smell of urine. There are windows, blinds closed but neat and reassuring.

"Where are we?" Louis swallows his saliva and looks around frantically. "Zayn, I don't know this place."

"It's the sanatorium, Lou." Zayn tells him, crouching by Louis' head and taking his hand. "They had to call a real doctor to take care of you."

"T-Take care? What happened?" He gets a flash of memory. The brick, the blood. "Oh God-"
"No, no." Zayn stands and hugs Louis, stopping the boy's tears. "The baby's okay. Just fine."

Louis wipes his worrying tears away and Zayn uses his thumb to catch one. "A-And Harry?"

"Haven't seen him yet." Zayn sits on the edge of Louis' bed. "He's fine, Lou. They took him for therapy."

"Harry doesn't need therapy." Louis coughs into his fist. "I-I need him."

"Yes, Lou. I know." Zayn rubs his back in the meanwhile. "Relax now."

*HARRY'S POV*

My head as though should be hurting. It should be howling with agony, screeching like metal again the sensitive grey matter of the brain. Incidentally, it feels like I'm doped up on enough morphine to drug out my impending pain forever. Doesn't mean the discomfort's not there.

"Styles." There's a disgruntled voice addressing me and I turn towards it.

A female with long brunette hair, a stern and annoyed look on her face with deep brown flames where her eyes should be, is leaning closer. Her presence is disconcerting and I frown deeply at her.

"Sorry about the...therapy session." She clears her throat and checks something on her clipboard.

"It was a mistake."

It's a lot less sensible that it should be. What therapy? She probably means the numbed excruciating pain in my head, feeling of loss when I'm not sure of what I've lost.

"What did you use on him?" She asks someone else, someone too far away for me to see.

"Sixty."

The look in her eyes harden and she stares at them for a long while, deliberating something. I watch her bite her lip then motion to the man who came with her. Quickly, it returns to me. She's Eleanor and he's Damon, two of four siblings that run this mad institution.

Their asylum.

Briarville, that's where I am. How did I get here? Kidnap, as I remember, by someone I'm supposed to trust.

"Kill him." She says next.

Me? I peer up at her in vile agitation, only to soon realise that she meant the man who said what he'd used on me. Sixty? Sixty what? Techniques? Methods? This is therapy after all.

No wait. This was shock therapy. They sent electricity through my body in the hopes that they'd roast me alive, the bastards of arrogance. A lethal rumble releases from my chest and I glare at the attendant who is hauled out of the room and his screams are ignored like a Sunday musical. Wonderful.

"Sixty should have fried his brain." Damon tells her, stepping closer to her and me.

"He's stronger than that." She snaps at him. Why does she care so much? Why am I not speaking?

"What is your name?" Damon ignores her and directs his question to me.
There's a dryness in my throat, even my saliva won't lubricate the passage for my voice. "What the fuck did you do to me?"

"He's fine." Damon sighs with relief.

"We still have to check." Eleanor pushes him aside and sets her clipboard down. "Where are you, Harry?"

This is enough.

"Fucking untie me!" I roar, and smirk inwardly at how she jumps back.

"Yeah, he's fine." She puts a hand to her chest, slowing her heart rate. Two nurses step up behind Damon and Eleanor puts her hand up. "Leave him restrained."

I growl and tug hard on the straps around my wrists, where my skin is broken and close to bleeding. I feel like something is missing, like I'm missing something.

"Do you need anything now?" Eleanor asks, whether to be hospitable or test out another theory of hers. "I won't be asking again."

Looking away, I smother as much of my face into the pillow as I can. My mind was tired and it was starting to dawn on me. There were many things drifting about that needed permanent placing and it seemed only sleep could deliver that.

"Give him some meds." Is the last thing Eleanor says before leaving with her vindictive other.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Zayn manages to sneak two bread rolls and a peach into the sanatorium from the kitchen. Louis' been awake but drowsy for a day now, in the hours that he was conscious. He slept for almost ten hours to rest himself under the nun's supervision.

"Here. Eat this." Zayn offers the first bread roll to Louis.

"Thank you so much." The boy smiles gratefully at him, he hates eating the tasteless soup offered to him everyday.

He tears the roll in half and gives one piece back to Zayn, only to be refused. "I ate already. This is yours."

Louis looks down at the offering and begins nibbling away at the warm crust. They must have only baked a few batches today, as they usually did on occasion.

"How are you-"

"Have you seen Harry?" Louis cuts across Zayn accidentally, but doesn't retract the question. He needs to know.

Zayn's expression sobers to one of hidden emotions: regret, secrecy, doubt. "No."

Louis knows he's lying and quizzes Zayn further. "Zayn, please-

"I'd always be honest with you." Zayn looks him in the eye, those depth-filled blue eyes he has memorised. "So if I don't share something with you, it is for good reason."
"That's not for you to decide, Zayn." Louis frowns at him. Not even Harry does this to him.
"Then who will decide for you?"

"I decide for me!" Louis instantly regrets yelling as a pang is suffered in his lower left side.

"Please don't stress yourself, Lou. This baby needs you to be healthy and strong for you both."

"I need Harry, Zayn." Louis looks down at his lap where he's had the blanket pulled back so his bandage isn't cooped up, the warm skin of his tummy is exposed.

"I know." Zayn draws back in his seat. "I know, Lou."

* * * * *

*HARRY'S POV*

"Harry?"

There's something wrong in this voice. It's not the voice that commands my heart, the details of my decisions. It's female, not feminine. High-pitched, not gentle.

"Never thought I'd see the day when you were tied up again." She speaks again and now it's closer, very much discomforting.

"What do you want, Rose?" Given, my mind is still recuperating, but I'm not bitch weak and unable to decipher anything.

"They told me you lost your memory." She comes to sit at the foot of my bed between the edges where my ankles are locked in place.

"Did you want me to?" I look at her, unimpressed and bothered.

"Little bit." She giggles, and it's not endearing enough. What is this comparison I'm always making?

"Why?"

She shrugs. "Would've made this easier."

"This?"

"What's your favourite flower?"

"Certainly not the rose." I scoff, satisfied with the hurt upturned expression she grows.

"Still as cold, I see."

Odd for her to say that. I don't remember being too friendly with her at all. "The amaranth."

"What?" She looks up.

"My favourite flower."

It makes her smile and part of me never wants her to smile, so I say something else. "Are we done?"

"Sweetness-" She shakes her head while she laughs, picking up the ends of her dress so she can crawl up towards my hips. "-we're just about getting started."
Rose's hips finally stop rotating, ending my torture and hopes for demise, and I feel her clench around me. It's undoubtedly the worst feeling I've ever experienced, even when put next to every sexual experience I'd ever had. She has her hands on my chest, nails pressing indents into my skin and it feels like a raven settling its claws into my flesh.

"I really wish-" She has her lip caught between her sharp teeth, looking down at me like I'm her personal sex toy. Poor Zayn. "-Louis hadn't chosen you."

Louis? My heart drops past the floor to bury itself. *My Louis.*

He's the comparison I've been making, the final piece of my shady memory sticking to its place. The sweet voice and the soft skin, the cute giggle and touch of magic.

It feels like a cannonball throwing memories back at me. The first time seeing Louis, our first conversation, our first times doing everything else. What he felt like, what he sounded like. The music he likes, the stories he told me, our fights and when I broke under guilt. When he was taken from me, by these bastards and how he's taken again.

Looking from the ceiling to Rose, I allow a slow smile to creep onto my face. "You did one thing right."

"Yeah?" She probably expects praise for her sexual prowess, wriggling her hips with me still caught inside her.

I put my hands on her waist and count to ten. "You untied me."

I flip us over, thanking her silently for releasing the restraints on my ankles as well, and hold her down on the rickety bed. She looks confused at first, then her mistake hits her and I smirk proudly down at her.

"You enjoy this." I sit up, tying up her wrists and getting off her to complete the thick leather strap around her middle. "Someone to fuck you? I can get you that."

"What-"

"Shut up for once." I snap, fetching a rag from the table to shove down her throat so it couldn't be spat back out. "And wait right here."

She screams but it's muffled remarkably by the rag in her mouth. I pull on pants from the set that's placed on a chair by the door, and step outside to make a trip to the common room. I place this room on the second floor, one above my destination, and one corridor away from the sanatorium.

When I return to the room where Rose chose to molest me, I have a friend with me. The sight of him makes Rose scream louder than her lungs can handle and has to stop, along with her struggling, before her voice is completely ruined.

"Have fun." I lean close to her ear and clasp Donald's, the rapist clown who just got in. "You too, Donald."

Donald is confused at first, especially when Harry walked up to him and offered him a present, but now he's very pleased and even hugs Harry. It doesn't matter that Harry smacks him hard enough for him to stumble, because he really likes this present.
Harry takes the key card from Rose's belongings before he walks out, using it to lock the room and then shove it in his back pocket.

* * * * *

Louis' let out of the sanatorium just two days after he was put there, when he's hit seven weeks pregnant. The brick was almost fatal to both him and Bean, but by a miracle's chance a surgery was performed and stints were inserted so both baby and mommy were safe.

In those two days, Louis saw nobody except Zayn and Reggie. No nurses or nuns were allowed to attend to him, just Reggie. Zayn stayed with him from the moment he woke up to well after he fell asleep.

"Thank you." Louis muttered quickly to the older male who was holding his hand and waist.

"Don't thank me." Zayn smiles back. "Where do you want to go?"

"Harry. I want to see Harry."

Zayn had been recently informed of Harry's state and he doesn't think Louis can handle meeting him now when his mind and body are still fragile.

"Lou-"

"No." Louis shakes his head. "I need to see him, Zayn. Please."

Zayn nods, tightness in his jaw because he was right here looking out for Louis but the boy saw right past him at a man who wasn't even here.

When entering the common room, an arm secured around Louis' waist half for peace of mind and half for the satisfying of an urge, Zayn did not expect to see Harry leaning against the window in the spot they've claimed with a cigarette in his hand. Zayn didn't expect him to be here at all.

Louis' the first to move, and he weaves through all the pairs of hands reaching out for him, to get to Harry whose back is to them. He touches Harry's shoulder carefully, and the man stiffens before turning around. Zayn stays put at the door, watching in case Harry isn't fully recovered and does something heinous.

"Lou."

Harry's first word is a breath of relief and Zayn can hear it, feel the radiant abundance of joy coming off Louis and he knows now he can never put that smile on Louis' face. Only Harry can.

"My darling Louis." Harry cages Louis' body in a warm embrace. "I love you so much."

"I know." Louis smiles through tears. He's been crying an awful lot. "I love you too. I missed you."

"That's over now." Harry tosses the cigarette without a care and covers Louis' mouth with his own. "How's my baby? Lou, I don't remember much about what happened."

"You don't? Why n- oh God."

It dawns on him as the flashbacks return. They would have thought Harry threw that brick to hurt Bean because Louis doesn't remember seeing anyone else. This is an asylum, a home for the mentally broken people, and it's so far off the grid that their techniques of treatment must be medieval.
"Oh no, Harry." Louis brushes Harry's hair away from his face and tears slip down his face when his fingers glide over the ruined skin, burnt circles, at his temples. "Haz. I'm so sorry."

"No, no, baby." Harry refuses to lay the blame on his sweet boy when they've been apart for so damn long and he has such good news to share. "I'm fine. How is Bean?"

"Bean's okay." Louis smiles, crinkles at the corners of his eyes and Harry's reminded about what he lives for.

"Good." Harry kisses Louis' forehead. "I have something to tell you."

"What's that?"

"Rather-" Harry cups the side of Louis' face and stares into such perfect, innocent shades of ocean blue. "-let me show you."

Louis doesn't understand what could be so fascinating, so important that a smile is tugging at the corners of Harry's mouth. Nonetheless, he holds Harry's hand and follows him through the double doors that leave the common room. Zayn's standing there, leaning against a pillar with his eyes glued to the scruffy shoes he's wearing. Louis grabs his hand and smiles when the man is startled.

"I am finally delivering on my promise to you." Harry leads Louis, who has Zayn following them, past the first hallway and into the reception.

"Haz?" Louis is scared now. What is he doing?

"Come."

Harry shows them the front doors and there's nothing special about that, but nobody's stopping them and nobody's screaming for their lives. There's even a cab outside and Louis almost starts to cry. This has been his dream for weeks, and now it's happening.

"Really?" Louis has to release Zayn's wrist and face Harry. "H-How?"

"I was too passive before. I made too many plans." Harry holds the door open and Zayn walks through the other one. "This time, I made one phone call and that freed us. Rose is probably torn apart now, Damon's dead and so Eleanor. Reggie can come home from his hunting trip and find them."

Louis gasps, stepping out onto the staircase and taking large gulps of fresh air. There's a field ahead of them, and the main iron gates are wide open. He puts a hand on his tummy and uses the other to pull Harry down for a thank you kiss. ' "Who did you call?" Zayn interrupts their moment.

Harry lifts his head and smiles in a lopsided way, the strong wind blows his hair in his eyes and he chews his lip. "I called Niall."
Chapter Twenty-Seven

Chapter Notes

It's all an illusion

_Pain demands to be felt. - An Imperial Affliction (not The Fault In Our Stars)_
_I want to be lost in your darkest everything._

*NARRATOR'S POV*

"Niall's waiting at the airport for us." Harry informs Louis and Zayn after paying the cab driver.

He's conveniently taken back everything - and more - of what's his followed by what's owed to him. That excited Louis, because it feels like he's been away from all the things he's always so familiar with for so very long. Louis still isn't sure whether Zayn was part of the deal in leaving Briarville, but he's not going to let him go back there ever.

"Who took care of all this?" Louis asks Harry, holding his arm and whispering in his ear.

"Your blond friend was all too thrilled to have my credit card details." Harry whispers back with a side smirk.

Louis smiles because of course Niall was. He turns back to make sure Zayn's still there, looking gravely uncomfortable but manages a smile for Louis when the boy checks on him.

"You okay?" Louis can't rotate his entire body since Harry has him plastered to his side.

Zayn nods jerkily. "Yeah."

They board a flight in their current dishevelled state, and none of them seem to care about the odd looks being passed around about them. They look homeless, and homeless people don't belong in first class.

"It's just an hour flight." Harry makes Louis sit by the window at the wing. "Sleep if you want to."

Louis' slept a lot these past days and weeks, but it was never relaxing or soothing the way sleep should be. He knows he'll just be grumpy if he only gets an hour nap, so he opts to stay awake.

"I feel sick." Louis swallows the foul taste in his mouth and as a reaction, his body provides him with a pulsating headache.

"You need motion sickness pills." Zayn says in advice. "It's the baby."

Harry buckles him in even though Louis can do it himself, and gets him a bottle of water just after take off. There are no special pills for Louis, and Harry won't have him shovelling random tablets just because there's a 'what if' scenario.

"Drink this." Harry gets the water bottle with a nozzle at the top because Louis' previously complained about any other type hurting his teeth.
Louis swallows a good amount of water and it settles the queasiness in his tummy at least.

"Close your eyes." Harry allows Louis to rest his head on his shoulder. "How do you feel, baby?"

Louis hums, feeling comfortable like this, and smiles when Harry slips his hand into Louis'. Damp lips are pressed to his knuckles and Louis retaliates by kissing Harry's jaw.

The flight lands close to fifty minutes later, and Harry's the only one who was awake for the entire time. Zayn fell asleep at an awkward angle, his head hung off his shoulder almost as if it was detached completely. When the seatbelt sign goes out above their heads, Harry starts to wake his companions up.

"Lou?" He unbuckles Louis' seat while the other passengers get off. "Get up, love."

Louis blinks lazily and smiles at Harry when the first thing he sees is Harry's face inches from his. He reaches out to touch Harry's cheek, feel if he's real at all. He blushes when it's all true and Harry kisses his nose.

"We're going to see Niall now, darling." Harry knows that's enough to wake Louis up all the way. Louis' smile broadens into a grin and he stands up immediately, keeping one hand in Harry's while Zayn stretches in the isle.

"Zayn!" He whines at the older male who is definitely delaying them on purpose.

"Calm down, love." Harry says, hands braced on Louis' sides. "Zayn woke up after you."

"Sorry, Lou." Zayn apologises absentmindedly and begins the trek towards the door.

The airport terminal is buzzing with people and Louis finally gets a glimpse of the time and date. March seventh, 15h56. The information depresses him. March seventh? Has it been that long? It's a crushing thought and reminder.

"Can you see him?" Louis wants to distract himself and asks both Harry and Zayn if they've spotted Niall yet. He's anxious to be reunited with his best friend.

"Is that him?" Zayn points to an individual by the juice bar. His back is to them and he's got a grey golfer's hat on.

"It's Niall." Louis confirms. "He loves that place and his mother got him that hat."

Just knowing these things about Niall is making Louis giddy, and he forgets about Harry's hand in his when they're close enough to the juice bar's still mascot. Niall turns around first after placing an order and is struck dumb by Louis rushing towards him.

"Niall!" Louis traps the boy in a bear hug, arms around Niall's neck as he rests his weight on him.

"Louis!" Niall cackles, mimicking Louis' ecstatic tone, before welcome the embrace and holding his best friend. "I missed you."

Louis wants to cry but he tries to be a big boy about this. "I missed you too."

He has to pull back when Harry and Zayn both make it to the front counter of the juice bar, silently astounded by Louis' ability to move through a crowd to gracefully. Niall hugs them too even if Harry goes rigid and Zayn seems shocked.

"How you doing, Psycho?" Niall releases Harry - even a man as bold and intimidating as him is not
immune to Niall's hugs - and beams up at him.

"I'm changing my pin number." Harry frowns, not at all in tune with all this affection, and pushes Niall away. "Get off me."

"Haz." Louis chastises him. "Don't be mean to Niall."

"He makes me uncomfortable."

Niall has laid claim on Louis, as he has worsened his security regimen now. He keeps an arm looped through Louis' while he talks to Zayn, the poor lad looks sick to his stomach with something foul.

"You look constipated."

Niall stands in front of Zayn, peering up into dusty brown eyes under long lashes. He's forgiven Zayn for almost breaking his heart a long time ago, because he doesn't believe in holding grudges.

"Thanks." Zayn's frown lightens but Niall can see he's fighting to maintain it.

"When's your birthday?" Niall glances at Louis when his name is called, nodding to indicate that he's coming.

"Why?"

"Because I want to gift you lots of fibre. When is it?"

Zayn chuckles at this strange person's responses, amusing and very peculiar. "January twelfth."

"I'm September thirteenth." Niall smiles kindly up at him, having to bend his neck at an angle to do so. "My juice!"

The exclamation startles Zayn enough to have him stepping back and gasping, quickly covering it up with a cough to clear his throat. Niall takes the two rather impressive smoothie's and smiling at the counter person.

"Come on, Malik." Niall blows out an exasperated breath and nudges Zayn along a path to the electronic sliding doors.

"Where's the car?" Harry asks Niall once they've paid the little ticket fee and he has his Dodge keys back.

Niall nods, handing Louis one of his pomegranate smoothies and basking in satisfaction with the grateful look his best friend repays him with. It hurts Niall, who has had not an ounce of malnutrition these past weeks, to see Louis - pregnant and all - in this condition.

"You must have a plan." Zayn stops Harry from getting in the driver's seat, grabbing his arm as a restraint.

Harry scowls at him, black overcoming green, but he closes the door with Niall and Louis safely inside. "I've done what I needed to, now the lawyers will handle things."

Zayn doesn't feel like that's enough, like Harry's not really punishing them, but this mess could just get uglier if they pushed things. He nods and gets out of the way so Harry's car door can open.

"Go to St. Jacobs." Niall says, ruining the perfectly tense silence in the car.
"That's a hospital, Niall." Louis looks at his friend through a rear-view mirror since he's in the front passenger seat.

"I know." Niall quips. "I'd feel better if you all, especially you Lou, got checked up by people with medical degrees."

"That's not-"

"It is." Harry intervenes. "Niall has a point."

So instead of heading home and sating Louis' grandest desire of warm milk and an even warmer bath, they find their way onto the highway towards the local private hospital. Harry's had him and Louis registered here because of the pregnancy and his injured hand.

At the hospital, they're placed on three different beds in the ER while Niall walks between them, most of his time spent by Louis of course.

"This stitching is waterproof." The doctor with navy scrubs and a fresh look on his face, tells Louis.

"We're putting a rubber Steri-Strap on you anyway so that if you have a shower or bath the bandages won't get wet. You have to wear a fresh one everyday and remove them before you sleep."

That's all Louis gets, and Zayn's attending resident is not at all thrown off by his marred beauty.

"All done." She says after placing three stitches to a cut above his eyebrow and bandaging the nasty scratches on his back. "Get someone to change these for you everyday. Try and sleep on your front so they don't hurt as much."

Harry's amputated finger seems to be a kind of miracle to the medical staff that are present. Apparently he's almost fully healed, which is just unnatural for such a severe injury. All he needs is a cloth bandage over his wrist and the stub where his finger was. No brace, no arm sling, no pain killers - the irony is not lost on him.

"Happy now?" Louis uses Harry's shoulders to help himself down from the high bed.

"My mind is at ease, yes." Harry tilts Louis' chin up with his thumb and index finger. "You're so beautiful, princess."

Louis' cheeks becomes pink - they never became red and outstanding like most fair-skinned people, just a delicate floral pink - and he pecks Harry's lips. "My hero."

"I'm quite the villain." Harry contradicts.

"Then you're my villain." Louis connects their lips briefly, allowing the agony and mistrust evaporate into the air and become someone else's problem.

"Let's go, dove." Harry puts an arm around Louis' waist.

All through the drive across town to their campus to drop Niall off, Zayn tries to build up a solid argument in Harry's favour. Harry has a family now - or one that will be born in less than thirty weeks - and he has to put their best interests first.

When Niall's stop arrives just outside the campus dormitories, Louis jumps off quietly with Niall to bid him adieu. Harry becomes tense at the sudden gust of air that hits him from the unlocked car door, as he's become a firm believer in Louis not being more than ten feet away.
"Thank you, Ni." Louis hugs Niall tightly again. The smell of fruit and cologne on his best friend was enough to welcome tears.

"Please don't thank me." Niall's regret begins to show. "I let you down and I'm so sorry, Lou."

Louis shakes his head and sneezes from the chilly air surrounding them. "I forgave you a long time ago."

"Thanks, Lou-Bear." Niall laughs, but it's muted. "Go now before you catch a cold and Psycho goes bezerk."

"Come for dinner tomorrow please?"

"I don't know, Lou." Niall scrunches up his nose as Louis opens his car door. "You might have to convince me."

"A home-cooked meal isn't convincing enough?"

"I'll be there."

Niall ushers Louis into the seat and closes his door, standing there to wave at their retreating vehicle until it's out of sight.

Next is Zayn's apartment complex and Harry stops Louis from jumping off after him with a hand on his thigh. "My turn."

"Invite him over for tomorrow." Louis is pride-filled with this scenario, Harry being polite. "I invited Niall."

Harry nods, kisses Louis quickly and jumps off on his side, locking the car once he's touched the cold stone pavement. "Zayn!"

The boy's already made it up the front steps, but doesn't groan once before jogging back down towards his summoner.

"You said we'll be going back to hating each other now." Zayn is laughing at his own statement.

"I strongly dislike you, Zayn." Harry clenches his jaw so that it's sharp enough to cut the cold air.

"But Louis doesn't and I won't forget how much you helped when we were....at Briarville. I owe you a debt."

"You got me out." Zayn smiles, revealing a sharp canine in the corner of his smile. "The debt is repaid."

"Louis still wants you to come to our place tomorrow." Harry coughs away a dry build-up in his trachea. "You can come with Niall."

"I think I will."

Harry's soft expression hardens into a glare. "Louis wants you there. If you're not there I'll-"

"I'll be there." Zayn stops him. "I promise."

Harry gets back in the car to find Louis asleep in his seat, legs folded underneath his weight and the side of his head pressed against the tinted window. It was both captivating and amazing to witness
such a calm fall over Louis' delicate features, especially after everything that's happened to them. Louis deserves a good rest, and so does Harry.

Arriving back at their apartment complex - back home - gives Harry a burst of thrilling contentment. Home at last.

He jumps off after parking in his spot in the underground parking garage, and Louis wakes up when one of the other tenants' dog barks across the lot.

"Hi there, darling." Harry opens Louis' door and helps him climb down. "Tired are we?"

Louis nods, swaying just a little in his footing but Harry's got his hand and waist secured. He can only imagine how exhausted the boy is, his poor dove.

In the elevator Louis leans completely against Harry, relying on him as a standing pillar, while his eyes close momentarily so the burn beneath his eyelids goes away. He works hard when it comes to keeping the box of rubber bandages in his hands sturdy. Harry's lips are pressed to his forehead and Louis musters up the strength to wrap his arms around the man's middle.

"That tired, pup?" Harry takes the key out - given to him by the trust blond friend with his car keys - when their floor arrives.

Louis mumbles something into Harry's neck when the man starts to move. Harry chuckles, completely endeared by Louis' attachment to him, and bends to lift the boy up off the ground.

"Open the door for me?" Harry gives Louis the key since both his hands are occupied supporting him.

Rushing to do so, Louis unlocks the door with the little silver key and bends the handle.

The apartment smells of detergent and aged dust. The cleaning company would have come even in their absence, and so all their food is restocked. Coming back home puts a block of relief, happiness and an abundance of other suffocatingly good feelings on both their shoulders.

"Home sweet home." Harry plants a firm kiss to the pulse-point behind Louis' ear. Smiling, Louis kisses him back.

"How about a bath then warm milk and bed?" Harry's already walking towards the bedroom, skipping the sleeping area and entering the bathroom.

The proposition makes Louis squirm with enthusiasm and Harry has to set him down before they can run the bath. It all sobers when Harry decides to make them warmed milk for the bath.

"Don't go." Louis stops Harry from leaving, holding onto his arm with both hands. "Please, Haz. I-I don't want to be alone."

It terrified Louis to be alone now. He didn't feel safe even with just himself because that institute left him haunted with the many ill possibilities in their world. What if they got them again? Louis was just making it to survive in that place.

"Alright, baby. Shh, don't be upset." Harry pulls Louis' quivering form into a hug and kisses away the threatening tears. "I'm not leaving, okay? I just wanted to make us warm milk the way you like it."

"O-Oh." Louis doesn't lighten up in his grip.
"Wanna come with me, pup?"

Louis shakes his head, messing up his fringe on Harry's chest. "I'm tired."

"How about-" Harry turns on the taps to fill the tub. "-we talk to each other so you know I'm there?"

It's ridiculous but it also makes Louis smile and nod, which is all Harry lives for anyway.

"I'll be right back, princess."

He leaves Louis to put bubble bath in the tub as it fills, and eventually the entire bathroom smells like chocolate. Louis decides that a nice shower is much better than dirtying the clean bathtub water - they hardly had decent showers at Briarville.

They talk about what little they can while Harry prepares two servings of Louis' favourite beverage and brings it into the bathroom. He put Louis' in a light green thermostat bottle - with a nozzle - and his in a mug.

"Finished?" Harry leans against a glass plane next to where Louis' showering, crossing his arms over his chest.

"Almost." Louis rinses out the last of the conditioner in his hair - he could preen at the delectable berry scent.

The tub's filled when Louis steps into it after his shower, feeling squeaky clean. Harry goes to have his shower as Louis gathers bubbles.

"You remembered my bottle." Louis smiles through his words. "Thank you."

"You're welcome, princess."

"Are you going to come in?" Louis asks, hiding his hands under the foamy water's surface, when Harry steps out of the shower with a towel around his waist.

"Am I welcome?" Harry comes up to the side of the bathtub and leans closer with her fists on the edge.

"You're always welcome." Louis pouts, stretching upwards to have a kiss. He puts a wet hand on Harry's nape and holds him in place as the angle was already awkward, their lips at different degrees.

Harry smiles against Louis' lips and licks them when he's pulled back. He makes quick work of seating himself at the opposite end of the tub, placing his palm on Louis' knee when it appears above the water.

"How are you feeling?" Harry likes checking up on Louis, knowing that the boy's okay.

"Little hungry." Louis yawns, keeping the narrowed opening at the end of his bottle between his lips. "A lot tired."

"Sorry, baby. We can sleep as soon as we're done here."

Louis makes a soft noise like a child's whine, before upsetting the calm water to sit on Harry's lap. He hums delightedly at this new position with Harry's one hand on his hip and the other staying dry on the side of the tub.
"Are you more comfortable?" Harry feels very content with Louis resting against him, chest-to-chest with short fingers drawing flowers - or stick figures - on his shoulder. Louis hums, and goes back to nursing his bottle and artwork. He wiggles his hips when Harry's too warm skin applies pressure to his chest where his body's gotten better at lactating and making him sore or uncomfortable all day long.

Slowly, his mind began to wander. He's been watching it carefully, ensuring distractions thus far so he didn't have to think about what they were put through, what they survived. The ill-treatment, the cruel words, the screaming, the insane patients, the violence, the mutated people at their door every night.

"Sometimes I think this is a dream." Louis disturbs their comfortable silence.

Harry sets his bottle down on the tiles. "I know why. Love, I can't tell you to just stop thinking about that horrible place but we're really out now and that's what we wanted while we were there, yeah?"

"I know but-" Louis sits back on his calves. "-that place still scares me. It's like I'm never really free of it."

"We are though, love." Harry says earnestly. "We never have to go back. We just have us now, everyone we had before, and nothing bad is ever going to happen."

"You can't promise me that."

"I can and I am. Princess, it's hard looking after our baby and do you think Bean would like to feel all these sad emotions?"

Louis looks down, hiding his face, and shakes his head. "I'll forget about that place, I promise."

"I don't want you to forget, little dove." Harry shakes his head and continues when Louis' expression becomes confused. "I want you to move on, don't let it become a weakness."

"Oh." Louis understands this better and goes back to hiding his face in Harry's neck where it smells of aloe vera and his prickly stubble scratches Louis' cheek.

It makes Louis giggle softly, then much louder, when Harry tries to get a smile out of him by an attack of tickles. He's gentle around the bandage but he cages Louis' head on his shoulder and they're close enough to share the same air.

"There's my beautiful boy." Harry kisses Louis' neck, his stubble tickling the soft skin, and nipping at the warm flesh. "I missed your laugh."

"I missed yours." Louis puts a palm on Harry's cheek to push him off but keep him close. "Love you, Daddy."

The word makes Harry smirk and he closes his legs around Louis so the boy can't escape. "Love you too, baby."

Louis hardly makes it to put fresh clothing on before climbing into their bed, under the warm covers and hiding from Harry.

"Love, you have to get dressed." Harry only managed to slide on a pair of white panties onto Louis. He quite likes - loves - the contrast of the white cotton against perfect, light golden skin. He lives for it now.
"My gym teacher once told me-" Louis huffs when Harry pulls one of his BayMax-sized shirts onto him. ":the best way to sleep is naked."

"Your gym teacher was a pervert."

Louis giggles - Mr. Banks really was a pervert - and falls back onto his side of the bed. He rolls onto his side when Harry gets in next to him and cuddles up to his side.

"Did you take your bandage off?" Harry asks about the waterproof Steri-Strap.

Nodding, Louis doesn't directly touch Harry yet - he isn't sure if he should - so he stays close and curls his fingers against the man's inked bicep.

"Baby?"

Louis peers up from under his lashes with a faint little smile. "Hmm?"

"I can't sleep."

This is quite a profound thing for Harry to admit and Louis feels very torn. He puts a hand on Harry's chest, feeling his heart race and witnessing the heat behind his unpleasant hurricane of mixed emotions.

"I know why." Louis smiles sadly when he repeats Harry's words from earlier. "What do you remember?"

"Not knowing where you were sometimes. That terrified me, thinking that you were alone somewhere." Harry feels the need to touch Louis and so he thumbs the cheekbones that stand as a platform for Louis' full lashes.

"No need to worry about that anymore." Louis tries not to be clumsy when he throws one leg over Harry's hip and straddles his waist, sitting upright. "I'm not going anywhere."

As soon as he puts his hands on Harry's chest, the good turns foul and Harry pushes him off. It was too soon for him, he wishes he'd had the shock therapy torture after that whore put her hands on him. He's reserved for Louis, who he just discarded to the side to sit up and turn away.

"Haz?" Louis doesn't touch him, but he's still selfless enough to sit close-by and feel empathy. No, pity. No one knows how vile it is to experience what he did.

He wasn't going to hurt their relationship - that's been through so much difficulty - by leaving, so he just shakes his head. "I can't. Lou. I can't touch you that way right now."

"We don't have to, Harry. I know that but what's wrong?"

Honesty is the best policy. "At Briarville, that Rose woman. She...she touched me."

Louis doesn't react with outrage and disgust, the boy bravely puts a supportive hand on Harry's shoulder. "Oh Haz. That's-"

"I'm not emotionally scarred or some rubbish." Harry confesses, twisting his frown so it's indicative of distaste. "It's that I didn't stop her."

And that's enough for Louis to retract his hand. "You didn't?"

Harry nods, feeling ashamed for the first time in his life. He's felt a lot of things for the first time
with Louis in his life. When he was raped - was it even that? - he knows he could have stopped it if he really wanted to but the aftermath of his session of shock therapy left him more than a little disorientated.

"Why didn't you?" Louis sounded small, more than usual, but Harry wasn't going to comfort him yet.

"It was the shock therapy, Lou." Harry turns around to move closer to his boy. "I couldn't think straight. I didn't remember anything."

Louis' a very easy-going person and he's very understanding of special circumstances, since his life seems to be all encompassing a series of singular events. This, he just doesn't know what to do. How does he respond? Harry, the man he'd leave his beating heart with any day, was molested by a sex addict. More outstandingly, he didn't stop it. Didn't stop it? Well that leaves one inescapable conclusion, Harry liked it?

No, Louis battles his train of thought. Harry had shock therapy, something cruel and unethical by a mile. He wasn't in his right state of mind, obviously. But....if he didn't remember anything then why'd he let a stranger touch him? Shock therapy or miserly sleeping pills, there's no excuse for allowing yourself to be raped.

Either way, it was too much for Louis to process now when he's trying to repair what's been broken emotionally, and learn to cope with what's been stripped from him.

"I understand." Is the lame response Louis' graduated, mid-college brain can conjure up.

He moves away from Harry though and returns to his side of the bed. There's a subtle sigh from Harry that sounds very annoyed, when Louis says nothing else and puts a pillow against his tummy so he can close his eyes.

It's too much for Harry, to have to handle this rejection - it certainly feels like rejection - but it's fifty times worse for poor Louis. He knows he can't blame Harry, and for that he let's Harry spoon him from behind without being too abrupt with his discomfort. He even let's Harry kiss the back of his neck but all it leads up to is tears on his face.

Louis' being a baby about this, or at least he thinks so. How dare he be so inconsiderate when Harry's been through something so horrid? Then again, Harry's an adult with his own trauma. Louis' an ageing twenty-something year old trying to handle his lover having sex with someone else. By choice or not, he isn't really sure.

*HARRY'S POV*

As anyone would assume, I spent that night entertaining ferocious ordeals in my merciless nightmares. Every occurrence at Briarville followed me here, haunted my sleep. I was losing my mind completely by two in the morning when I woke for the fifth time next to a calmly dozing Louis.

It's probably that Louis' gone to the far side of his portion of the bed while I laid crumbled in mine, that I was experiencing this. I sidled up behind him, nuzzling his hair and inhaling the delicate scent, rubbing his hip though it offered me comfort instead of him.

A small hand unconsciously reaches up to comb through my hair and it becomes the repetitive motion that puts me to sleep again. Louis goes back under and I secure the comforter around us, strictly locking out all spaces for cold air.
*NARRATOR'S POV*

The morning came for Louis and Harry at ten. They're not sure what the day is, but it must be - according to Louis' calculation - Saturday or Wednesday. Their phones are gone forever so Harry plans to go out today to the nearest iStore.

Louis has rolled over numerous times during the night and now he's sprawled across Harry's chest with the sheets pooled at his waist, just high enough to conceal his very short underwear beneath the shirt that's ridden up. Harry has the side of his face smashed into the pillow he's sharing with Louis, eyes closed and deeply breathing into Louis' neck.

The first half of the couple - Harry - stirs but just for a moment because Louis' lips somehow made it to be pressed against his neck and he won't move now if the world was ending. Instead, he pulls Louis' - his - gigantuan shirt down over Louis' bum. The perfect curve is well defined from under the sheets.

"Hello there." Harry smiles at Louis when the boy's eyes blink into an alive state.

Louis smiles back but it's quick and troubles Harry. "Hi."

"What's the matter, dove?"

Shaking his head, Louis smiles again for a bit longer, rolling onto his back - away from Harry - to stretch.

"Lou?" Harry puts a hand on Louis' tummy, mindful of the bandage that will be out by next week or so.

"Hmm?" Louis sits up, dropping Harry's hand to the mattress, and looks over his shoulder.

"Talk to me."

"I am, Haz."

Harry's quite the opposite of a delinquent and he knows this is about what he confessed last night. He doesn't regret it though, because now they can move past this.

"Come here." Harry props himself up on his side, supporting his weight with his left elbow. Louis carefully slides back into the warm spot, close to Harry where it smells of body gel and is so familiar to him. He likes being this close to Harry.

"What I said last night-" Harry starts, chewing his lip as he rubs his thumb in circles on Louis' waist. "-I know you're upset."

Looking away, Louis can't find a bone in him that wants to object. "I am."

"But Lou, I told you-"

"You told me you didn't remember anything." Louis cuts across. "You're either lying or you let a complete stranger at the time have sex with you without saying no."

Harry sighs, a bad feeling bubbling in his ribcage. "I...Everything was coming back to me in small bits. I knew something only if I was reminded of it."

"So you just.....forgot me?"
"I didn't-"

"Yes or no, Haz."

"Yes."

Louis nods, fiddling with the neckline of the shirt he's wearing. It's almost throttling him now. He pulls away when Harry holds onto his waist, using the hold to lift Louis slightly off the mattress as he kisses below his ear.

Harry isn't trying to initiate anything - he's not that moronic - he's just trying to tell Louis that he loves him. Just him. Nothing more than him. None other than him. From the depths of his soul and bottom of his heart.

"I love you." Harry starts to mumble. "I love you so much, baby. I'm so sorry."

"Harry, stop." Louis pushes at his chest.

Harry does so immediately. "Baby?"

"I can't blame you for this, and I won't. You weren't you and what you'd gone through was inhumane." Louis says diplomatically. "But on the same hand, it still hurts me. You were with someone else-"

"Lou, I don't want that. I never want to lose you."

"I love you, Harry." Louis puts a hand on Harry's cheek. "We've been through so much and I'm not going to throw that away, I swear to you."

"Lou. Love. Baby." Harry proceeds to get between Louis' legs carefully and kiss as much of his face as he can. "Princess. Do-"

"I'm listening, Haz." Louis smiles at Harry's rambling string of endearments just for him. "Make me forget her." Harry pleads earnestly.

Louis remembers Harry telling him not to forget, just come to terms with so that he can move on, move past. But this must be one of those exceptional nightmare-triggering memories that one has to forget in order to recuperate. He can understand that.

"I don't-" He's cut off by his own gasp when Harry hauls him up onto his lap, causing him to scramble for a good footing. "I don't know what I should do."

Harry answers by taking off Louis' T-shirt - the front is a bit damp because of not wearing nipple pads to bed - and encaging Louis' waist in his arms. He spread Louis' thighs more and more with one hand between his legs, rubbing against cotton and brushing the engraving on Louis' thigh. "I need you to talk to me." Harry had his lips pressed to Louis' ear, his long and deft fingers groping Louis through his underwear.

Louis opened his mouth again, and a high-pitched whine got out when Harry dropped him down onto the mattress and bucked his hips against Louis' pelvis. The soft cotton clung to Louis' curves and his hands fell to his sides when Harry pulled it off his legs. Plump lips touched as much of the shaven, smooth skin as he got lower and teeth grazed his knee.

"I want to think of you when I remember that place." Harry's eyes are closed and his face is hidden between Louis' thighs.
"H-How?"

Smirking proudly, Harry tossed Louis' white cotton panties onto the floor and hiked his knees up so between his legs is exposed. Harry licks his lips at the sight of Louis so vulnerable, where his body is most private. He shuffles through their drawer for lube and grabs the first one irrespective of flavour. Louis' little fingers curl into Harry's hair and tug harshly as an encouragement.

"What do you want, baby?" Harry kisses along the inside of Louis' thighs.

Louis mewls, feeling Harry so close to where he wants him but not exactly there yet, is turning his mind into mush.

"Want me to taste you?" Harry traces Louis' puckered hole with his dry middle finger, bringing his mouth up to Louis' neck. "This is all about you, princess."

Louis would have, a decade or so ago, found it very hard to believe that a person's personal pleasure could come from someone else's. Now he completely comprehends the logic behind Harry's persistent drive to keep Louis satisfied.

Harry's impatience is displayed when he slowly inserts his lubed finger past Louis' clenched rim. The boy gasps, back arching and thighs shaking. His fingers dig into the sheets and toes curl against the mattress.

"I know, darling." Harry mouths at Louis' thigh, high up next to where his name is carved. "But we're just getting started so you need to calm down okay, angel? Don't wanna get too excited."

"S-Sorry, Daddy." Louis says breathlessly. It's a lot of effort to form actual words now when all Louis can feel is lust, love and arousal.

"It's alright, baby. I love you." Harry bites Louis' ear lobe and tugs on it as he starts to move his finger.

Louis' arms lock around Harry's neck and he just holds onto him, leaving the pinch in his abdomen and strain in his muscles to be worried over later. He just offers himself up for Harry to use for recovery, for fixing what needs repair. It's one of the ultimate acts of love, of eternal companionship.

"I'm yours, Harry." Louis whispers in his ear, making his voice soft like a purr. "Take me."

It's enough in words to make Harry groan and pump his finger faster, nudging Louis' walls with his long digit that gets joined by a second finger. He feels the quiver in Louis' thighs, the ripple in his baby soft skin and the tight clench that's filled with tantalising promises around him.

"H-Haz!" Louis chokes, wanting to ask for something.

"Yeah, pup? Want something?"

Louis nods, whining and rocking his hips back on Harry's fingers. He spreads his legs wider and bends his knees in the air as an invitation.

"Oh, baby." Harry kisses his cheek. "You want Daddy to taste you, huh?"

His boy whimpers and reaches down low between them to grab Harry's hand. Harry's fingers are so long and always so good at pleasuring Louis, he misses the extensive foreplay and wants Harry inside him. He pushes Harry's fingers deeper, moaning in the back of his throat when the finger bud grazes his prostate.
"I'll give you anything you want, princess." Harry rolls Louis' damp nipple between his thumb and forefinger. "You have to ask first. Gotta tell Daddy what you want."

"W-Want-" Louis blinks away the bleariness of his vision. ":your mouth."

"Where would you like my mouth, beautiful? Here?" Harry traces Louis' clavicle. "Here?" Louis shakes his head so Harry chuckles and moves to his abdomen. "Here then?" Again, Louis shakes his head but this time Harry extracts his fingers before pushing them back in harshly and it burns but Louis lives for that pain.

"There!" Louis pants. "There, Daddy. Please."

"Of course, pretty love." Harry plants a gentle peck on Louis' hip before tilting his hips up for better access. "Look so pretty, darling."

Harry presses kisses from below Louis' sack to his eager hole. He attaches his lips to it and sucks after removing his fingers, tasting Louis and the lube. He points his tongue and forces his tongue into Louis' body. It completely throws Louis off but he mewls and welcomes the wet intrusion.

To keep Louis from shifting up the mattress, because the race of feelings get confused between escaping and wanting more, Harry grips Louis' hips tightly. Red bruises begin to bloom on the span of golden skin, and Harry opens his mouth wider to create a suction around his target. Louis' whole body lifts off the mattress and his own jaw goes slack, ruined by pleasure. He bites his lip, tightening up when it starts to bleed but the constant jab between his legs is driving him insane. Harry's not going easy on Louis now, there's a very impressive gap to fill with Louis' body and aura, that's something he's greedy for. He pushes as much of his tongue as he can into Louis' loosening body, tasting that which he was starved of. His fingers find their way back, penetrating Louis' writhing form savagely as Harry craves more from him.

Louis' babbling nonsense and Harry finds it to be very sweet. The boy's higher intellect has been speared and discarded now that Harry's taken control of his body.

"My good boy." Harry pulls away - he feels the need to whine too - and kisses Louis' tummy.

Louis' head is turned to the side, chest panting in hurried breathing and fingers curled into the sheets below him. He leaves his legs to Harry's command as the man crawls higher up to be on his level. The comforter comes with him, keeping Harry's and his waists down concealed. His legs get hiked up as Harry settles between his thighs again, drawing his gaze away from the closet to look up at him.

"I love you." Harry kisses Louis' forehead, hands - even the injured on - holding the crook of his knees.

Louis smiles and his flushed, sweaty and desperate look is getting Harry further riled up. Harry buries his face in the boy's neck, keeping his teeth locked on a spot of skin as he reaches down to position himself at Louis' entrance; his forehead was against Louis' shoulder so he can watch himself disappear into Louis' body. He didn't use lube but the passage but quite wet, glistening with lubricant and saliva, already.

There's a soft gasp filling his ear when the head is in, Louis' rim having stretched just enough to fit him. Inch by inch, Harry watches the inexplicably incredible sight and can't look away for anything. When he's bottomed out, Louis' thighs fall from his hips to the tops of his thighs. Harry's knees shuffle forward to be under Louis' bum, raising it off the bed.
They felt so complete this way. They were as close as can be, two bodies tied as one and limbs tangled everywhere.

Louis' fingers find Harry's hair, tugging hard on the silky chocolate locks when a pair of wet lips find his right nipple. Louis is all slackened jaw, foggy mind and breathless noises now when Harry starts to suck on the perky nub. Harry's hips start to gyrate, going slow with rotating his hips so Louis' stretched further.

Warm sweetness starts to enter Harry's mouth, lapped up by his tongue and swallowed greedily. There's more for him this time, and he drinks everything so nothing's wasted. His hands go to Louis' so they can be laced together, even his bandaged left hand can be held so intimately now. His body starts to move, back and forth slowly, and Louis moves with him. The rhythm builds up but he doesn't plan to go fast now, he wants to pull this time out for as long as possible.

Harry switches nipples, sucking the other one dry until Louis' groaning and twitching from sensitivity. The stimulation of Harry rolling into him, impaling his insides and creating friction on his own member between their chests, the suckling on his nipples so all the pre-milk is consumed. Everything is destroying him.

"Baby?" Harry comes up to whisper in his ear, string of saliva and milk following his lips. Louis can only dig his nails into the backs of Harry's hands. "H-Haz."

"Feel good, baby?" Harry pulls out, Louis' thighs latched onto his sides, and rolls back in. He can feel the special place inside Louis and he aims for it.

"Aha." Louis can't make it to nod, so he ends that word with a loud whine.

"You like it slow, don't you baby?" Harry releases one of Louis' hands to pinch his thigh, then hold it with a firm hand. His words are branded into Louis' neck with searing lips. "Like to feel me deep inside, forget everything and just make love."

Louis' body was between rigid and mellow, his gasps getting swallowed by Harry when their lips connect sloppily. Harry let's go of Louis' hand and thigh, pressing his palms into the mattress on either side of his head and moving faster but not erratically. His hips dragged against Louis', creating sweet sensational friction between their heated skin. Louis' nails were on his back, pressing into his lower back and his neck exposed.

"I belong here, princess." Harry hastily gripped Louis' thigh again and hitched it up on his waist so the angle is altered and Louis' head falls back onto the pillows. "Inside you."

Louis was close and his body was tightening with his impending orgasm. He wanted it but he wanted it to last too. When Harry's teeth sunk into his neck, he moaned and started to move his hips against Harry's thrusts. It was more pleasurable, both of them working in a steady rhythm towards a splendid climax.

"Fuck, baby." Harry cursed in Louis' ear, bracing his forearms on the bed and rocking the entire contraption with his movements. The headboard detached from the wall when he drew back and hit the wall when he slammed forward.

Louis cried out when Harry hit his prostate head-on, scrambling for purchase around him. He squeezed his eyes shut and let Harry kiss him, tongue slipping into his mouth and tangling with his. Harry's one hand glided down Louis skin, touching his hip and thigh as it went, to where they're connected. One finger slides in next to his length, making Louis' eyes fly open and fingers tighten
"Relax, princess." Harry fucked that finger in and out of him, much faster than the motions in his hips.

How could Louis relax? That's impossible right now when Harry's mouth is dominating his, Harry's thick manhood is thrusting into him, Harry's finger is alongside that manhood and doing a fine job with ruining Louis' sanity.

"Feel so full, don't you?" Harry extracts his finger, trailing it up Louis' body so the boy flexes and pants to have it touch him. It reaches his lips and he sucks on it to keep quiet.

It all gets to be too much when Harry grunts in his ear, and the muscles he's carrying ripples against Louis' soft exterior. Louis releases all over himself, coming harder than most times they've had sex before. Harry gets desperate then, and puts his hands on Louis' hips to fuck sloppily into his spent body. He feels the tight heat around him, the warmth of Louis' clenching and his hips slamming into Louis. It burns now, the sensitivity, and Louis' just waiting for Harry to come so he can nap.

This is the final bit of his repair, and every foul, disgusting thought about Briarville chooses to haunt him now. He almost becomes soft from them, but he needs to do this, learn to heal rather than cope. He can't find his release and it annoys him to no end, makes him sit up so he's kneeling and brutally pounding Louis' rag doll body. His blunt nails scratch Louis' thighs and calves.

"D-dad-ddy!" Louis whimpers. It's started hurting now, feeling like he's body shutting down but Harry keeps forcing it awake.

"Almost there, darling." Harry spreads Louis' legs and lifts his hips, thrusting harder and moaning with the slapping skin sound.

"Da-addy, stop." Louis pushes Harry's shoulders so he falls back and gets on top of him. "You were hurting me."

Harry slips out of him, and Louis grabs hold of his red erection before it's neglected. He sits astride Harry's hips, pumping the length with his small hand and leaning down to whisper in Harry's ear.

"Stop thinking." Louis sucks in a sharp breath as he guides Harry's throbbing length towards his near gaping hole. Harry grabs his cheeks and spreads them apart so the slide in is easier. "My body is yours. Enjoy it."

Harry looks up at Louis with reverence and holds his hips but Louis shakes his head and drops them to the mattress. He bites his lip and starts to round his hips, feeling Harry nudging against his insides deliciously but also painfully. The sting of sensitivity is mingling with the perfume of arousal.

"Look at me." Louis wasn't good at taking control, but cared more for Harry than any insecurity he has. He had to do this, and it was going to hurt in more than one place.

Green eyes meet shining blue orbs, gems of real beauty, and Harry's frown lightens up. He remembers being like this with that slut, and those memories, flashes of imagery kept coming back.

"Harry." But this was Louis' voice. "This is me. Me and you."

He puts his hands on Harry's chest and picks himself up before dropping down again, curving his back into a C from the shot of pleasure up his spine.
“Where did she touch you?” Louis was determined to make this go away.

Harry took Louis' hands and put them closer to his clavicle, then picked his bent knees off the bed and grabbing Louis' hips. The boy's thighs spread wider and Harry bucked up into him, fucking the horrible thoughts out of him.

"Here?” Louis' voice cracked but he maintained his facade, his hand pressing into Harry's chest. "Did she feel like me? Better? Worse?"

Harry growled and held Louis' waist still as he pounded upward. "You're better. So much fucking better."

"Yeah?"

Harry nods, feeling obedient, and runs his hands down Louis' leg to the heel of his foot. The skin's slightly rough because of that asylum and too much physical strain, but it'll get better.

"I'm carrying your baby." Louis reminds him - as if Harry would ever forget. "I love you, Harry. She didn't. She doesn't." Louis ran his hand along Louis' torso, removing what negativity he can with gentle touches. "I'm so full of you all the time, Haz. Your baby and whenever we make love. I'm always yours, aren't I?"

Harry sits up, arms wrapping around Louis' middle and slotting his lips against his boy's. At the same time, Louis feels Harry release inside him, filling up his body with his scent. He was soft again, and the come started to drip out, down Louis' thighs.

"Thank you, princess." Harry is breathless and his hands are more inquisitive than usual. He nudges Louis' head to the side and sucks on the skin, tasting the sweat and raw skin. "You're so beautiful and so enchanting."

"Was I good?” Louis looked up from Harry's throat to his eyes, both his hands on Harry's shoulders. "Exceptional, pup." Harry chuckled at Louis' grin and giggle. "Why is that amusing?"

"I've never done that before.” Louis pulls off Harry. "Felt weird."

"You were wonderful, darling." Harry kisses Louis' neck multiple times, even tickles his sides to get the boy to loosen up. "I loved you getting dominant. It's very sexy."

"Really?” Louis raises an eyebrow.

"You're very appealing to me all the time." Harry responds, fetching one of their smaller plugs that just about manages to keep Louis full. "Are you tired, dove?"

A small yawn escapes Louis' mouth. "Yeah."

"You remember inviting Niall and Zayn over for dinner, love?"

"Oh yeah." Louis pouts into his pillow. "Can we order something? I don't want to cook."

"Of course we can." Harry kisses Louis' shoulder and his bicep, keeping his lips against the skin. "Have a nap and when you wake up, we'll go get something from the Greenstone."

Greenstone Mall is the closest shopping complex to them, and it carried all the stores and utilities to convenience their necessities. There was an Italian restaurant with very decent prices and extraordinary food that Harry plans to order from.
Being unable to sleep outside his regular night hours, Harry gets off the bed once Louis is sound asleep. There’s lots of things to get done today, and he starts with phoning in the Greenstone iStore. The attendant is trying to communicate with him and another one at the same time so Harry is forced to raise his voice and get a round of full attention.

He tells them to have an iPhone 6 Plus ready for pickup later today, then calls the nearby Android store and gets a Samsung Galaxy Trend for Louis. He knows his princess hates large phones and even this one is a tad oversized for his dainty hands, but almost everything tolerable and older has been discontinued. Also, Louis likes to download things illegally and Apple doesn't allow that on any of their devices.

He calls the superintendent of their building and finds out that Niall - trusty blond - had brought their belongings from the hotel weeks ago. It's brought up to their apartment by three men who drop it and leave.

At ten, Harry prepares a bowl of chocolate-y cereal for Louis and puts a tablespoon in - Louis dislikes teaspoons in cases of tea and breakfast assortments. Louis' asleep on his side when Harry walks in, and slides up the mattress to sit beside him.

He sets the bowl down on the bedside table before leaning close to the boy and kissing his cheek. "Lou?"

It could have been the smell of the chocolate or Harry's very gentle voice that woke him up, because Louis never wakes up the first time you ask him to. His blue, blue eyes are revealed to the world as well as a shy little smile.

"It's ten o'clock, baby." Harry noses at Louis' neck and his victim giggles before putting a hand on his cheek and kissing him.

"Love you." Louis kisses Harry's nose.

"Love you too." Reaching over, Harry brings the bowl between them. "Eat, then shower so we can go to Greenstone."

"Did you eat?" Louis sits up, yawning as he clambers his way onto Harry's lap.

"Not hungry."

Louis frowns at him and opens his mouth to say something but gets a spoonful of cereal from Harry at the same time. He happily chews and swallows - both his words and the food - before wriggling closer.

"I want Indian food." Louis won't admit that he spent his nap dreaming about all the types of Indian food he's ever tasted.

"I was going to order Italian but we can get Indian." Harry feeds Louis more cereal, and pulls the comforter up to hide Louis' blatant nudity.

"Did you call Zayn and Niall to remind them?"

"I will call them before we leave."

After Louis' bowl of cereal is scooped to an empty state, he finds himself lying back on the mattress again with Harry's face pressed into his belly, careful with the bandages.
"My baby's in here." Harry puts his hands on Louis' waist. "In you."

"I believe so." Louis smiles fondly and combs through Harry's unruly hair with short fingers. "I'm excited to meet him or her."

"Would you like one more than the other?"

Louis shakes his head. "No. I'd love them so much either way."

"Would you try for more after this little one is born?" Harry tickles Louis' pudge with his lips as he talks, and at the end of every sentence drops his mouth to kiss the skin closest.

"Maybe not right away." Louis confesses. "After college?"

"Hmm." Harry doesn't like that the bandage is keeping him from the most vital part of Louis' pudge at all. "Where do you want to move after college?"

Louis was here on a student visa, and so was Harry. He hadn't thought beyond college as yet, considering he's got a year or two left. "I can't say for sure now. Maybe I'll go back home."

"Middleton?"

"The one and only."
Chapter Twenty-Eight

i>You broke my heart, but I still love you with all the pieces.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Feeling patriotic, Louis decides he wants to take the bowl he used for cereal to the kitchen. Harry, succumbing to mutual lust, pulls it out of his grip and pins his arms to the mattress. Louis lands on his back with a soft 'omph' sound.

"Haz...." Louis whines, fidgeting while his body is held down with a hold so much mightier than his.

The only response he gets is a pair of licked lips pressing scalding kisses up his neck. The pressure hurts where some bruises are blossoming and merely adds to the pool of heat in Louis' tummy in other spots.

"I love your skin." Harry captures a small bit of flesh between his teeth, smiling into release when hands wrap around his waist after he let's Louis' arms go.

"My skin?" Louis' nails draw red lines down Harry's back.

Harry hums and it sends thrills of exciting shivers along the surface of Louis' skin where goosebumps began to rise. He grins when Harry crawls up to his level again, slotting their lips together and initiating a breathless, sloppy kiss. It's making the air hot and Harry's hand has snuck around Louis' waist to grope his bum, knead the firm flesh and swallow any pleased sounds from his boy.

It doesn't lead to anything more heated and sweaty, just them lying on the bundled sheets kissing lazily under the faint sunlight. Harry will get too excited and slip a hand between Louis' thighs, just to have the boy giggle and roll away. He'd much rather be deprived of sex with Louis than have him so far away all together.

"Come back here." Harry reaches out for any part of Louis, and manages to grab his ankle.

Louis would give up many things to spend a day in bed with Harry, but there is a day to look forward to and errands to deal with. It's already nine o'clock.

"We have things to do." Louis gets his limb free and pulls on underwear - beneath the covers so Harry can't see.

"Are they more important than our relationship?" Harry stands up as well, just because it's easier to catch Louis on his way to the bathroom when he's on his feet.

"Nothing's more important than our relationship." Louis presses a chaste kiss to Harry's cheek before slipping out of his arms and tries not to frown at how chilly it suddenly feels.

After making quick work of showering and getting ready, Louis sits at the kitchen counter on the phone with the only Indian restaurant in Greenstone. It was not without difficulty, of course, because Harry walked into his shower without asking permission. That inevitably led to more time spent under the hot spray.

He wore black jeggings now, and Harry's lavender sweater with some comfy Vans - nothing else
was comfortable in his book. His shoes were coming with Harry from the bedroom so for now he walked around with secret socks.

The person he spoke to at the restaurant had a foreign accent but promised him hot and fantastic food as soon as he got there. He sounded young too.

His tummy growled and the sound was soft, muted by the thick sweater he was donning. "Someone's hungry." He mumbled to himself as he went to the fridge with the express intent of discovering something suitably edible.

They had pickles. It was all the way in the back behind a head of lettuce, and Louis felt his mouth water at the sight. Pickles are glorious, and Bean thinks so too.

He takes the jar of mini pickles - they're going to buy large pickles today because this is outrageous - back to the kitchen counter and starts munching away. The crunch is the most delightful soundtrack, the sour taste is so satisfying.

"Ready?" Harry appeared from their bedroom, holding one jacket and wearing his own. Louis shook his head and held the jar of pickles close. Harry chuckles at his better half, kneeling by the bar stool to slip the Vans on Louis' dangling feet.

"I hope to Hell we have enough pickles in the world." Harry teases, kissing the corner of Louis' mouth and not really enjoying the taste that comes after licking his lips.

"We don't." Louis retaliates, biting his fourth pickle. He usually takes small bites but he's too impatient with pickles.

"We're not going to have enough time to get back here before Niall and Zayn, princess." "I'm almost done." He had at least twelve pickles more.

"Bring it with you." Harry helps him off the stool by his waist and plants a kiss on the boy's forehead when he gets fussy. "I may have to buy you a pacifier."

Louis' thin pink lips are red, deliciously red, because of the salt absorbed in them. "They only make those for babies, Hazza."

"I'll do my best to find one, my sweet boy." Harry notes how Louis didn't object to having one, just that he couldn't get one. He takes a finger-sized pickle from the jar and pops it in his mouth. "Harry!" Louis closes the jar's lid and hugs the tub to his chest.

"You didn't say you weren't sharing." Harry

"To clarify then-" Louis closes the lid on his jar and keeps it out of Harry's reach. "-these pickles are ours."

Ours was enough to make Harry coo and wrap his arms around Louis' petite frame, driven into that gear by the mention of his unborn child. Louis knows that his comment would trigger this reaction and smiles up at Harry, a small hand settling on shoulder.

"I would never deprive you and my other love of anything." Harry nuzzles Louis' neck with his face nudging Louis' head at an angle and rendering a brilliant giggle from him.

"Let's go!" Louis is impatient as ever when he grabs Harry's free hand and pulls him out the door.

A quick trip to the elevator and down to the parking lot later, they're on their way to Greenstone.
Louis has been feeling a dry tightness in his throat and his nose has been stuffed since he left the apartment. He chalks it down as the result of too many pickles and seals the jar again.

"Do you want anything other than the food for tonight?" Harry parks in a spot under a tree and turns to face Louis.

"Don't think so." Louis shrugs.

"I have to go to the bank to block the cards that were in my wallet and claim the insurance."

"That sounds boring."

"It is but we don't have to wait in a queue. I'll take fifteen minutes at most."

"Okay." Louis wasn't about to opt out because very bad things have happened upon their separation. That isn't happening again. "I'll come with you."

* * * * *

"Do you drive at two bloody miles an hour?" Niall shoves himself off the wall he's been waiting against for the past half hour for Zayn to show up.

"My apartment is-" Zayn rolls his window down to reply to the angry blond but gets a backpack thrown at his face.

"It's freezing out here!" Niall opens the trunk without permission and slides Bolg's and Bundy's cages in carefully, still mumbling to himself about Zayn's incompetence.

"I'm sorry?"

"You bet you are." Angry Niall is dangerous Niall and Zayn finds himself taking the chance of chuckling at the infuriated boy as he climbed into the front passenger seat.

"Niall?" Zayn puts the bag in the back seat and doesn't start the engine while Niall huffs. He gets ignored.

"Niall?"

"My best friend has promised me food. If you don't get us there in time I will unleash my best friend's psychopath boyfriend on you."

When Niall storms into Louis and Harry's apartment approximately seven minutes later, the former has to hold his tongue and follow the fussy lad. Louis gets a kiss on the temple from Harry and a warning to be careful, before being released.

"Ni?" Louis tries not to laugh at the way Niall's face is scrunched in red anger as he falls onto their couch.

"Hey Lou." Niall looks up briefly and smiles emptily.

"What happened?" Unable to resist the temptation, Louis sits on the couch slowly and folds one leg under the other.

"Zayn made me wait outside the dorm for half an hour."
"Oh I'm sorry." Louis puts his head on Niall's shoulder. "It's pretty cold out there."

"I hate him."

"Do you?"

"I do."

"Niall." Louis sighs and turns his head to watch Zayn carefully enter with his two pets' cages. "Did you ask him why he was late?"

"No." Niall replies. "He promised to be on time."

"I spent the entire drive apologising." Zayn contributes to their conversation from the studio doorway after he set the cages down. "He won't listen."

"Niall, he's sorry." Louis puts his arm on the back of the couch to cough into his fist and support his back.

This was all so dramatic for Louis, because surely his best mate was making a mountain out a mole hill here but he himself cannot handle the thought of waiting outside for thirty minutes.

"Why did you make him wait?" Louis asks Zayn directly.

"My complex didn't have electricity so I had to wait."

"Did you call him?"

"My battery's dead." Niall mutters under his breath.

Louis' eyes land on Niall, silently scolding him for blowing this nonsense out of proportion. "Niall, it isn't his fault."

With that, he leaves those two to their own devices and walks back into the kitchen despite the kink in his back. He hardly has a bump and the back aches have commenced. How vile.

"Your blond friend is melodramatic." Harry tells him once Louis is in his arms - the only safe place for him and their little Bean.

"He's Niall, that's his right." Louis whispers into Harry's shoulder. "My back hurts."

Harry drops his hands to where Louis' spinal base meets his voluptuous bum and massages the patch in between. It's quite relaxing and Louis would purr had he been a feline, but he sticks to moaning from relief. The tightness in his muscles and tension in his bones are slowly loosening.

"Thank you." He peeks over his shoulder at Niall and Zayn conversing in whispers from opposite couches.

"Do you feel better?" Harry presses a little harder but just so it provides pleasurable ease in his stiff muscle joints.

"We have guests, Hazza." Louis groans. He really doesn't want to pull away. He's willing to kick the guests out so Harry can massage his back and loosen to frustrating knots there some more.

"I know." Harry leans down and, holding Louis' curved hips in large palms, kisses his slightly puckered lips chastely. "Let's feed and dispose of them."
Giggling, Louis forces himself to detach himself from Harry's warmth - the things he does for Niall's friendship - and pouts at the food packets on the kitchen counter.

"You're still dressed." Harry pats his bum. "Go put on something comfortable for you and Bean."

"Alright." Louis' all too willing to escape the chance to heat up takeaway in a microwave right now. Before he can leave though, Harry takes his hand and draws him back. "I bought you something."

"Me?" Louis' eyes get that childish glint that they always do when presents are mentioned. "Of course it's just for you, my dove."

"What is it?"

"Get through tonight and I will show you."

That brings a sad pout to Louis' face - it can be labelled as puppy dog eyes but a tad more dignified. He really wants to know what this present is and how Harry managed to get it while they were together the entire day today. It's not fair that he has to wait!

"Can I have a clue please?" Louis draws circles on Harry's chest where the buttons of his shirt were open.

Harry's never one to lose composure but Louis was his ultimate Kryptonite and he sucked in a sharp breath. Such dainty fingers, smooth skinned and soft against his more calloused, hard skin is a seductive feeling.

"We spoke about it very recently." Harry puts a finger to Louis' lips once he's done. "No more questions, pup. Go get changed."

Louis obeys and goes off towards the bedroom for fresh clothes. Niall follows him because he cannot be in Zayn's vicinity after he's apologised.

"Niall?" Louis hadn't noticed the lad until he flopped onto their made bed with an exasperated sigh. "That is my slave name." Niall grumbles.

"You are anything but a slave. Farthest thing from it." Louis looks through Harry's hangers for his favourite emerald sweater and some leggings from his own section.

"So!" Niall sat up with a little struggle and watched Louis change into the comfy clothing swiftly. "How have you and Psycho been?"

Louis folds his sleeves and brushes his hair back, looking at Niall with a sober expression that's haunted with thoughts. "We're doing fine. He's trying to forget and......I'm trying to just move on."

"You can always talk to me." Niall pats the bed next to him where Louis soon sits down.

"That place was a...." Louis scrunches up his nose and bites his wobbly lip at the memory. "It was terrifying to be there. It was just grey everywhere and I didn't even know the date or day, Ni. I tried but they make you feel like there's no point, no hope of getting out."

"But you did, Lou." Niall wraps an arm around Louis' shoulders. "You're here now and so are the rest of us."

"I know this is real." Louis whispers so softly it's hardly audible to either of them. "I know nothing's going to happen but......that's what I thought last time, yeah?"
"No, no. Lou? Don't think that way."

"But it's so scary." 

"It shouldn't be, okay? It should just be bad, bad memories that you survived and you're so strong because you had Bean inside you the whole time. Little Bean relied on you as a mommy to keep him or her safe and you did that."

Louis sniffs and wipes his nose with a tissue from the bedside. "Thanks, Ni."

"Anytime, LouBear." Niall pulls him into a hug. "If anything ever nags you, call me no matter what time it is."

There's no better friend in the world, Louis decides, than Niall. He accompanies his best friend out into the living room and they pull up smiles onto their faces for Harry and Zayn. They set the table with soda and water for beverages, and the extra large glass tray with all the chicken varieties on it. There's Indian bread that's thick and puffy like simply baked dough that Louis loves because of the garlic taste in the middle.

"Have you spoken to any lawyers, Harry?" Zayn has taken his seat next to Niall.

"Not yet." Harry looks at him from where he's been staring out the window into the beginning of rain.

"Do you plan to?"

"Yes." Harry's glare is unmistakably directed at the antagonizing individual. "I intend to shut that place down."

"Do you think that's enough?"

"Where are you going with this?" Niall intervenes, setting his fork down and glancing from Louis to Harry. "We don't need any more unexpected happenings. We're doing fine so why go implicate ourselves further?"

"Zayn wants revenge." Louis speaks for the male who hasn't touched his food.

"I can understand why." Harry complements.

"No." Niall points to Harry. "You, Psycho, are not doing anything stupid. Louis is pregnant and you need to be with him all the time." He turns to Zayn. "I don't care about you so much so you can do whatever it is that you want but don't you dare think about dragging us into it."

"Niall-"

Niall cuts Louis off almost immediately. "I'm serious. Look, you three have been to Hell and back in the matter of a few weeks. You're lucky that Louis is fine and Bean is healthy. By doing something stupid now, no matter how much those assholes deserve it, you'll be throwing that away."

"We know that, Niall." Harry snaps at the raving boy. "I won't be joining Zayn but he is free to go ahead. I will handle this legally."

Louis is really hungry and looking between the three people in conversation is doing nothing to curb that building appetite. He feels it will be somewhat rude to just eat while they're discussing something like this. He coughs softly into the crook of his arm to get rid of the dry feeling in his
"Fine, okay." Zayn sits back in his chair and frowns when Louis coughs again. "I suppose if I try something it will just prolong things."

"You okay, darling?" Harry looks at Louis curled up in his seat and sniffling away. He starts to respond positively but a sneeze is rising in his throat and he shakes his head, getting up and dashing across the living room towards the bedroom.

"I'll go." Niall starts to rise.

"No." Harry shuts his offer down. Niall and Louis are close enough but when Louis' sick, it's his business mostly.

He gets up and leaves Niall with Zayn for company at the table. When he gets to the bedroom he can hear Louis sneezing in the bathroom, the light off and sitting on the closed toilet lid.

"Love?" He knocks on the door once before entering and approaching Louis, kneeling down in front of him.

"S-Sorry." Louis throws the tissue in his hand away and sniffs. "I'll be right out."

"No, darling." Harry flips the light switch on and takes Louis' face in his hands. "Are you sick, baby?"

Louis shrugs because he doesn't really know. His head hurts and his throat's almost completely closed up, leaving his lungs labouring to inhale. The tip of his nose is red but he's shivering with goosebumps on his arms and legs.

"I think you are." Harry confirms after kissing his forehead.

"That's not good." Louis feels the crying coming on because he hardly ever gets sick, but when he does it's very painful to endure.

"No it isn't." Harry chuckles.

"I don't like being sick."

"Nobody likes it, baby." Harry picks Louis up off his seat and sets him down on the counter. "You can have a hot shower then I'll put you to bed, okay?"

Louis sneezes thrice consecutively and ends with a shiver again. "O-O-Okay."

"Will you be able to stand with the steam or you want me to join you?"

Louis would really like that but there was a mess to clean up now in the kitchen and he didn't want to delay Harry in that chore so he shakes his head.

"Sure?"

The boy shakes his head again, sneezing into a toilet paper again before a cough follows and leaves him crippled by the pain in his back.

"Alright that settles that." Harry carries Louis bridal style into the bedroom and leaves him on the bed. "Stay here while I tell Zayn to drive Niall home."
Louis slips into the stage between consciousness and sleep while Harry goes to inform their guests of his flu symptoms. He's promised that they will clean up since Harry has to be with Louis.

"Baby?" Harry bends close to Louis' sleeping form and kisses his temple to wake him up.

It's a herculean task getting Louis in the shower and to stop grumbling about the hot water making him irritable. Louis' skin is sensitive, Harry knows this, but this situation can't be helped.

"Sweetheart." Harry had to pick Louis up off the floor, wrapping his legs around his waist and arms over his shoulders. "You need to breathe the steam in."

Louis tries to and his chest wheezes with the struggle, before setting off another sneezing fit. His eyes tear up from the powerful spasms and he whimpers helplessly.

"I'm sorry, baby." Harry feels terrible for being unable to help but he'll do his best. Witnessing his princess in pain is excruciating for him. "Do you want tea after this?"

Louis shakes his head, feeling the weakness in his joints and whines into Harry's neck. He loves his warm milk and he can't have it then he doesn't want anything else. "Want warm milk."

"I'll get you warm milk then." Harry kisses Louis' neck and keeps him away from the cold tiled walls. "I'll have to give you your present early now."

That makes Louis curious again and he presses the warm tip of his nose against Harry's jaw. "Really?"

"Do you want it?"

Louis nods, even though he has no idea what it is, eagerly with a small smile. "Thank you, Daddy." "You're welcome, princess."

Harry carries Louis out of the shower and sets him on his feet while he gets a towel. He unintentionally makes Louis giggle when the fluffy black towel he uses tickles the boy's sides. Well, that's what he lives for anyway. He cuts the Steri-Strip and dries the bandage underneath. While he's down there, Harry presses three kisses against the growing pudge where his baby is safe.

It's surprisingly easier to get Louis dressed despite the horrible headache the boy's experiencing. Harry puts white ankle socks on his feet, matching cotton panties that's one of Louis' favourite because it's especially soft against his skin, one of his massive white long-sleeved shirts and comfortable grey slacks.

"Try to stay awake for me, darling." Harry puts Louis under the covers and tucks him in. "I'll get your milk and some vapour rub."

"Okay." Louis wasn't tired at all, the phlegm in his throat and constant sneezing won't allow him a peaceful rest.

"While I do that-" Harry comes back from a short trip to the closet with a small baby blue box in his hand. "-you can open your gift."

Momentarily, Louis forgets his agony and reaches for the box. Harry chuckles and hands it over only after he gets his kiss placed on Louis' neck. He puts the box in Louis' anxious paws and leaves the room.

"Is he okay?" Niall asks from the kitchen sink.
"He has a cold." Harry nods once and inspects the condition of their apartment. All the food is put away and the dishes are washed already.

"Zayn went out to smoke." Niall tells him, answering Harry's silent question.

Harry puts a small pot - their midnight milk pot - on the stove and gets milk from the fridge. The cinnamon is added and Niall still hasn't moved.

"What do you want?" Harry asks bluntly.

"How did you and Louis meet?" Niall crosses his arms over his chest. "You both came from Middleton, I know."

"We met at his school." Harry feels the need to answer this inquisitive fake blond.

"Romantic." Niall watched how Harry heated the milk and stirred it before grabbing a light green bottle with a smooth rubber nozzle off their rack.

As Niall does that, Louis gets through the box lid after untwisting the little gold ribbon. He sits up so he can peer into the box, gasping softly when he identifies the object. It is indeed what they spoke about very recently and it brings a blush to his cheeks that Harry remembered, and bought one for him.

It's a pastel green pacifier with a plastic ring at the end as a handle and clear rubber nozzle for him. It's obviously not a baby's one because that would eventually hurt his mouth, so it seems Harry got a bigger size. It is the most considerate gift he's ever gotten and he's in love with this adorable little paci.

"I swear Niall gets more annoying every time I see him." Harry walks into their room with Louis' bottle.

He pauses with a smug expression when he sees Louis curled up around a pillow, awake as he watches the TV screen and sucks away contentedly on his new paci.

"Like the gift, I see." Harry strips off his shirt and crawls over to where Louis is lying.

"Thank you." Louis smiles, muffling his words around the pacifier because he's grown attached already.

"You're very welcome." Harry pulls the covers over himself in time for Louis to sneeze and throw away another few tissues. "Come here, darling."

Louis shakes his head at first, hiding under the coverlet further and watching the television. Harry can't even care enough to figure out what's playing.

"Lou."

He sighs and picks Louis up, making him whine and fidget, to settle him on his chest.

"Better?"

It was but all Louis did was huff around his pacifier and suck harder. Harry's gotten used to this behaviour by now and can't find it in him to be angry. Instead, he tugs on the loop of Louis' paci gently.

"You want your milk, don't you?" Harry brings the bottle closer. He used vanilla flavoured milk this time and reduced the cinnamon greatly.
Louis sits up between Harry's legs and brings his box of tissues with him, leaning back against the man's broad naked chest as he accepts the bottle. The pacifier must be left alone for a little while now and he's sad about that but his milk is more precious.

"What are you watching?" Harry starts to rub the base of Louis' spine to relieve the uncomfortable pressure there.

"I don't know." Louis sips from his bottle, feeling the liquid warmth soothe his throat but still make breathing difficult.

"Are you tired?" He brushes Louis' hair away from his cheek and kisses him there. "We can watch a movie."

"Movie."

"Okay." Harry can't fathom how his princess could have the flu - something that usually makes people disgustingly contagious - and still smell so fresh and innocent.

Louis giggles then coughs dryly into his tissues. That's a bad idea then. He wipes his nose and finishes his milk before pulling Harry's arms around him. It feels safe like this, safe and warm. His feet get tucked between Harry's so the size difference is lethal, and Harry's chin is on his head. "What shall we watch, princess?"

"Anything."

Louis misses his paci already and asks Harry for it back instantly. His lips lock around the plastic and hums contentedly with his current state in motion. Harry kisses his neck, nudging it to the side a little to rest on his shoulder, and sets his chin there.

"Something scary?" Harry playfully nips at Louis' throat but feels very guilty after he discovers the damp skin as a result of a growing fever.

"Okay." Louis starts coughing again, and it's dry but painfully annoying.

"Does anything hurt, love?"

Shaking his head, Louis kicks off the comforter but stays close to share body warmth with Harry. "How about this?" Harry had to get one arm free from Louis before he channel surfed for something decent to occupy their time with. He was sitting on a channel that was showing the *Halloween* movies.

Louis nods because he's still sucking on the green paci and doesn't want to let it go again. It's a comforting feeling to him, makes him feel small and cherished because he knows Harry will care for him.

"Do you want anything?" Harry notices Louis falling asleep on his shoulder, ignoring the movie. Louis frowns as his light sleep is disturbed and turns in Harry's arms to be held close. Harry lays him down and puts the TV off before holding the boy close and covering him up. He can still hear soft suckling noises from the pacifier and Harry's never felt better about spending his money on something.

The next day is born and Chicago is drowning in a sudden thunder storm. The electricity was out in most parts of town but Harry's building had generators that should take them through the struggle. This cruel storm had, as expected, woken Louis up many times during the night which lead to the boy being cranky when morning came.
First it was at ten o'clock when a crack of thunder woke Louis up and he whimpered into his pillow before turning in Harry's arms and trying to fall asleep again with his paci safely inserted in his mouth. The second time Louis couldn't close his eyes and pawed at Harry's chest until he woke up.

"Louis?" Harry's bed voice was twice as seductive as his regular voice.

"I can't sleep." Louis sniffed, looking truly pitiful with wide blue eyes.

Louis tried hiding under his chin, breathing in Harry's scent, but those deep breaths made his chest hurt and lungs weep with the strain. He spent three minutes getting through a coughing spasm before the sneezes hit him. Those acts alone tired him out for another thirty minute sleep.

"Harry?" Louis whispered to the sleeping lump next to him, lightly scratching Harry's arm with his short nails.

Harry was awake with him and because he had less of a reason, this was starting to wear on him. "Hmm?"

"It's loud. I can't sleep."

"It's just a storm, love." Harry lifted his right arm and Louis curled under it with his face tucked into his neck.

He managed to get two hours rest before the storm, at around three in the morning, was coming down viciously and it woke him up again. It was cruel and a loud clap of thunder got Louis up with a start, shifting both Harry and himself. He sat up, panting heavily and listening to his chest wheezing. That's not even the worst part.

He lost his paci.

Trying not to wake Harry up, Louis searches for it urgently amongst the sheets and under his pillow. He feels the tears well up and fear rising as another break in thunder whips out. The paci was calming to him, made him feel small and safe. Now he doesn't have it.

"Louis." Harry sounded mad and Louis bit his lip.

"Hmm?" He wanted to move to another part of the bed because Harry's probably annoyed with him now, but everywhere is cold and Harry's body warmth is reassuring.

He needs his paci.

"It's just a storm." Harry tells him again, huffing as he turned onto his back.

"I-" Louis sneezes and wipes his nose. He sneezes thrice more before he can continue. "I know but I'm still scared."

"What's there to be scared of?"

"I lost my paci." He wipes his nose and winces at the cuts by his nostrils because of the weak skin that had torn.

Harry blinks quickly to adjust his eyes before flipping on the bedside lamp. He helps Louis find the pacifier and walks lazily to the bathroom to wash it before returning. Louis' eyes are focused solely on the baby object when Harry pops it in his mouth. He mumbles something that could be 'Thank you'.

"Can you sleep now for me, love?" Harry kisses Louis' forehead.

Louis shakes his head and sucks a few times on his soothing toy. He doesn't think he can, because now he's wide awake and the back aches are here now with a vengeance.

"It's not safe to put the TV on either." Harry bundles Louis up in a cocoon of blankets and picks him up to be carried to the lounge. "We can watch something on my laptop."

Harry says 'we' but he really means just Louis. As soon as he's got the boy comfortable he plans to fall asleep before another disturbance comes along. He carries Louis with two arms and makes him carry a pillow and quilt. They make a trip to the studio and Louis is made to carry the laptop as well, before they go into the living room finally.

"Do you feel better here?" Harry had arranged Louis between his legs, pulling the comforter over them both and over Louis' shoulders with the quilt.

Louis hums, pulling the quilt further up to his ears, covering himself so entirely before the movie options are displayed. He points to which movie he wants and settles back against Harry again, kissing the man's neck to show his gratitude. He had to remove his paci for that and repositions it afterwards.

He actually gets caught up in the latest remake of Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* even when Harry's nodded off, stuffing his face in Louis' neck. Louis wore the earplugs and so shut out the storm easily now. When the movie was over, he slid the laptop onto the coffee table and curled up on Harry's chest with his white woollen quilt.

He hadn't had a full night's sleep and in the morning he was tired. Harry stayed on the couch too a little longer than necessary, cuddling with Louis as the boy's breathing slowed and his paci went still between his lips after the loud storm passed.

Knowing Louis will wake up hungry, Harry finally makes a move at nine when the weather's cloudy outside and grey from sad conditions. He makes sure Louis is covered from head to toe, presses a firm kiss to his forehead and goes to wash up.

He tries to be as silent as possible because Louis needs lots of beauty sleep. When he returns, Bolg had found his way out of his cage and was crawling over to the living room carpet. Harry gives him a lift and deposits him on Louis' front with a leaf of lettuce from the fridge.

Harry gets to work making a quick breakfast for them both with Louis' vitamins for little Bean as well as what the doctor gave him to help dissolve his stitches faster.

He makes French toast and cuts up some fruit to put with vanilla yogurt. Louis usually has tea in the morning but now he needs Vitamin C and Calcium to get rid of the flu he's experiencing, so Harry pours him a glass of citrus juice.

Louis wakes up at something to ten after Harry's drawn the curtain to mostly conceal their apartment and lit the fireplace. He makes a soft tired sound with his mouth sealed around his paci, catching Bolg's wandering weight before the reptile tumbles down. The sudden action leaves him labouring for air and coughing into his fist, feeling extra miserable with a heavy head and clogged sinusitis system from his nose to eyes.

"Good morning." Harry is suddenly kneeling by Louis' head and the boy hides under his quilt. "Sweetheart, how do you feel?"

He pulls the paci out of his mouth to answer, his voice sounding like a broken aged croak.
"Terrible."

"Yeah? I'm sorry, love." Harry pulls the quilt back and touches Louis' forehead. "You can lie here today. Are you hungry?"

Louis nods, feeling the familiar twist of a building appetite in his tummy as food is mentioned. He sits up as Harry goes to bring him his breakfast, already excited about receiving it. Harry's far better in the kitchen than he is and he isn't shy to hand over that pedestal.

"The storm is not so bad now." Harry takes a seat at the foot of the couch, Louis' legs across his lap and the turtle Bolg tumbling between the sheets.

"Yay." Louis smiles, ending in a brief dry cough.

Harry smiles sadly at his boy and kisses his cheek, a warm promise to get him better as soon as he can. Louis eats slowly, forced to chew properly now because his throat is swollen closed and it's a challenge to breathe simultaneously.

"We're staying here today?" Louis finishes eating and places a comforting hand on his tummy.

There's that "we" again.

"Yes, you are." Harry takes his plate to the kitchen. "We can take a shower and then watch some movies."

"Can we read instead?" Louis' eyes are glued to his tummy.

"That's even better actually."

Harry does as he promised and manages to make Louis enter a giggling fit with his acting voice for Hamlet. He doesn't exactly act it out, but the dim lighting and fireplace starts up a proper atmosphere. Louis gets to play Ophelia in the madness and gets actual sadness from his Hamlet upon his - her - funeral scene.

"Hey there." Louis coughs into a tissue - it can't be helped - and keeps his distance but touches his shoulder. "You know I'm not leaving you, yes?"

Harry smiles and crawls between his legs. "I won't let you."

"Even if you would-" Louis closed his legs around Harry's back and covered them both with his quilt. "-I wouldn't go."

Harry's smile softens and he stretches forward to kiss Louis' forehead. "I love you; forty thousand brothers can not, with all their quantity of love, make up my sum."

"'Tis in my memory lock'd, and you yourself shall keep the key of it."
"Harry Styles!" Louis screeches, clutching his back where it's been aching like someone stabbed his bone for the past three hours.

Harry looks up at him from the bathroom basin where he's watching his hands clean from the blood. It's something that's happened too often these days.

"Darling?" He presses a kiss to Louis' temple and rubs his two month pregnant bump.

"Don't you dare." Louis doesn't push him away in spite of his sudden rage when Harry starts to rub that exact spot on his back.

"What is it?" Harry presses Louis against the door.

"You did it again." Louis bats Harry's roaming hands away. "I just sent you out for eggs, Harry."

"I got the eggs."

Louis glares powerfully at his boyfriend. "Harold."

"You know how it is, baby."

"You said you'd try!"

Harry's neck is buried in Louis' neck and his arms force their way around his knees. He pins Louis' hands to the door and shreds through his joggers.

Louis doesn't even try to fight this anymore, not like he did when Harry first came home weeks ago with blood on his palms and hair matted. He always had a knife or a gun, always covered in blood because Harry was never neat.

He cries out when Harry first plunges into him, using just spit for lube and immediately starting to pound into him. Louis gasps and scratches at Harry's back, letting himself be used by the man he loves unconditionally despite all the differences, all the grief. His body is impaled on Harry's length, his mind foggy and his neck exposed to Harry's teeth.

"Always so good, princess." Harry bucks his hips and holds Louis' waist as he fucks him. "H-Harry, please." Louis tugs on his boyfriend's hair and mourns his shirt as Harry rips it in two and suckles on his pebbled nipple.

"Shh." Comes his curt reply. "Daddy needs his Princess. So pretty, Lou. Wanted to get inside your pretty hole the second I walked in."

Louis cries out and rolls his hips to meet Harry's pivoting hips. They're so deep, so brutal and Louis knows Harry hasn't lost his touch.

"How's my baby?" Harry can hear the door rocking and Louis' breathless pants as he rocks the boy's body, forcing Louis' orgasm from him.

"M-M-Missing you."
Louis can only moan, whine and scream as Harry finally comes and sets him down. He is carried into the bedroom and dressed by Harry who says nothing further to him. They need to talk about this, about how negligent Harry's become. They might have to move again.

"Harry please." Louis sits up and bites his lip at the small plug tugging at his rim.
"Princess, not now." Harry pulls a shirt over his head and sighs.

"We have moved over three times in the past few months." Louis grabs Harry's hand and pulls him closer. "We can't keep doing this."

Harry kneels by Louis' bedside and takes his hand in both of his. "I'm sorry I let you down."
He sighs because Harry always says he's sorry and never acts on it. "Do you love me, Harry?"

"I love you-" The man kisses him. "-our Alexander." He gestures to the door. "-and our own unborn baby more than life itself."

"Then please let this move be the last one." When Louis' sentence ends the bedroom door creaks open and a little shadow of eighteen months comes crawling in.

"Later." Harry kisses Louis' cheek and goes to pick up the babbling toddler. "Hello to you, little lion."

The baby boy brings a smile to Louis' face. Harry sits on the floor with their son, blowing gently into his neck and whispering soft words.

"What were you up to with uncle Niall today?" Harry asks the staring boy who nods - something he did when he didn't want to answer. "Did you have fun, Lex?"

Another nod.

Alexander looks to Louis and tries to escape Harry's hold entirely. He loves father lots but he also remembers spending so many nights awake with mummy Lou when Harry wasn't around. He'd cry and Louis never got any sleep. When Harry went out for hours, Alexander kept Louis company. He also knows another baby is coming, one to play with soon he hopes.

Upon realising that Alexander wanted Louis and not him, Harry sighs tiredly. He hands the baby over and is given an extra pang of hurt when the baby immediately hugs Louis' neck.

"He hates me." Harry rubs the boy's back. "My own baby boy doesn't want to spend time with me."

"You never made time for him." Louis fires back tiredly. "He always wanted to spend time with you."

"I know."

"You didn't read him a story last night."

Harry smiles apologetically at their adopted son when the boy peers curiously at him, sucking his thumb and nuzzling Mommy Lou really close.

"I'm a terrible father and an even worse boyfriend." Harry sits on the bed and pulls Louis onto his lap. "I wish I was better for you both."

"I feel sorry for you, Harry." Louis caresses the side of his face. "I love you as I've loved you in
Middleston, Chicago, then Middleston again and everywhere after that. I've been patient with you but Alexander doesn't deserve a life of constantly running."

Harry tries to interrupt but Louis isn't having any of it.

"Our baby's due in a few months. We'll have two babies and you can't even get a grip, Harry."

"Please. Please, baby." Harry's expression grows pained and he pulls Louis in for a searing kiss, mindful of the inquisitive baby between them. "Don't leave me, not when the only thing I have is my family."

"We stopped being a family the day you met Josh and Freddy."

* * * * *

Louis' flu was over in the next four days. He'd been swathed in warmth and taken care of by Harry in every respect so he was never in need of anything. By the Wednesday of a brand new week, Niall popped by to tell Louis everything he missed in his lectures and it was definitely going to delay his return by another week even if he worked fast.

"Baby, you've been busy for too long." Harry interrupts the study session and kisses away the groan from Louis' lips.

"Harry." Louis whines when he's picked up and carried weightlessly out of the studio. "I have so much work to do."

"Bean needs some distance from all that work." Harry points out, setting Louis down on his feet by the door. "We're going out."

"Why?"

"Because we haven't left this apartment in days."

"Where are we going?" Harry slips shoes on Louis' feet and puts on his boots.

"The park." The man replies with a slanted smirk. "We haven't had our completely cliché couple moment under a tree yet."

"We're far from cliché, Harold."

"We're not very far from unconventional either."

They walk across the street to the park Harry knows is very close to them, and Louis' still recovering from the flu that took a good piece of his health so he doesn't walk fast enough.

"It is supposed to be a stroll." Louis tugs on Harry's hand where their fingers are linked.

"It's a big park." Harry decides that they'll take the shortest roundabout route and head back home after Louis' gotten some fresh air.

"Can we get ice cream?" Louis bites his lip at the thought of such creamy goodness.

"If that's what you want." Harry pulls him under his arm and presses a feather light kiss on his temple. "Tell me if you start to feel uncomfortable, okay?"

Louis nods and slots himself into Harry's side like two perfectly carved puzzle pieces. The park
provides an entirely natural atmosphere that smells of corn dogs - Louis' tummy swirls for one, maybe paired with ice cream - and freshly cut grass. People are out in full force despite it being mid-week, laughing around picnic tables and sharing meals.

Damn corn dogs are torturing Louis. He can see products of the vendor and smell the array of sauces but he can't find the stall.

"We must make this a regular thing." Harry breathes in and exhales loudly.
"I agree." More corn dogs will come Louis' way like that.

They walk on the pebbled path between lawns of grass where people are jogging in groups, listening to music that varies in genres to convey their diversity. Harry finds an empty bench and leads Louis towards it by the hand.

"Sit here." Harry instructed. "I'll get you a corn dog."

"How'd you know I want one?"

"Everyone who walked past us with one either got a sniff or glare from you. I took a guess."

"Clever guess." Louis compliments, kissing Harry's lips chastely before pulling back. "Corn dog please."

"Your wish is my command."

The corn dog stand was just opposite their bench, a little to the left. Louis sat cross-legged on the bench with his - Harry's - sweater wrapped around him for warmth. He takes out his phone that turned out to be Harry's - he was using it for homework because his own device was charging - and unlocked it with the numbers that corresponded with the letters of his name.

He looks from Harry ordering corn dogs to a kids playing on the swings or on the grass. This almost felt unreal, after everything they went through they are here amongst trouble-less souls.

Something tugs on his pants and Louis' startled out of his imagination. He looks down at the source, and a little boy of maybe one year in age is sucking his thumb with tears on his cheeks and spit all over his mouth. He's wearing a little Marvel shirt and matching Spiderman trainers. He was chubby and light skinned with round blue eyes.

"Hello there." Louis sets the phone down and smiles at the shaking toddler.

The boy starts to cry and he grips Louis' pants in angry little fists. Fat tears roll don his face and Louis panics to console him.

"Oh no, poor baby." Louis straightens his back and picks up the boy, rubbing his back to calm him down as he stood up.

"Louis?" Harry has returned, looking very confused and somewhat miffed.

"He's lost, I think." Louis answers, feeling his shirt get wet from the boy's sobbing and holds him closer.

"That's not our problem."

"It is." His boy retaliates. "He's a cute little boy and he shouldn't be all alone in the park."

Harry sighs and watches how Louis calms the toddler down, stopping the crying and rendering a
smile or two. The boy's chubby hands held Louis' and his other arm clung to Louis' neck. It was
cute, Harry will admit, seeing Louis interact with a little boy who could be like their unborn child.

"Let's take him to those officers." Harry suggests helpfully.

"Okay." Louis carries the boy on his hip to the pair of officers in black and introduces him.

They tell him nobody's contacted them about a missing child yet so they'll have to wait until
someone does. Louis volunteers to keep the boy until said thing actually happens, much to Harry's
passive chagrin. This isn't his baby, so why is it coming into their home? What rubbish.

Louis never gets to eat his corn dog and Harry hatefully throws the item of food away in a public
bin. He won't consider himself high-strung but his nerves are edgier than usual. He has to stress
over uni work, the gallery that he has even less time to prepare for, Louis and Bean, maintaining the
apartment with the current economic tides, he paid for both their college tuitions, his meetings with
the police - his old pal Abrams included - and his lawyers to deal with Briarville, and to piss him off
even more people started following them as off two days ago since news of Briarville was published
in every fucking newspaper.

Harry couldn't go to Tesco's without someone bombarding him with questions. He's worried about
Louis being out there in these circumstances, pregnant and fragile.

Right now Louis was feeding the stranger baby yogurt on their kitchen counter and making the
toddler giggle. The boy looked very pleased to have lots of attention showered on him, none of
which came from Harry. Oh no, Harry just escaped to his studio and pulled out a new canvas to
work on.

Being a difficult to distract individual, Harry found it surprising when his mind drifted to the paint
he was using. It messed his arms and some of his neck, splatters on his expensive shirt and bare
feet. The red paint was just that, red. Harry hates red because it's so bright and common.
Nobody respected the particular shade of crimson that only came from one source.

As he drew contours with agile fingers, he noticed the change in pattern. He was drawing what he
long ago agreed would be his theme for his gallery: Louis. Every feature and trait on a different
page, photograph, canvas with every colour: pencil, pastel, coal and paint.

It was Louis' abdomen he was working on first, just a massive canvas to project the diverse
enthralling beauty of his petite boyfriend. He chose red for the extremely low half of his tummy to
symbolise Bean's presence - his little baby was always on his mind - and black everywhere else. He
used the finest brush when drawing the image of Louis' small hand over his larger one placed just
above his belly button.

The change in colour bothered him. The red was ideal but just not for him. Maroon, burgundy and
every other shade but nothing was crimson. Bean had to be crimson, so he tried something out.
He fetched his Stanley knife from his desk drawer and made the tiniest incision on his right index
finger before dabbing the cut against the canvas and chewing his lip grimly as it began to dry. It was
perfect, but there wasn't enough.

"Harry?" Louis knocks on the opened door thrice before stepping in, sans the toddler they arrived
with.

The man finishes putting a band aid on and turns to Louis with a small smile and nod. "Yeah?"

"Those officers called on your phone. His parents are waiting for him."
Fuck finally, is the first thing that comes to Harry's mind. He clears his throat and drops everything to go put some shoes on.

They return the wonderful boy to his extremely relieved parents. A couple of idiots, Harry perceives. Who on Earth loses a baby boy and takes so long to get a move on finding him? Idiots, that's who.

"He's such a darling boy. They're so lucky." Louis' hand is in Harry's, following a longer route back to the apartment just because they can.

Harry hums because he can't agree - he never spent time with the kid - and shoves his left hand into his jeans pocket.

He should have known freedom doesn't last very long, because soon enough there's a click of a camera behind them. When he looks over his shoulder and pulls Louis closer to his side, there's more than one reporter shark following them.

"Styles!" One of them calls him out and he turns away immediately.

"Are they-"

"Reporters." Harry growls his answer to Louis and deduces that their apartment is close enough now. "Ignore them."

"Why are they following us?" Louis wasn't out very recently so he couldn't be aware of their currently exalted public status.

"Later." Harry nudges Louis ahead of himself.

The reporters are throwing questions at them, dozens of enquiries about Briarville's treatment and what it was like.

"How did you survive?!"

"What was Briarville like? How bad was it?!"

"Just a few words, Mr. Styles!"

"Harry! Did you really kill that woman?" (He was pardoned by the police on the case of self defence already.)

"Comment, Louis?!"

"Louis! Louis, how's the baby?!"

The last one aggravated Harry and he ushered Louis into their apartment complex quicker than necessary. He spoke to the manager and told him that he'd bring every source of his income down underground if he didn't keep those nasty reporters outside.

They took the elevator up to their level as they do all the time, and Harry checked Louis for any harm caused.

"I'm okay, Haz." Louis has to cup the sides of his face to get Harry to slow his breathing and pay attention. "We're fine."

"Did they- Did they touch you?"
"You wouldn't let them do that." Louis says jokingly, pulling on the lapels on Harry's halfway unbuttoned shirt. "Did they follow you around before?"

"Yes." Harry frowns, his eyebrows knitting together. "Bastard reporters."

Once inside their apartment, Harry pins Louis to the closed door and moulds their bodies together like they were once starved of each other. The skin exposed by his unbuttoned shirt makes contact with Louis' bare abdomen and his large hands roam all over Louis' perfect little body. One supports the side of Louis' face and the other cages his waist.

Harry's lips slot into place with Louis' and he groans into the messy kiss. Louis' hands are gripping the front of his shirt, caught off guard by Harry's sudden advances.

They just stay like that, wrapped up in each other's arms and making the door vibrate slightly when Harry growled and deepened their kiss. He jerked Louis closer and closer until there was no space, no air between them. He threw Louis' arms over his shoulders and dominated his mouth as the boy went weak.

"My perfect princess." Harry is latching onto Louis' soft neck with plump red lips, kissing and sucking so it bruised.

"I love you." Louis gasps when Harry's teeth sink into his clavicle, leaving indents behind.

"Love you too, baby." Harry licks over the bruises he made and presses firm kisses to below Louis' ear.

Harry draws away from his neck that's properly marked up and presses their foreheads together, their lips brushing past one another and breath scents of mint, nicotine and berry sorbet mingle deliciously. Harry's eyes pin Louis', stormy and riveting emerald green stapling the gentility of Louis' Mediterranean down to the finest hair folicle.

Louis' fingers are wrapped around Harry's forearm and he shakily moves them, chewing his lip lightly. He maintains the intense eye contact between them but his fingers undo Harry's first of two buttons, then the second. He rolls the material off Harry's shoulders, trailing his hands over the muscular shoulders, tattooed skin and tough flesh.

Without a moment's warning, Harry lifts Louis off the ground and carries them to their bedroom. He sets Louis down on the bed carefully, tossing the comforter aside to make way. Unbuttoning his jeans, Harry crawls over Louis' shirtless form, planting kisses all over the boy's body. On his thighs, his hips, his belly button and up his torso. He tastes the sweet taste that only belongs to Louis and he slips his hands under Louis' waistband to palm his bum.

Louis' throwing his head back and breathing heavily, squeezing his eyes shut as Harry's fingers slide the soft fabric of his panties to the side. His smaller hand fists the sheets and mouth moves in synchronisation with Harry's command.

"Baby?"

Harry kneels and pulls Louis' legs apart so they're splayed open. He also yanks Louis' pants down and gazes hungrily down at the newly exposed body that's all his.

Trying not to combust with growing stimulation, Louis sits up and pulls Harry's lips back down to his. Harry goes smirking, lips curved against Louis' while his hands are seeking out lube.

"Wait a second for me, princess." Harry has to pull away and he tugs on Louis' bottom lip as a
farewell.

He drizzles some lube onto his fingers and hikes Louis' hips up with a pillow beneath them. When he's about to continue, an idea blooms in his dark fantasy.

"Daddy?" Louis frowns when Harry gets off the bed, leaving him there cold and wanton.

"I'm coming, baby."

Harry goes into the closet for a moment then returns with a strange glint in his eye. Louis is quietened by a pair of familiar lips and a smile when he's about to ask about the headscarves in Harry's hand.

"Hands above your head, sweetheart."

Louis immediately obeys, crossing his wrists and letting Harry tie them together then throw a thin post on their headboard. Next are his ankles, and they're binded individually to the bedpost at a wide, revealing angle that made him feel very breezy and cold down there.

"Does it hurt?"

Shaking his head, Louis feels nervous and very excited. Harry suddenly tugged on Louis' knees so he was dragged lower on the sheets. It's a stretch and Louis whines but doesn't protest. He gets between Louis' legs and kisses him until his lips are swollen, his hips grinding down against Louis' erection under his lace.

"Last one." Harry finally covers Louis' eyes with the fourth silk headscarf and kisses his nose, cheeks, jawline and lips as a reward. "So very brave, princess. Do we know the safe words?" Louis nods, lips parted eagerly. Harry gets the lube again and drops some directly on Louis' clenching hole, pink and flushed as it grips the air. He slips one finger inside easily and Louis moans, bucking suddenly. A second finger fits as well and Harry feels the tightness enveloping his digits greedily. He pumps those two fingers repeatedly, slowly then roughly to jab at Louis' prostrate.

"Baby?" Harry checks up on Louis, taking the quick breaths and high-pitched whimpers as a good sign. "Do you want something, angel?"

Louis nods and arches slightly when Harry finds his special spot again with precision.

"What's that?"

"Kiss me."

Harry chuckles and bends over Louis' shaking shape to connect their lips, pleased at the eager response he gets. When he pulls away, fingers buried to the hilt inside Louis, the boy's lips try to follow but his bound limbs are very disabling.

"Sweet boy." Harry removes his fingers, knowing it's far from enough prep but that Louis' handled worse before. Hell, their first time didn't include prep at all. "All mine."

"All yours." Louis replied breathlessly. "Take me."

Determined, Harry pushes Louis' panties aside and in one smooth thrust buries himself inside Louis' welcoming body. The boy beneath him arches his upper body off the mattress and wriggles back onto Harry's length, wanting it deeper inside him. Harry tasted sweat on his skin, blood on his lips
and desire permeated through the air like electricity.

Harry removes the pillow from under Louis' hips and replaces it with his thighs under the backs of Louis', leaving the boy to rely on him a lot for support. His palms comes down on the side Louis' left thigh without half the force he'd normally use. The response he gets is beautiful, Louis panting and pulling on his restraints.

Feeling pity for Louis' own neglected member, Harry pulls the waistband of the lace panties down so it slaps against his lower abdomen.

Slowly beginning to thrust, Harry delivers full and deep movements between Louis' tightening thighs. He pulls out all the way after the first few thrusts and teases Louis' stretched red hole by applying pressure to it but nothing else. Louis mews and fidgets, lips locked with Harry's, and body confused. Harry's fucking his mouth with his tongue, and his hole is being used until it's wrecked and gaping.

Louis screams and digs his nails into his own palms, curling his toes and squeezing his muscles. He lets Harry's body use his, ramming so hard into his body it should rattle bones and drive him mad. His whole body rocks, the bed creaks softly and Harry's grunting into his ear. He craves being filled, feeling complete and whenever Harry's pounding hips meet his pelvis Louis feels floaty.

He comes with white vision and sweat pouring out from his pores. Harry holds his hips through the quivering before pulling out. Louis sags into the mattress, now empty but very well sated. Until there are fingers at his hole again, Louis thought he'd be getting a break at least.

"D-Daddy." He almost sobs from oversensitivity.

Harry ignores him and his own throbbing, rock hard erection to poke at Louis' entrance. It's puffy and red from being used, as it will be again. He effortlessly enters two fingers and the ring of muscle clenches around him. Louis whines and tries to escape the discomfort, groaning and whimpering.

"Shh." Harry scissors his fingers and licks the come off Louis' chest, single sweet drops at a time.

"S-Sens-Sensitive." Louis tries to explain.

Harry seems to block that information out, because he slips a third finger in and fucks the trio in and out of Louis. They get wet with lube and Louis, stretching the boy even more. Louis' second orgasm crashes over him easier than the first because he has never done well with sensitivity ruining his brainpower.

"H-Hurts now, Daddy." Louis sobs openly, tears wetting the cloth covering his eyes. "Stop please!"

"One more, baby." Harry kisses his jaw and immediately Louis wants to do it for him. "Daddy didn't come yet, sweetheart."

Louis goes lax as Harry's body covers his completely, just his legs visible from how wide they're spread. Tears roll down onto the pillow when Harry's long member slowly enters him again, buried all the way in and starting to move.

Harry abruptly pulls out again and Louis feels twisted, empty inside. He feels the binds on his ankles being released and then he's flipped onto his stomach, a pillow protecting Bean from too harsh jostling.

A pair of wet lips kiss down Louis' back, across his shoulderblades and following his spine. His
body was flat against the mattress on his front until Harry pulled up his hips so his perfect behind was in the air.

More cold lube was poured onto Louis' hole, doing nothing to soothe the anticipation and burn. He wanted more and whenever Harry's lips met any other part of his body, Louis would get irritable. His hands were tying him down and he panted heavily into his own arm, when Harry bottomed out again.

Harry was kneeling behind him, thrusting quick and hard with hands keeping his hips secured. He sometimes rubbed Louis' sides but mostly sheathed his aching length inside his heat and whispered filthy things into his ear.

"You're so perfect, darling. Everything I've ever wanted."

Harry bit his ear lobe and Louis cried out, his hardening member was rubbing against the sheets and weeping precome.

"You look so pretty in your panties, Lou."Harry cupped Louis' behind, curling his fingers and gathering the lace. "Especially pretty getting fucked in them."

Louis keens when his prostrate is brutally slammed into, the angle perfect with his ass in the air and nothing else. He can't find the words, any words.

Slowly the current situation becomes the center of his world and Louis wants to give Harry many climaxes, because he got three. He wants to please Harry more than he wants to breathe, and each sacred thrust Harry's delivering with powerful precision is one deep gasp.

Harry hated the lace rubbing against his c*ck so harshly, thus leading to his sudden act of shredding through the fabric and discarding the pieces.

Louis' body clenches sporadically and Harry's hands holding his cheeks apart, those lips plastered to his, drive him over the edge. He comes with a glassy look in his eye and Harry fills him up with his hot white seed.

Harry pulls out after a short while and rubs Louis' ankles gently to rejuvenate the bloody flow. He releases Louis' wrists next and kisses them before bringing both to his chest. When he removes the cloth from around Louis' eyes, he kisses away the wetness from the corners and thumbs away what tears remain.

"Hey there, princess." Harry whispers in his ear, having finished wiping Louis with wet wipes.

"Wanna come back to me, love?"

"Warm." Louis replies, mind far away.

"Warm and fuzzy, I know. What's your colour, baby?"

"White."

"Want your paci?"

"Yeah."

"You have to come back to me for that, baby. Paci's are for good boys."

"I wasn't good?" Louis' subspace leads him to believe Harry wasn't happy with him and tears to
spring to his eyes.

"No, no. Lovely boy, you were perfect." Harry nuzzles Louis' neck and rubs his hip with one hand, his tummy with the other.

"Paci."

"You can have it when you come back. I miss you, darling." He kisses behind Louis' ear. "Daddy wants his princess back."

Louis closes his eyes and when they open again, the spaced out look is gone. Harry smiles softly at his boy, rubbing circles on his throat. He turns on his side, facing Louis and holding as much of the smaller male as he can.

"Welcome back, darling." Harry kisses Louis' forehead.

"My bum hurts."

Louis' remark makes Harry chuckle and grab a pillow they can share. "Means I did a thorough job."

Gasping, Louis pokes Harry's chest. "You need a filter."

"All I need-" Harry pulls the comforter over their heads so they're completely hidden. "-is your arse."

Louis pokes his chest again, laughing this time with a hand covering his mouth. "You're so mean."

Harry pulls Louis - fighting as he is - onto his chest and smiles when a few unholy drops of come drip out of Louis onto the sheets. "I've always wanted to watch that happen."

"You've seen enough of my body for today."

"Far from it." Harry argues. "I didn't get my milk today."

"I do feel sorry for when our baby arrives."

Smiling as he helps Louis to be propped up on his elbows, perky dusky nubs presented to Harry for nursing from above. He leans up and makes Louis hiss when he starts suckling around the pebbled tip, draining all the nutritional goodness from within. The second nipple gets the same treatment, until they're both raw and very sensitive from Harry's touch.

"I can't wait for when there's more." Harry has to put a thin pillow on his chest now for Louis' torso to rest on.

"Dear Lord." Louis laughs shakily.

"Something that's not real can't save you, princess."

In a matter of six days and eleven hours, Louis got every bit of coursework done before he had to go back to campus. Harry was up to date as well and settling back into their old routine was a comforting conversion. The reporters were given a warning by the police to leave Louis if not them both alone because the boy was in a fragile state and should not be harassed.

Harry got home in a huff one Sunday night - the next day they had college to attend - after meeting with his lawyers for the thousandth time.
"Lou?" He called after dumping more paperwork onto the dining room table.

"In here." The reply was from the kitchen.

He found Louis by the stove, wearing his new black cable knit sweater and some joggers with ankle socks. He's beginning to think it's Louis' signature style.

"Hi." Louis greeted over his shoulder. "You look bummed out."

"Lawyers are bastards." Harry mechanically wound his arms around Louis' waist and kissed his neck three times. "Reporters are bastards."

"How nice." Louis giggles. "Wanna tell me what happened?"

"We're going to court."

"What?"

"We have to. We aren't exactly presenting much because it's the city versus Briarville but they need witnesses."

"So now?" Louis wiped his hands on a towel and leaned back.

"We tell our story."

"Harry, I don't want to relive what happened in that place."

"I didn't bring you up, just Zayn and myself. But if they ask, Lou-"

"If they ask I'll do it but I'm not volunteering."

"Fair enough." Harry sighs. "Distract me now, what are you making?"

Rolling his eyes, Louis unlids the pot he had on the stove. "Chicken alfredo. You like that, don't you?"

"Sounds perfect." Harry gives Louis' lips a chaste peck but demolishes that modesty with a not so subtle squeeze to his boyfriend's perky bum.

"Go get clean." Louis blushes and fights to maintain his composure, wiggling free of Harry.

Harry leaves Louis in the kitchen to finish up their early supper while he goes to have his shower. He spots Bolg and Bundy roaming in his studio on his way to their bedroom.

First, he gets clean clothes from their closet and tries to banish the irritating feel of crusty skin. He picks out a pair of black slacks and boxer briefs before entering the bathroom, switching on the light to illuminate the room.

He listens to Louis bustling delicately around in the kitchen, while he turns on the shower's spray. Stripping down to the last layer, Harry's forced to peel his white vest off rather than easily slip it off. The blood sticks to his skin and the cloth, having dried over a course of a couple hours. He's messier he'll admit, but these days have been so much easier now that he is messy.

Careful not to misplace anything, Harry puts his bloodied vest and briefs into a clear plastic bag. That bag goes into a locked drawer on his half of their closet to be later rid of.
Harry steps under the hot spray, letting the blood wash off him and be replaced by the faint scent of his shower gel. He washed his hair and the foam turns red at his feet, forcing him to remember, to *never forget* who he is and what he's capable of. It just so happened that today's victim was a male receptionist at a gay bar.

His blood was on Harry's hands, under his nails and stuck to his skin elsewhere. It helped release energy, all the tight restrictive nerves will always be let out whenever Harry got to do this. He feels two thin, soft arms wrap around his middle and Harry lets out a quick breath before he relaxes.

"Food's getting cold." Louis' lips move against Harry's right shoulderblade.

"I'll be right there." Harry takes Louis' hands and kisses them, one finger at a time. "My darling boy."

"Hmm?"

Harry turns around and places Louis in the safety of his arms, caging him in carefully. He cups both sides of his face and kisses him silly, preventing the hot water from hitting Louis directly.

"I love you so much." Harry wraps one heavy arm around Louis' neck just so it's like a stake of claim.

"I know." Louis smiles up at him, making the blood Harry shed worth it. "I love you too."

"How's my other baby been behaving?"

Louis' face lights up and Harry swears that magic is not an illusion. "I have a rounder pudge now."

"Yeah? Can I see?"

Harry kneels in their well-sized shower and presses a trail of loving kisses across Louis' abdomen. He rubs Louis' sides and feels Louis brush his soaking hair away from his eyes.

"Less than thirty weeks before we get to meet Bean." Harry smiles as he says it.

"We have an appointment tomorrow." Louis reminds him.

"Let's go on a vacation."

Louis laughs softly at him, or maybe it's just drowned out by the water flowing around them.

"I'm serious, darling."

"Harry, we've missed so much at uni already."

"After this semester then. We have a few weeks left, don't we? We can go somewhere far, far away even if it's just for a week."

"Maybe."

"Doesn't it sound tempting?"

"Very, but we have responsibilities here."

"I'd never neglect any responsibility but things have just been piling up and I'd like to run away
from it all."

Louis tilts Harry's head up to look at him. "You can never run away, Haz. I'll make you a deal."

"Yes?"

"Let's survive this court case, our exams for this semester, get every unpaid bill or ticket out of the way and then we consider a good vacation."

"Deal." Harry seals it with a slightly slanted kiss on. "We can go to Vegas and get married."

"Madman." Louis' giggles suddenly turn into shrieking when Harry captures his hips and spins him around.

"A madman who will travel to the ends of the Earth for you."

While Harry pulls on no more than two items of cotton clothing, Louis hovers about in a drowning sweater and no pants - just cotton undies that are hidden well by the top - dishing their food out. He puts brown rice in his plate with the alfredo just because the mental image made his mouth water. Their dining room table has been divided into two equal portions - though Harry would attest to the fact that Louis' books claimed more surface area than his - and Louis' half put him in a cozy little corner to work. His chair was big enough to have him sit cross-legged on the plush cushion, while Harry stared at him from across the table.

"I can feel you staring at me." Louis looks up from his plate and from where he's simultaneously browsing his online schedule for tomorrow.

"That's a good thing." Harry sits back with an empty plate. "You're attuned to me now."

"I remember being attuned to you even in Middleton."

Harry gets up and takes their plates away, planting a sneaky wet kiss to Louis' lips as he passes him. "Still a bitter-sweet memory."

Rolling his eyes playfully, Louis gets back to work while Harry starts shuffling about in the kitchen. "What are you doing to my kitchen?" Louis asks in disbelief.

"I'm making hot chocolate for us both."

Somewhere between putting three teaspoons of the powdered cocoa and adding milk, Harry put the Samsung wall radio on. It was already playing one of the many albums he owned so he just left it be.

"You bought the Fifty Shades of Grey soundtrack?" Louis asks in disbelief.

"Yes."

"I could have downloaded all the songs for free for you."

Scoffing, Harry sets Louis' mug down in front of him as well as his. He curls his hand around Louis' neck and a little forcefully tilts his head up for a badly angled kiss.

"This way we are contributing to the economy." He keeps his lips - tasting oddly of marshmallows and honey - pressed against Louis' as he mumbles his words.

Blushing madly, Louis pushes Harry away with a soft giggle and goes back to work. Or at least tries
"Up, princess." Harry pulls Louis' chair back and effortlessly hauls Louis off it.

"Haz!"

He gets a spank on his bum for that. "Don't raise your voice."

"Sorry."

Louis is set down on his feet in the middle of their lounge on the carpet since he had just socks on. Harry encircles his waist and draws very near, tugging Louis forward so he fell against his chest.

"May I have you for this dance?" Harry asks when the song changes from Beyonce to The Weeknd.

"You may have me in everything, including this dance." Louis replies sweetly, wanting more of Harry's delicate kisses.

He gets what he wants without asking, lips curving into a precious smile when Harry's meet his under the bright modern chandelier.

"I have extra classes tomorrow." Louis informs him. "It's two more lectures after three."

"Tell me what time they end and I'll come back to fetch you after gym."

"I would but I'm quite restricted right now."

Harry bites his bottom lip and yanks Louis forward again, supporting all of his weight with grace. Louis stumbles ad Harry catches him, the metaphor is certainly not lost on them both.

"You're.....hard." Louis pokes Harry's bare bicep where black ink concealed his toned skin well.

The man chuckles with an amused shake of his head, steeling his arms around Louis. "You're my delicate flower, aren't you?"

Nodding shyly, Louis takes to hiding under Harry's chin as they move so slowly it's indifferent to just standing still.

When it was time for bed, Harry had to carry a fast asleep Louis from the dining room table to their bedroom. He tucked the boy in as he did for almost every night thus far, before climbing in himself. No matter how exhausted Louis seemed, he always managed to crawl his way onto Harry's chest for the night and fall asleep again.

The next morning produced wonderful sights such as Louis darting around the apartment in nothing but his shirt for the day and his valiant efforts towards locating the elasticated black jeggings he needed for today. Harry usually took ten minutes at most to get ready, so while he'd ordinarily be sitting at the kitchen counter scarfing down a hearty breakfast, he is packing Louis' bag according to the boy's instructions.

"Thank you." Louis gushes as soon as he's out of the bedroom, wearing his promised black pants and a cream sweater. It was Harry's, it always was.

"No problem, princess." Harry guides Louis to the counter and sits him down on a risen stool. "Eat now."

"Yes, Daddy." It was a joke but Harry playfully growled and nipped at Louis' neck anyway.
Harry got their bags while Louis - with his very own silver key - locks up the apartment.

"My classes end at five, by the way." Louis tells Harry in the car while buckling up.

"Alright. My session at the gym ends around that time so I'll be there but phone me as soon as you're done, okay?"

"Okay."

"And don't stand outside where it's cold."

"Fine."

"Don't let Niall leave either, stay with him until I get there."

Louis knows Harry's paranoia will drive them both off a cliff soon, and they'll probably laugh about it afterwards.

* * * * *

The start to Louis' day was chilled as he was updated on work and just had to move forward from this point. He had a lecture at nine until ten thirty then a forty minute break during which he and Niall skipped campus for a visit to the smoothie and pizza joint across the street.

That had to lead to an angry phone call from Harry who just happened to be leaving his Art History lecture in time to see the pair strolling across the parking lot.

"Where do you think you're going?" Harry growls into the phone, standing at the top of his campus building staircase with a rigid frame and stern glare.

Louis pauses in his step and bites his lip, able to feel Harry's stare on his back. "T-To the pizza place."

"When were you going to tell me?"

"I-I'm with N-Niall, Harry."

"That's not what I asked. You know our rule, Louis."

"I'm sorry."

"Do you know where I am?"

"Y-Yes."

"Then come to me. You're not going to that pizza place with Niall today."

"But, Harry! I-"

"Now."

Louis excuses himself from Niall's company with a broken smile and scurries off in the direction of Harry's Art building. Once above the drastic flight of stairs, he is no longer protected from the man's wrath by any physical boundary.

Harry silently takes Louis' hand and leads him into the building, past three open doors and finally
into a closed one. It's dark inside and Harry looks almost frightening when he towers over Louis with an intimidating stance and frustration in his eye.

"You're aware that I am beyond fucking pissed, Louis." He hisses coldly, one arm pressed against the wall beside Louis' head.

"S-Sorry, Haz. I-"

"You don't take me seriously. The rules? I make those for you to be safe."

"I am safe! I'm with Niall."

"Niall was with you the last fucking time!" Harry bellows. "He was with you at the amusement park and he was with you when those people took you away."

Louis looks down at his hands before taking Harry's lapels beneath his palms. "I'm sorry, Daddy. I wasn't thinking."

"Can you be your own age for just this moment, Louis?!" The harsh tone of his voice makes Louis jump. "Your safety is important to me and you're so willing to throw my effort away!"

"I-I'm not." Louis stammered helplessly, stung in the heart when Harry ordered him to stop being his baby.

Harry sighs and pushes off the wall, Louis' hands falling to his sides lifelessly.

"Harry?" Louis feels so lost now that he doesn't have a safe headspace.

"If you want to go to the pizza place, go ahead." Harry picks up the books he slammed down on a shelf earlier before pushing the door open forcefully. "You don't seem to learn your lesson. Do what you want, Louis."

* * * * *

Louis' not been looking forward to their Photo-Journalism lecture now that Harry and he are sitting on bitter waters. He told Niall what happened and got a sober response as well.

"He's got a point, but he's still a tad overdramatic." Niall is nothing if not selectively diplomatic. "I know." Louis misses Harry's sweet texts all through the day and so he really just bites his lip and takes one of two available seats at the front of the class where Harry can't follow him.

Harry walks in ahead of Zayn with his books and doesn't look for Louis. That hurts the most. He just takes a seat several rows behind Louis and Zayn ignorantly takes his place next to him. Louis decides to apologise and do something to fix this, Harry being angry at him is not healthy for his levels of stress.

"Our Drama, Arts and now Literature departments have a big announcement to make." Their professor tells them. "The college will be hosting its annual live show for three consecutive nights in May and this year we are involving two other faculties. The literature students, that is you together with English Lit, will be constructing a lengthy script to follow.

"There will be a meeting held in the campus theatre on Friday after three. Now back to work." After the lecture students file out and since it's the final lecture of the day for Harry, Louis has to pull on the big boy pants and go talk to him. His classes are extended for the rest of the week, each day until six.
"Styles." Zayn sees Louis approaching them, a wary Niall on his heels, and stops his conversation with Harry to jerk his chin in their general direction.

Turning around, Harry's expression is expertly impassive when Louis steps into his space. He waits for Louis to speak first while Niall pulls Zayn away.

"My classes e-end at six." Louis blurs.

"Are you sure?"

"What?" He peers up confusedly at the taller, broader man.

"You don't plan to do anything stupid again, do you?"

Louis feels the insecurity driven up his throat and he wants to cry but honestly he's deeply wounded and **angry**.

"You said I can do whatever I want so that's what I'll do." Louis' hurt and confusion sit stagnant in his soft gaze as he says this.

"Good then maybe I can do the same?"

Louis doesn't think this is his Harry. "What's wrong with you?"

"Wrong? Darling, listen carefully." Harry leans in to whisper to him, faces inches apart. "Go to class, I will fetch you at the time I deem suitable after looking at your schedule. You do something reckless, and you will be punished. You are *mine*, are we clear?"

"You said you don't care." Louis steps back. "And now you don't trust me."

Harry says nothing in response and Louis' face crumbles with hurt. He shakes his head and walks away so Harry doesn't see his tears, but Niall does and immediately comes to his aid.

"He was crying." Zayn lights a cigarette and offers Harry one as they walk out.

"I know."

"You made him cry."

Harry releases a puff of air through pursed lips.

"In case it's not clicking, you're *not* supposed to make him cry. Ever."

"We have to meet Josh and Freddy in twenty minutes. Get in your damn car."
Chapter Thirty

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Harry felt guilty.

Maybe guilty didn't even begin to cover it because once he saw Louis' course books in the back-seat of his car, he gripped the steering wheel with fierce strength and screamed at himself internally. He felt downright horrible, like he should skin himself and run himself over.

His poor Lou, his princess, was upset now because of him. His arrogance and his foul behaviour. Harry makes a U-turn at the next stop light.

He takes Louis' books and goes back up the front steps to where Louis' lecture hall is. After finding the right door, he bursts in and finds that the professor hasn't arrived yet. Like that would have stopped him.

Louis' standing on the steps waiting to sit, and Harry loses his breath for a minute. His baby is beautiful, standing there with Niall. His skin is so soft and hair so feathery, he's Harry walking dream partner. He's all Harry's.

Taking extra large strides, Harry skips steps as he makes his way up to Louis' level. Louis sees him, that sixth sense was still so active, and looks caught off guard. He involuntarily steps back when Harry walks up to him.

Harry sees the wetness in Louis' eyes, the extra red puffiness of his nose and all around sadness.

"Baby." Harry can't say much else, so he drops Louis' books on the desk and wraps his arms around the boy. "My darling. I'm so sorry."

Louis' struck dumb with this sudden outburst and tries to free himself of Harry's hold. The man doesn't let up and Louis is just pressed closer to his chest, to his heart. People pay them no mind - this is the twenty-first century after all - but Niall is very wary.

"My sweet love." Harry withdraws to cup both sides of Louis' face, pressing their foreheads together. "Why am I so reckless?"

"Harry, I'm confused." Louis' sniffles are not from a past cold.

"You are precious to me. You know that, there is nothing more dear to my heart." Harry confesses, larger hands gripping Louis' fiercely. "I don't know what came over me. I would never offend you."

"You were so angry at me."

"No, no princess." Harry kisses Louis' lips fervently, caging Louis' waist in the process. "It's all my fault. I'm so sorry."

Louis' breathing is laboured and he hiccups from all the crying, gripping Harry back just as tightly. "M-Me too."

"No." Harry says firmly. "This was all me. You did nothing wrong, princess."

"Why were you mad at me?"
"I wasn't, baby. Nothing was your fault and I shouldn't have taken it out on you. I couldn't think straight afterwards because you were upset."

"O-Oh. Harry?"

"Yes, my love?"

"P-Please don't do that again. I was scared."

Harry held Louis' body flush against his, kissing the boy's temple and cheek. He can only imagine all the insecurities rushing through his boy all this time.

"It felt like.....like Middleton again."

"What do you mean, baby?"

"When you left me there, s-said I did something wrong and just left. I thought....I thought this time you really were leaving me."

"Oh fuck no, love. Never. I'd never, ever do that to you and Bean."

Louis' smile is shaky but he kisses Harry chastely and bumps their noses together. "We can talk about this later."

"Yes, anything you want. But....-"

"But?"

"I have somewhere to take you this afternoon. Will you be my date?"

"Can I bring Bean?"

Harry's smile grows into dimples and fondness. "It's a must."

"Then yes." Louis smiles, creating distance between them again. "Go now, before my professor thinks we're being naughty."

The professor for the evening classes has indeed arrived and the many friends of the attending students are filing out. Harry gives Louis one more timid kiss before jogging down the isle and leaving with them.

* * * * *

"Get your helmet on, idiot." Zayn hands Harry a towel after the ref blew the first whistle and there's a small break between rounds.

"You know we don't use helmets." Harry drank some water and spat it back out. "It's the whole point."

Harry wiped the profuse sweating symptoms from his face and neck, cooling off with the rest of the bottle's contents being poured onto him. Being shirtless helped.

"He's more experienced in this type of game, Harry." Zayn reminds him about their opponent, Jefferson.

Harry's been boxing against said man for twenty minutes and he's developed the upper hand easily,
but Josh already shook his hand and told him Jefferson is a sly bastard who will come up from the bottom. Their audience was mixed, and it was Harry's fifth or sixth match so he's gathered up enough supporters in his section.

"Fine." Zayn takes back the towel and squashed water bottle. "Go at it then but don't fuckin' lose."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Josh will hang you if you lose."

"I'd like to see him try."

"He's got more money on you tonight than he's ever had before."

The lights got a little dimmer and the crowd got a lot louder. Jefferson kicked his stool away and Harry retied his hands to protect them, but he knows they're already split and blistering under the cloth. Harry shook his hair away from his face and cracked his neck.

Round Two.

* * * * *

"Why are we in the chemistry lab?" Louis held his books close and followed Niall on his toes so there's no noise.

"Beau wants something."

"This is stealing."

"It's borrowing."

"Will we return it?"

"He might."

"This is stealing."

"I bet you never do anything devious. I'm changing that."

"I don't want to be devious."

"Everybody needs to be a little devious."

"You're ridiculous."

They get the item from a steel cupboard for Beau and hasten out of there before they're caught. Their classes ended thirty minutes ago and Louis' waiting for Harry to come get him, while Niall is waiting for someone to come fetch him as well.

"So...it's a date." Louis is lying on his old bed - not newly occupied by anyone thankfully.

"It's not." Niall argues, but he showered and got dressed just to sit and wait for this person.

"Is to."

"You're a baby, you know that?"
"What's his name?"
"Why should I tell you?"
"Because you owe me after constantly prying for details of my sex life."
"I take it back, you're already devious."
"Tell me." Louis hurls a harmless pillow at Niall's back.

Niall mumbles something.
"Who?"
He does it again.
"Niall."

His best friend sighs and his arms flail about him. "Zayn! It's Zayn!"

Louis breaks into a fit of laughter and gets the same pillow from earlier thrown back at him.

He sits up and puts a hand on his tummy. "Where's he taking you?"
"Don't know. Where's Harry taking you?"
"Don't know either. Do you think-"

"No." Niall stops him. "No."

Ten minutes into the hour one car pulls up in front of the dorm and Niall's dreams are squashed. Louis' half asleep on the bed he used to own, and Harry knocks thrice before entering the room.

"Hey Psycho." Niall nods at him from the closet door, then Zayn. "Psycho's sidekick."

Zayn does not expect flattery from Niall at all for the course of their developing relationship. That's fine because he compliments Niall enough.

Harry ignores them both and kneels by Louis' head, brushing stray strands of hair away from his eyes and contemplating whether he should bother such innocence while he slept.

Louis' blue, blue eyes blink awake before he can decide and he smiles softly at Harry.

"Hello, darling." Harry kisses Louis' forehead. "I'm sorry to wake you and Bean up."

"It's okay." Louis stretches and sits up. "Niall?"

Niall doesn't answer because he and Zayn are arguing about something in the dim closet using hushed voices and vivid arm movements.

"Where are we going?" Louis asks, standing up without Harry's help and grabbing his bag from the desk.

"Surprise." Harry tries to take Louis' satchel but the boy shakes his head and declines politely. "I want to introduce you to some people. Zayn apparently wants to do the same with Niall."

Harry didn't look dressed very formally. He's wearing his signature black skinny jeans and a black
dress shirt with little white stars printed on. He's wearing his cross necklace again but Louis doesn't point it out verbally.

"What's wrong with them?" Harry sighs and reaches for Louis' waist.

Louis shrugs and settles under Harry's arm without leaning against him. He's really tired but can survive maybe one or two hours of socialising tonight.

"Let's go." Niall walks out of the closet first with Zayn in tow, looking red with anger.

"What happened?" Louis asks Niall in a whisper.

"I'll tell you later."

When they reach the ground floor and walk out into the parking lot, neither Louis or Niall recognise the vehicle that awaits them.

"What's this?" Niall asks, sweet as sugar.

"Our truck." Harry takes Louis' bag and places it in the bed of the truck under a plastic cover.

It's a sleek black canyon truck that seats four in the front and has way too much weight. Louis has to climb up into the back seat, biting his lip when he feels nervous being so high up. The windows are tinted black and inside smelt of mint. It still has that new car smell.

"Where did this van come from?" Niall asks Louis' internal question when they're on the freeway and Harry's driving with the headlights on.

"Harry and I bought it to share." Zayn answers.

"Why?"

"Why not?"

"What purpose do you have for a truck when both of you already have so many cars to handle?" Louis cheers Niall on.

Zayn's about to answer again but Louis grips Niall's arm and pulls him onto his side to look out the window. "That reason?"

A drag race track. They're out in the middle of nowhere with hundreds of minimally dressed people parading their bodies and cars on a Friday night when Louis is supposed to be watching the newest episode of Criminal Minds.

"Oh no." Niall breathes. "Have you two lost your minds?"

Harry already jumped off and Zayn turned back to argue with Niall's differing opinion. Louis' door opens and he squeaks when Harry's calloused hands help him down swiftly. The door is shut and he's pressed against it.

"Give it a chance." Harry tells him huskily, breath smelling like cherry and nicotine brushing his lips. "Please."

Louis nods and Harry produces a jacket from behind his back. The noise of deafening engines makes Louis frown but not whimper - he's trying to maintain his maturity according to his age at all times now. Harry notices anyway and he places a beanie on Louis' head, tugging it over his ears and
zipping up the jacket.

"Stay close." Harry tells Niall and him when the blond - and angry - boy jumps off as well. Music picks up from four different corners of the dirt field, escalating the amplitude and making Louis irritable. He lets go of Harry's hand to cover his ears more properly and tuck his hands into his jacket pockets afterwards.

Cars are revving all around them with bright and nauseating colours. They don't walk for very long before they're acquainted with the first group of people. Louis wonders how Harry had time to meet all of them.

"Harry!" An olive-skinned male with dreadlocks claps Harry's shoulder. "Glad you could make it. You too, Zayn!"

"Had to, Pedro!" Harry has to raise his voice several octaves to be heard. "This is Louis."

"Louis!" Pedro looks at Louis and the boy steps back involuntarily because of the creepy gaze directed at him now. "Don't be afraid, sherbit. We don't bite."

Louis forces a smile and steps closer to Niall, who slips an arm around his back. He looks around him and everyone is drinking, laughing and dancing. The track itself runs from corner to corner, around the edges and is maybe wider than a football field. Louis' glad he got tissues in his back pocket.

"This is Niall." Zayn introduces with a smile.

"They're here for the races?" Pedro asks.

"Yeah." Harry looks at Louis intently when he answers, nodding his head.

"You driving tonight?"

"No!" Harry shouts, then laughs. "No."

"Why not? You did well today."

Louis looks at Harry questioningly. The man looks away immediately. "I'm not driving."

"If you change your mind, find me. First race in twenty minutes!"

Pedro walks off with his posse and Louis knows Harry won't answer now if he asks what was meant by 'did well today'.

"Let's get back to the truck." Harry puts a hand on Louis' back and gently nudges him along.

"Haz-"

"Not now, Lou."

"I was going to ask for my bag." Louis says softly. "My gloves are in there."

"Oh." Harry kisses Louis' temple. "Sorry, babe."

When they're back at the truck, Harry rolls the plastic sheet back and Zayn gets his jacket from the front for Niall. Louis hoists himself up before Harry can help and crosses his legs on the towel placed under him. Niall joins him once the jacket is on.
"I'm giving this place an hour." Niall whispers to him while Louis puts on his gloves. "It smells like cow droppings."

Louis giggles and covers his face in laughter. "No it doesn't."

"It does."

Harry leans against the truck rather than get in, and he looks very uncomfortable. Zayn is lying on his back on the truck's bed next to Niall and the latter is using him as a table.

"Aren't you cold?" Louis refers to Harry's halfway unbuttoned shirt.

"Not really." Harry shakes his head. "Are you warm?"

Louis smiles and nods. "Where are we?"

"A little bit out of town. Doesn't really have a name."

"How did you find this place?"

"Hang on, babe. Zayn!"

Two cars have pulled up next to them and Zayn jumps down promptly to join Harry beside one of them. Two Lamborghinis, one white and one gold. Only one person steps out of either and Harry hugs both of them, then Zayn. The gold Lambo's owner has blond spiked hair and muscular arms that make him look disproportionate. The other one has red hair and a biker's jacket.

"Styles. Malik." The blond hotshot looks between them. "Good to see you both."

Harry says something but Louis can't hear. It makes everyone laugh though. Louis' torn between discomfort and curiosity.

"Of course!" Is the redhead's response. "In fact, this is your reward."

Niall has crawled onto Louis' lap now to see what's happening in this estranged communication. Louis frowns in confusion when Harry catches a set of keys thrown at him, before handing one to Zayn.

"Think they're dealing in drugs?" Niall asks a little too loudly and Louis pushes him away quickly when all eyes turn to them.

"And I believe these two are who we've been waiting to meet." Redhead grins and Louis finds that to be one of the few attractive things about him.

Harry takes up one familiar role after so many days and stands by Louis' side when they're introduced. Louis is offended by this and doesn't accept Harry's hand when it's extended towards him.

"Which one of you is Louis?" The blond man asks, standing in front of the van.

"I am." Louis smiles politely.

"Then you're Niall?"

"Yup." Niall smiles and nods.

"I'm Josh-" He points to himself then to the redhead. "-and this is Freddy."
"Welcome to the races, darlings. You have two of the best men I know here with you." Freddy smiles broadly.

Niall scoffs and Louis giggles under his breath in response to that, coughing to cover it up.

"Harry?" Josh motions for Harry. "You're driving tonight?"

"No."

"Good. Stay with them." Josh means Louis and Niall. "Zayn?"

"Yeah?" Zayn steps closer.

"You're driving tonight. Get in your car."

"What?" Niall sits up, not pleased with this news.

"Both of them were going to drive, doll." Freddy smirks. "Next time Zayn will stay and Harry's driving."

Harry doesn't even say anything. Louis' thoroughly disappointed in him and his lack of judgment. Zayn whispers something to Niall, kisses his cheek and walks off to get in the gold Lambo. When he's driven off, Niall falls into Louis' side, stricken with worry.

"Asshole." Niall mutters.

"Hey." Louis brushes his friend's hair aside. "He'll be fine."

"I know."

* * * * *

Zayn won the race and Niall had to run across the field - which isn't as long as one would think - to jump into his arms and almost smack him silly. Louis refuses to talk to Harry until they get home, then he plans to let it rip.

Around an hour later Louis got cold and tired, he needed to go home. He said goodbye to Niall and hugged Zayn before walking back. Harry drives Louis home with the truck and the silence inside the cab is deadly. It's almost ten at night when they make their way into the elevator and Louis leans against a wall rather than Harry himself.

It felt like a storm was brewing and Harry was holding his breath, waiting for it to crash on him. Louis stripped off his hat, gloves and jacket. He left his bag in his area of the dining room and went into the kitchen.

"Lou-" Harry tries.

"Don't." Louis closes the tap after rinsing his bottle out and turns to look at Harry. "Why would you take me there, Harry?"

"It's something exciting, Lou."

"Is it? Zayn almost killed himself on that track."

"Zayn's a professional." Harry leans against the counter with his arms crossed.
"I don't care, Harry. And those men, Josh and Freddy, who are they?"

"Friends."

"It looked like they owned you two."

"They don't."

"Then since when do you take orders from people?" Louis spits. "You're always so in control, so in charge. Why do these people have authority over you?"

"Nobody has authority over me, Louis! I'm my own person and I wouldn't have taken you there if I didn't think it would be good for us."

"Good for us? Harry, the amount of fumes I inhaled tonight is toxic. The music hurt my ears and it was freezing cold. If you wanted something to be good for us, we could stay at home or-

"That's what we always do, Louis! We're always here or at a diner or at college. It gets boring after a while and the same neurotic routine is driving me insane."

Louis tries not to let the blow sting too much, but it inevitably does. "Is that what happened then? You were bored with me so you went out looking for more friends and this is the best you could find."

"I'm not bored with you, babe. I just-

"Please don't call me that."

"Why not?"

"I don't like it." Louis dries his hands and steps around Harry to go into the bedroom.

"Okay. I wasn't bored with you, I just wanted something new to do sometimes."

Louis turns around and looks up at Harry with watery eyes. "Bean is yet to be born. Is that not new enough for you?"

"That's not what I meant, Louis." Harry sighs, and runs his hands through his hair. "Fuck. I meant that right now......-"

The hurt on Louis' expression drove daggers straight through Harry's chest. "My Harry followed me from Middleton to Chicago, and he's who I said yes to. He's who I fell in love with and Bean is his baby. Who I saw tonight on the racetrack is not my Harry."

Harry starts to interrupt but Louis stops him.

"Maybe that's not enough for you anymore, I don't know. If that is the case and you want excitement where it will be dangerous for me and Bean then let me know please because I'm done changing for the world."

Louis slammed the bedroom door shut and when Harry came in an hour later, he was fast asleep. He didn't complain when Harry curled around him on top of the covers fully dressed - minus his shoes - and rubbed his baby pudge.

"I'm sorry, baby." He whispered to no one, hoping at least Bean was listening. "I love you both so much. I'm a terrible dad to you, Bean, but I do love you. I hope you grow up to be like your mom,
you'll ruin your life if you're like me."

* * * * *

Harry went the very next day to speak to Josh and Freddy, and he told them he wants off any deal. Zayn went with him for the same request and both were declined.

"What the fuck-"

"Harry, we may not have contracts but our deal is solid." Josh interrupts him. "You're tied to us, we pay you handsomely. There's no way out, even for you Malik."

When Harry tried harder, he was broken to hear that they knew Louis was carrying his baby, and if he left that baby would be taken away sooner than later.

"You can't be so cruel." Zayn intervened. "That's Louis' baby, even if you hate Harry."

"Life is cruel and everything involved is unfair. If I hear a word about this again, I will make your pretty boyfriends pay."

Both of them spent the weeks afterwards trying to handle that work, and their personal lives. Harry missed Louis so much even though the boy was so close to him.

"Lou?" Harry would cook dinner sometimes - very rarely - while Louis did his work.

"Yes?"

"How was school?"

"Fine. How was your day?"

"Eventful."

They ate supper in silence and Louis did the dishes while Harry cleaned up. Harry stayed up very late watching TV without knowing a thing about what's being displayed, then woke up to join his boyfriend in bed.

"Lou?" Harry laced their fingers together on Louis' front. "Baby?"

"Hmm?"

"I'm sorry."

"For what?"

"For everything."

Louis stopped cuddling with him by the TV, stopped using his special bottle and never hugged Harry like he would in public before. The boy started using his own clothes and stayed on his half of the bed, even when the storms came around.

"Louis, c'mere." Harry would try - mostly for himself - to bring Louis over.

"I'm okay." Louis was curled into a ball and turned away from him. "Go to sleep."

"I can't, baby. Not when you're scared."
"I'm not scared."

"You never liked storms, princess. It's okay to be scared."

"Everyone needs to grow up, Harry. I can't be afraid of storms anymore."

Harry felt Louis slipping through his fingers each day he got up to go with Zayn somewhere and came home very late. He even bought Louis a lively present one day to apologise further.

"Lou!" He walked in the front door, punctured white box in one hand and car keys with his cellphone in the other.

"In here!" Came Louis' reply from the studio.

He found Louis sitting on the floor, Bolg and Bundy doing circles around him while he read a book. Bolg kept trying to climb up onto Louis' lap but Bundy got there first.

"How did you get home?" Harry hasn't kissed Louis in days now and his body is beginning to shiver like a deprived addict.

"Niall drove me." Louis set the book down and Bundy got really close to it, setting off a sneezing fit. "Zayn lent him the Lambo for the day so he drove everywhere with it."

"Oh." Harry sets the box down next to his belongings. "I got you something."

"Why?"

It stung, cutting real deep that Louis asked why and not what like he used to with all the childish enthusiasm in the world. Harry is reminded again that he fucked up.

"It's a kitten." Harry hands Louis the box, Bolg bumping against the side repeatedly.

Louis' eyebrows knit together. "We can't have a cat, Harry. I have allergies."

Harry sighs loudly and has the urge to just kick the damn box out the window because he keeps fucking this up.

"I'm trying, Lou." He pushes out.

"I know." Louis whispers at his hands.

"Then give me something. Please!"

"What do you want?" Louis looks up. "What have I not done for you that you want from me now?"

Harry feels so much of his mixed emotions clear up into categories. "I ask for too much."

"Yes." Louis shakes his head and pushes his hair back. "And I'm sorry but I have nothing left to give you."

* * * * *

Bean was twenty weeks developed in his mummy's tummy when Harry got home early with fresh dinner for the first time. He went into the bathroom and sank to the floor when he saw Louis' paci in the bin. It was the last bit of his will, because he gave up hope of ever repairing their relationship if they stayed here.
Louis never called and asked for a ride home anymore, Niall always dropped him off or Zayn did if it was en route. This time, he got home to a surprise.

"What are you doing?" He asked Harry who was moving about in their closet, bags and suitcases gaping open everywhere.

"We're leaving." Harry tossed some stuff off the hangers into a red suitcase. "Didn't Zayn tell you?"

"No." Louis said slowly, rubbing his prominent baby bump that Harry had to sneak touches to at night.

"I'm packing." Harry states the obvious. "Get any other stuff you'll need."

"Harry." Louis is in disbelief. "What makes you think I'll drop everything and just leave?"

Harry pauses and steps over two gym bags to grab Louis' waist gently. He hasn't held the boy like this in weeks and it pains him every single day.

"This time, I'm really doing this for us. For Bean." Harry pleads. "Please, Lou."

"No, Harry." Louis shakes his head. "Bean and I did nothing to deserve this. We can't move around now."

"Do you love me?" Harry raises his voice slightly. "Do you love me at all, Louis? Or did you stop loving me long ago?"

"I do love you, Harry. I never stopped but you can't ask me to do this."

"Yet I am. Louis, if we leave we will have the world at our feet. Baby, I know I let you down but Josh and Freddy are so difficult and this is the only thing we can do to get away."

"What about college? Niall and Zayn?"

"Our college registration will expire by the end of this year. They're coming with us because Zayn doesn't want Niall in danger, just as I don't want you in danger either."

"We have a life here, Harry." Louis is caressing Harry's cheek and that's the most intimate contact they've had in so, so long.

"We'll build a new one."

"You're insane." Louis sits on the edge of the bed with a sigh.

Harry comes to kneel before him, slotting himself between Louis' legs and placing both his hands on Bean's well-developed bump.

"I found your paci." He says softly, intense green focused on marble blue.

"Yeah." Louis feels so at ease now that they're this physically close again, and he misses being small and happy.

"Why did you throw it away?"

"You told me to stop acting like......" Louis sucks in a sharp breath when Harry brushes his cheek and presses their foreheads together. "I wasn't acting, Harry."
"I know, darling boy. I know." Harry wipes away Louis' tears. "I had nobody to take care of these past few weeks and I can never tell you just how painful that is."

"I tried to stop." Louis' piercing blue eyes pin Harry's drained of life orbs. "I wanted to be normal but....-"

"Normal is boring, baby. We are so far from normal already." Harry presses their foreheads together and kisses Louis' red nose. "I missed you, princess."

"I missed you but you're an idiot too."

Harry chuckles and presses their lips together firmly, breathing deeply through his nose so he doesn't have to pull away. Louis' fingers tighten in his hair and his eyes screw shut when he brought to lay down more comfortably on the bed.

"Baby."

Harry kisses down Louis' neck and his torso. He worships Louis' baby bump and hikes his legs up to expose his thighs where his name is carved.

"My baby."

"We'll come with you." Louis says in between pants. "Wherever you want to go."

"Thank you." Harry pulls Louis onto his lap and smiles gratefully at his princess. "Thank you, darling."

"Someone has to keep you in line, Hazza."

"Who better than you?"
Chapter Thirty-one

*Once a soul is bent in wickedness, it can never love.*

*NARRATOR'S POV*

At six thirty there was a knock on the door and Louis looked up from the duffel bag he was packing. Harry frowned and held his hand up, telling Louis not to speak or shift. The knocking picked up and Harry went to answer, not wanting Louis to answer and face the brunt of whoever their visitor was.

He yanks the unlocked door open on swift hinges and gets interrupted by men in badges before he can open his mouth.

"Harry Styles. We have a warrant for your arrest."

* * * * *

"Get him on the phone!" Josh's angry voice rattles his Scotch glass on the table.

"Phone's disconnected." Their assistant said, unafraid because both Josh and Freddy are prone to bipolarity.

"Send men to his place then." Freddy pinches the bridge of his nose and clicks his pen.

"Okay." Then he adds: "They're leaving, Sir."

"What?!" Josh screeches.

"Plane tickets are booked for...-" The blonde amateur checks his iPad. "-a few hours. Four tickets."

"Louis and Niall." Freddy supposes. "Fine then call Abrams and have him take care of it."

"Police chief, sir?"

"Do we know another Abrams?"

"No Sir."

"Then fuck off and get it done." Josh waves off the skittish individual and leans against the panoramic glass window. "Bastards. Him and Malik."

"I saw this coming." Freddy sighs indignant. "They were both going to leave sooner or later."

"I know but they're such motherfucking cowards."

"Louis' pregnant, isn't he?"

"Yeah." Josh crosses his tattooed arms. "Those two don't get any special treatment. They will fucking pay like the rest of the cunts who decided to leave us."

When their assistant had Abrams on the phone, the police chief is less than eager to carry out this job. "Styles? Harry Styles?"

"Yes."
"Are you sure?"
"Yes."
"What's he done?"
"Will you take care of it or not?"
"God dammit I owe that kid, tell me what he did!"

"I'm not entitled to say but if you don't handle him, Josh and Freddy will be at your doorstep at four today."

Abrams drew out his exhale, pinching his dry lips and peeling dead skin off. "Fine. What charges do you have on him?"

* * * * *

Harry willed Louis to stay in the bedroom while men tried to cuff him, but of course the blue-eyed angel had to step out curiously. His eyebrows flew up to his hairline when he took in the foreign voices, rustling of handcuffs and how Harry couldn't battle them.

"H-Harry?" Louis stepped forward, arm a little outstretched and his lip bitten.

He's so confused and so very heartbroken. Walking in on this, seeing something like this should make him vibrate with horror but Louis is numb to his toes and can't find any more strength than to stutter out his lover's name. He is weak, and void of self esteem at this moment.

"What is this? Harry!"

"Shh, darling." Harry was caught off-guard, but the odds weren't in his favour and if he acted out then these men could hurt Louis by accident. "C'mere."

Louis approached him, smaller hands holding both sides of Harry's face and the rims of his beautiful eyes turning red with salt water. He sucks in a sharp breath and Harry bends to kiss him, smothering his mouth and concentrating on the contact.

"What's happening, Harry?" Louis searched desperately for answers in Harry's words and in his dull eyes.

"Josh did this." Harry spits.

"What?"

"Listen to me, baby. I have to go now-"

"No, Harry please-"

"It's alright, everything will be alright." Harry kisses Louis a little too forcefully and tries to stay as close to him as possible. "I have to go but I'll be back, I promise."

"H-How?"

"Just trust me, love."

His arms are bent backwards and his cuffs are tightened. He knew what this was, what he'd done to
deserve it. He always thought it would never come back to bite him, but here they are.

"Stay." Harry pressed their foreheads.

"Harry-"

"Shh, no." The man yanked his arms back when the disgruntled officer tried to drag him off. "No tears, no sadness, princess. I love you, Lou. I love you so much."

"I-I...-" Louis let a few tears roll down his face and he tries not to lose himself to an emotional breakdown. "I love you, Harry."

"Chin up, baby." Harry encourages, smile bleak and not reaching his eyes. "Don't wait for me."

"What? No-"

"You don't deserve to be kept waiting, Lou-"

"I'll wait." Louis follows when two men tug on Harry's binds and he stumbles backwards. "I'll always wait for you."

"No, Louis-"

"Don't tell me what to do!" Louis chokes on his tears and pushes Harry's solid chest. "Bean and I will wait."

Harry's eyes drop to Louis' healthy pregnant baby bump and his world crumbles around him in small concave blocks. "My poor baby."

"Styles." The first officer who read him his rights and handcuffed him, grunts rudely. "Get a fucking move on."

When Harry was gone, Louis sat by the closed door on the ground and hugged himself, ruined by tears. He couldn't harm himself but he screamed and wept pitifully against the wall. He knew Harry's past would haunt them, knew it would tear them apart at some point but recently he just had a little faith that the universe forgave him.

Niall walks in ahead of Zayn a few minutes later but everything is in slow motion, too dull and soft. Louis hardly recognises them and just falls into his best friend's arms when Niall holds him.

"I-I want him back." Louis whispers into Niall's neck, listening to Zayn on the phone.

"I know, Lou. I know." Niall rubs his back and gives him his jacket. Louis pushes it off, he only wants Harry.

"Help me get him to bed."

Zayn supports half of Louis' weight and Niall balances the other half, together they get him to the bedroom where Louis collapses onto the covers. He curls up on Harry's side as a shaking mess and Niall is devastated.

"What the Hell happened, Zayn?" Niall questions the raven-haired man. "Where's Harry?"

"Josh called him in. The police have him."

"No bail? No-"
"With all his old charges, he's going straight to prison without a trial. There's no stature of limitations on murder."

Niall rubs his face and curses under his breath. "What about you?"

"I'm going to do everything I can to stay here, where I can take care of both of you."

"Thanks." Zayn gets a peck on his jaw but Niall withdraws instantly to go to Louis' side again.

* * * * *

Two weeks later is the next time Louis gets to be anywhere near Harry.

It hasn't been easy on either of them in the pairing during that time. Louis couldn't sleep but he had to, and when he did he had awful nightmares. He ate only for Bean and whenever he went to make warm milk he just ended up crying on the kitchen floor. He slept in Harry's clothes and was extra careful to make sure the smell never wore off.

Harry called him a week after he was arrested, and Louis gripped their couch cushion fiercely throughout the entire ninety second phone call.

"Hello, darling." Harry sounded tired, but he still had that raw edge to his voice.

"H-Hi." Louis sniffed and rubbed his tummy, biting his lip to keep his tears at bay. "I-I miss you."

"Baby, I miss you too." Harry shuffled and Louis can hear how sad he is. "I miss you and Bean. How's my baby?"

"I-I went to the doctor with Niall and found out the gender."

"Yeah? Don't tell me."

"Why not?" Louis panicked.

"I want to find out in person."

Louise broke down at that, tears free flowing and heart aching remarkably. "Pl-Please Harry, don't."

"Baby, don't do this." Harry wanted to grab Louis through the phone. "Don't make me cry too. Bean needs you to be strong and healthy."

"I love you."

"I love you too, princess. I-"

The call was automatically cut and Harry slammed the receiver down so hard the handle cracked. The next week was spent building up a reputation in the prison block so aggressive that not even the gang bangers pushed him too far. Harry never spoke a word to anyone but ate his meals, worked out in the gym and thought about his loves back home all day.

Eventually people tried latching onto him as he was a 'respected' insane member of the social hierarchy at the prison, but he warned them bitterly to never do so.

His cell mate was quiet and they never communicated. Harry kicked up his habit of cutting his thumb or leg again with shards of mirror or glass. He tried to feel, but the only thing left to feel was a staggering throbbing in his ribcage.
Visiting hours came around and as Harry was a more serious member of this all male prison, Louis and he had to communicate with a glass pane between them.

Louis still had a smile but it was lifeless, and his baby bump was well hidden under Harry's hockey shirt. His skin was just as it always was, and he was taking good care of himself. The man felt lighter, and easier in his chest when he saw the one he loved walk over.

"Baby." Harry breathed into the black phone, desperate to hear Louis' voice.

"Harry." Louis smiled, glad to see Harry holding up so well. "You're bigger now."

Harry even finds it easy to chuckle and watch the light return to Louis' eyes. He has grown in muscle size, as he hardly did much else here.

"I've been working out a lot." Harry says sadly, the throbbing lessening to a dull pulse.

"I see." Louis played with his fingers. "Have you made any friends here?"

"Haven't tried. Don't want to." Harry answers. "Has Niall been staying with you?"

Louis nods. "Him and Zayn."

Again, Harry finds himself grateful for both those people. "I'm so sorry, angel. This is my undoing and I know-"

"No, stop." Louis straightens in his seat. "I'm not angry and neither is your son."

Harry's face splits into a grin once he registers what Louis' just said. "Son? We're having a boy?"

"Yeah." Louis pulls out something from his pocket and holds it against the glass.

It's Bean's ultrasound for twenty-two weeks and already a little life can be seen forming. Their baby boy, waiting to come into the world. Harry refuses to let that happen without him.

"Time's up, Styles." An officer in blue tells him.

With a sigh, Harry gets up and shrugs tiredly when Louis watches the handcuffs being snapped onto his wrists. "I love you."

"I love you." Louis says back, taking the ultrasound picture back, little tears in the corners of his eyes and this time he's not alone.

Normal prisoners got the chance at a phone call everyday, but Harry got one visit and one call a week. He used the second week's phone call to contact Zayn, as he would never opt to not see his princess when he could.

"What the fuck do you want me to do?" Zayn had gotten cut off but another prisoner let Harry have his call too, out of strange implanted fear.

"The lawyers won't be useful." Harry scratches the developing facial hair of his chin and jaw. "Just take care of my Louis, Zayn."

"Already am." Zayn puffs out a smoke. "I know you'll figure this out, Harry. I won't do shit until then."

"Thanks. Where are you?"
"In the hallway. Louis doesn't know."

The call was cut off then and Harry was left listening to dead buzz and command of an officer
telling him to move on. It was sickening to his gut to reminisce about his life, to sit on a single cell
mattress and think about how deeply he fucked up by not listening to Louis. If he stayed away from
Josh and Freddy, he'd be at home with both his loves.

He blames no one but himself for this, and he's going to rely on nothing but his own capabilities to
get out.

Louis had unpacked their sealed bags and set their apartment up again as if they'd never planned to
leave. Niall lived out of a suitcase as well as Zayn, and both males were wary of Louis to say the
least. The boy went to campus with them and tried his best to put up a front but Niall always
noticed a little extra shiver from him when Photo-Journalism came around.

"Lou?" Niall's sleep had been interrupted by the clatter of a pot falling and he stopped Zayn from
checking to go himself.

Ugly sobs were his answer and Niall took a deep, careful breath before stepping into the kitchen.
Louis was on the floor, surrounded by the contents of a torn packet of cinnamon and curled up with
his face hidden.

"Oh Loubear." Niall sits beside him, on best friend mode and pulls Louis away from the cold stove
to embrace him. "Where'd you go, Lou?"

"T-To...-" Louis' voice shook and so did his body. "To make milk."

"How'd that work out for ya?"

Louis gripped Niall tightly and cried into his neck. "I-I...I st-still c-can't reach the cinn-cinnamon."
"Is that why you're crying, love?"

"I miss him!"

"Shh." Niall hugged Louis around his shoulders from the back and tried to harbour his own tears
from seeing his friend like this. "He'll be back. He promised."

"We-We want him n-now."

"I know, Lou. I know. Bean misses his Daddy but it will all get better soon, okay? Psycho will walk
through those doors very soon."

Niall stayed up to make sure Louis actually slept without the help of sleeping pills. Louis' baby
bump was so pronounced and healthy now, needing a pillow to support it when he slept. Niall hates
Harry for putting his best mate through this while his twenty-two weeks pregnant.

For Harry, another three days later when opportunity arose, he fought any instinct to grovel and
snatched it up with both hands. A federal agent was working the case of someone Harry knew by
observation, and since the prisoner died a pretty gruesome death they wanted answers.

His days spent sharpening his senses to a point served him well today. He knew exactly how that
prisoner - *Blancho* - was murdered and who did it. The detectives were interviewing
everyone in Blancho's cell block and Harry was the third prisoner to enter the interrogation room.

"Styles?"
The officer had a full head of brown hair, a stressed moustache growing and over-worked blue eyes. Harry scoffs at how empty and dreadful all other blue eyes look now to him.

"Something funny, Styles?"

Taking a seat silently, Harry laces his fingers together and waits for the real questions. The detective sees this and opens a manila file that's been torn at the corner and opened at least fifty times.

"Do you know Jameswell Blancho?" He starts.

"Did." Harry corrects, gaze of precise scrutiny glued to this individual.

"Well did ya?"

"No."

"Do you know he was murdered-"

"In the west wing of cell block C with a glass shard that was stabbed into his abdomen, neck and left arm."

The detective is impressed but doesn't show it. "Now how did you know that?"

"I read your page." Harry smirks, jerking his chin towards the white medical report on the table.

"You have good eyesight." The detective is disbelieving.

"What's your name, detective?"

"Greene. Thomas Greene."

"Thomas Greene, I know who killed Blancho and I know why he did it. I was there."

"Why should I believe you?"

Harry's eyes narrowed. "The wall behind where Blancho was found has four blood splatters, and despite his stab wounds that wasn't the cause of death."

Now the detective sat back, certain that he's just entertaining the whimsical theories of a psychopath. "Oh yeah?"

"Strangulation."

The detective went stiff because that was true and it wasn't in the medical report on the table. "So you killed him?"

"No," Harry's mouth curls upward into a twisted smirk that exposed one porcelain dimple. "I have a price for my answers."

"Do you, Styles? I hear it's a privilege to talk to you and have you respond."

Harry remains quiet, drumming his fingers on his thigh and biting his upper lip. He had all fucking day.

"What deal do you want?"

"Get me out." Harry takes Greene's Parker pen and dismembers the instrument. "-and I'll help with
any case you have."

"Really?" Greene laughs like he's heard the world's best clown joke. "Are you fucking serious, Styles?"

Harry removes the tip of the pen and blows the black ink onto the table into a thick blob. "Tell me if you get any leads otherwise then, Thomas."

Detective Greene screws his jaw shut and a knock on the metal door interrupts them. Harry doesn't look up from the mess he's creating on the table.

"Come in!" Greene watches Harry write something with the steel pen tip.

"Styles' visitor is here." The lifeless drone of a prison official informs them.

Harry starts to wake up, his most horrid inner monster is appeased by the notification that his Louis is here.

"We're busy. Cancel it." Greene dismisses.

"No!" Harry is standing and his fists land on the table with a thump so powerful it dents the surface, but he doesn't flinch.

Greene jerks in his chair at the threatening snarl, looking up to see a beastly emotion take over Harry's expression. His face is smooth as carved marble, but the danger hides in those stormy green eyes.

"Take him then." Greene swallows his stutter. "Give him ten extra minutes and bring him back right after. Don't send any other prisoners in."

Harry doesn't thank him and just walks out after the officer in charge now. He composes himself well until he's brought into the conjugal visits room, where he's allowed to speak with Louis in person without a glass divider between them.

Louis is let in after Harry, and when the latter lays eyes on him he wants to claw his heart out. His princess is still healthy, and just as beautiful with those mesmerising blue eyes. He looks up at Harry and his smile broadens from a thin line to true relief.

"Baby." Harry gets to hug Louis once for the past month and he's going to make it last.

He has to work around the handcuffs but Louis seems to forget they're there, and embraces Harry fiercely. He still smells of cherries and vanilla, while Harry is struggling to cling to his aftershave scent. Harry buries his nose in Louis' hair and breathes shakily, feeling the seams of his composure cracking.

"Hi." Louis looks up with red-rimmed eyes and kisses Harry's dry lips.

"You're so beautiful, princess." Harry puts a hand - with difficulty - on Louis' baby bump. "Bean is healthy?"

"He is." Louis smiles shyly. "He misses you."

Harry's never cried and he has to keep that urge inside here as well. "I miss him too. I miss both of you so much, fuck it hurts."

Greene spent the available twenty minutes speaking with Harry's lawyer, cell mate and all the
guards who communicated with him. He got the same answer from them all: Harry shouldn't be in here. Obviously, it was not their decision to make but when Harry's high-end lawyer jumped at the opportunity presented to his client, Greene was almost fully convinced.

"Styles?" The officer who brought Harry here stood behind him and dared not to touch him.

"Twenty minutes isn't over, Bill." Harry mutters stiffly.

"Detective Greene wants to see you. Both of you."

Louis' brows creased in concentration and worry, but Harry stood and so he followed. Harry kept Louis in front of him, a hand on the boy's lower back and watching everything by looking at just one thing. Over these agonising weeks, Harry has learned to harness every human ability of his to a point of almost supernatural detection.

They were brought to the same interrogation room from before but this time Harry was uncuffed and Louis massaged his wrists. The purple rings around his pale skin looked painful and when they sat, Louis kept both hands on his lap.

"What is this about?" Louis asked Harry softly, head on Harry's shoulder and Harry's lips on his forehead.

"I have an idea." He connected their lips and Louis held the side of his face. "I love you, Lou. I'm going to come home to you."

"I love you too, Haz." The boy laced their fingers together and folded one leg under the other, his knee sitting on Harry's lap.

Harry's right hand stays on Bean's baby bump, and he rubbed little circles over the fabric of his shirt. He kisses Louis' neck and inhales the familiar, sweet scent like a drug addict.

"My darling." Harry whispers longingly.

He hears the door opening then clicking shut but he doesn't move from the crook of Louis' neck. In fact, he feels more protective and helps Louis onto his lap swiftly. It's been too long. Too fucking long and he misses Louis so damn much.

"So this is Louis?" Greene's achingly familiar voice haunts Harry and he hugs Louis around the middle tighter.

"I am." Louis puts a small hand over Harry's on his bump. "You are?"

"Detective Greene." He takes a seat. "I may have some good news for the both of you."

"Oh?" Even now, Harry stays hidden in Louis' neck.

"Is he alive?"

Louis feels Harry's chest vibrate and he clears his throat. "What's the good news, detective?"

"Styles has some information we need and in the time we've been working, we couldn't get what he has. Not even close."

"What information?"

"There was a shanking a couple days ago and Styles knows who did it."
"He won't tell you?"

"He wants pardon before he does." Detective Greene sighs. "This is never something we'd do as a Federal Bureau but we need these names and we also have a use for Harry outside this prison."

Harry kisses Louis' shoulder and rubs his baby bump possessively. This is all his.

"From what I hear Harry could do with therapy and a tight leash." Greene continues. "If we give him a break he's got to dedicate his time to us and will have a tracker implanted in his arm."

Louis takes a deep breath, leaning back against Harry and nudging the man's response. "Make a decision, Haz."

Harry looks up for the first time and the dark look in his eye makes Greene wonder why Louis would ever go near someone so unstable. "Us being who, Thomas?"

"The Bureau. We're in charge of homicide and narcotics."

Harry looks at Louis who looks back with a small shrug. "The tracker?"

"There's no restraint but if you try to run as you did once, the tracker will melt and poison you."

There's an easy solution to that, but Harry bites his tongue. "Do I have your word?"

"Is my word all you need for reassurance?"

Harry tilts his head to the a side a little. "What is a man without his word?"

He was right and Greene nodded at his words, getting up to speak to the officer and step out to call his boss.

"Are you fucking crazy, Greene?!" Their man in charge yelled over the connection. "No, Sir."

"Then this is just a nightmare?"

"No, Sir. I'm serious about this. Styles looks like he'll be useful to us."

"That's a lot of paperwork, and a lot of convincing to do with the bastards breathing down my neck."

"I'm aware."

"Would you risk your job for this?"

"With all due respect, Sir, you can't fire me from the Bureau for suggesting this."

"I want full reports of everyone you spoke to about him, and I want to meet him here in the next hour. Have him released, but if he answers one question incorrectly he's out."

"Yes, Sir. Thank you."

"You want him because of what again?"

"Deduction and insight skills."
"Then I'm giving him one of our toughest cases when he gets here, and a crossword puzzle from Nasa. If he gets both right without a scratch I'll sign off on him."

* * * * *

Harry had to walk through the Bureau's head offices in an orange jumper and every set of eyes unwavering from his broad back. Many of these criminologists fantasised about meeting the Harry Styles after his record became publicly official. And here he was after a month of prison life, invading their territory and staking claim again. Some respected him, and others wanted to shoot him dead.

"Styles." Their leader, Granger Reede, extended his arm to shake Harry's hand and got a firm handshake from the man almost twice his physical size.

"Reede." Harry kept an arm around Louis, as he has refused to let go for the past three hours. Nobody asks how Harry knows Reede's name when he wasn't introduced yet, and they move to the conference room where a stack is awaiting Harry's attention.

"Solve this." Granger hands Harry a blue folder, then a green one. "Then this and you're in. If you can't, you go right back."

Everyone leaves Harry alone - he knows they're watching from their desks through the glass doors. Louis sits beside him, keeping Harry's left hand between both of his and listening whenever Harry spoke nonsensical sentences.

"Done." Harry announced an hour later.

"Both pieces?" Louis chews his lip. This is such a long shot and he's so worried that this chance will slip through their fingers.

"I believe so." Harry takes a gulp of water from the bottle given to him, and tears the label off to scribble something onto it.

"Is he right?" Granger asks the forensic representatives with the people above him in status also crowding the conference room.

"Did you tell him what the puzzle was?" A nerdy woman in thin-framed glasses asks. "No." Granger looks from Styles to the woman.

"The puzzle was encryption." She says mindlessly. "The contact code of a secret Iranian military base from the nineteen hundreds was hidden in it."

"And did he get the code?" This time it was Granger's superior who asked.

Louis' hand tightened around Harry's and Harry squeezed back.

"No."
Chapter Thirty-Two

There's a beast in every man, and it stirs when you put a sword in his hand.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Harry raises his head and Louis releases a deeply disappointed sigh from his chest. It wasn't the forensic investigator or any other official who said Harry didn't solve the puzzle, but it was the man himself sitting beside Louis in a dodgy leather chair.

"No?" Granger raises a thin eyebrow, a smug look filling his lips.

Louis keeps his head down. His chest is too heavy with sadness for this, to look up at all these new faces. At Harry, who he had - and still has - full faith in but won't be seeing for who knows how long. He's torn up inside, and rubbing his lovely baby bump only soothes some of that pain.

"No, because you gave me the wrong code." Harry clarifies, voice like when someone remarkably important is in the centre of the room.

Greene has lost his literal green shade and, like many others, is giving Granger a very sour look. The head of this police department clears his throat. "What proof do you have of that?"

"In every puzzle produced by NASA, there's a six-digit code imprinted into it. Simple really, the first two is the sum of the area code their headquarters are. Thirty-two. The next three is a multiple of the Pentagon's least favourite number, nine hundred and eleven. The last one always the same, D." Harry explains this approach as if it's the simplest thing that every conceived man and woman must know it. "You gave me H."

Granger forces a tight ad displeased smile of courtesy, but Harry doesn't shake his hand when offered. He extracts the water bottle label from his pocket and opens it up.

"Saydey Francis." He says clearly. "He killed Blancho with a mirror piece and strangled him. It wasn't premeditated, he just didn't get what he wanted from Blancho at the time."

"Which was?"

"Grape jelly."

Everyone clears out to make the arrest - the irony is not lost on a single soul - and Harry waits for them to be gone before going to Louis. The boy is biting his lip and looking at a pen that's the least fascinating of its kind, sucking in a sharp breath when Harry kneels before him carefully.

"Hi, darling." Harry wants to fish out what has gotten Louis so empty inside.

"H-Hey." Louis swallows and smiles wryly at their constant method of greeting before speaking. "I'm uh....I'm sorry. I just-"

Harry stops him with a shake of his head and sudden haul into his arms. He goes without protest and wraps his shivering arms around the man's neck. His breathing slows drastically, along with his heartbeat as Harry's embrace settles over him.

"Baby, oh darling love." Harry rubs Louis' back and holds him daringly close to his chest, allowing the boy to hide in his neck and let the feeling of security settle in. "I've missed you."

"I've missed you too, Daddy." Louis holds onto Harry's neck with his smaller hand, pressing circles
Harry presses kisses to Louis' neck and shoulder, letting the scruff of his developing stubble scratch Louis' skin in those places. He inhales the friendly scent that lingered wherever Louis went, and even for him it was difficult to contain the emotion he felt.

"Let's go home, dear love." Harry cups the side of Louis' face, daring to kiss Louis' lips delicately. Thirty minutes later, Harry is given his tracker and he doesn't even wince when the unreasonably large needle goes in his arm. Louis sits by his side, sweater drawn over his bump to keep it concealed and protected from the cold.

Niall and Zayn walk through the Bureau's front glass doors in a hustle, the former with a very worried look and the latter with indifference although his concern shines below his skin. Louis gets up from his seat and goes to them, hugging Niall fiercely around his middle.

"Where is he?" The blond slight extremist seems to have a very irritated and vaguely deadly stare in his eyes. "Where is Psycho? I'm going to kick his- Harry!"

It seems Harry appeared from behind Louis' back in fresh clothing provided by the Bureau and Niall is careful not to jostle Louis when pouncing on him.

"You son of a-"

"As much as I dislike your constant presence around my family, I missed you as well, Niall." Harry doesn't cringe with Niall's arms around his middle. He pats Niall's back and let's go in time to give Zayn a shoulder hug as well. "Thank you."

"Still got it out for me?" Zayn asks when Harry's gotten back to Louis' side, securing his waist against his hip.

"Not in the slightest."

* * * * *

Damage like this takes weeks, months to rectify. Harry and Louis didn't have that kind of time with Bean on the way, and after Niall and Zayn officially left their apartment they decided to sell it off completely.

"Why do you want to get rid of the apartment?" Louis asked, fingers combing through Harry's shoulder-length hair.

It was Harry's second night home and final free night before he has to go to the Bureau. He was lying with Louis on their couch in front of the television watching an old rerun, neither of them wanting to move and ruin this sweet illusion they had.

"I haven't started Bean's nursery." Harry said back, voice low and muffled by the baby bump against his lips. "This apartment holds many memories but almost none of which are good."

Louis bites his lip when he thinks about how true that is. He was kidnapped here. Harry was arrested here, spilt blood here, consumed blood here. Moving out would do many a good thing to helping them get through this rough patch, because said rough patch is deep and bound to cause an unhealthy strain.

"I understand." Louis nods, scratching Harry's scalp slightly. "Harry? If we....-"
"What is it, baby?"

Harry looks up and Louis finds an obsolete part of himself chip away again. Harry's hair is lighter and skin is paler, but he looks _changed_ and Louis hopes to the seven levels of Heaven that it doesn't change.

"I want us to go to therapy." Louis pushes out.

"Do you think our relationship is falling apart?" Harry looks hurt and the boy almost _gasps_ at how raw his emotions have become. "I never wanted this to happen, princess. You know I love you and this baby a crazy amount. You're absolutely everything that keeps me alive."

Shaking his head with watery eyes, Louis bends as much as he can before Harry gets the hint and leans up closer to him. He holds their foreheads pressed together and inhales sharply. "I know, Harry. I know. I just want to patch us up."

"Patch us up? Do you....do you feel we are broken?"

"No, honey. I just want security in our relationship."

Harry nods and grabs Louis' hand to kiss it at least three times before laying back down. Louis is stunned by this change. Harry was always careful with him, they were always so in love with one another but Harry was _never_ so scattered in his thoughts. He never trembled - as he sometimes did recently when Louis touched him - or held on so tight that Louis thought he was trying to become a physical part of him. It was scary.

"Understood." Harry says his words to Bean. "I have appointments with Dr. Ackles everyday at two for an hour. Would you like me to find a therapist for us?"

"I'll do it, Haz." Louis assures. "Let's go to bed."

Once they're under the covers that Harry's been away from and deprived of for so long now, Louis turns on his side and caresses Harry's cheek with his thumb. Harry's closed eyelids flutter open and the dilated dark green orbs narrow into focus, his large hand settling on Louis' back.

When Louis speaks, it's a whisper. "What did that place do to you, my love?"

The corners of Harry's mouth twitches and his eyes are diverted. He frowns absentmindedly whenever he looks back and Louis is still watching him carefully.

A tear slips out and hits the pillow. It's unexplained but all Harry uses as justification is that he's _tired_ and life has been beating down on him since he was conceived.

"Harry?" Louis does not ridicule him, of course he wouldn't. He straddles Harry's thighs and pulls him exceptionally close. "Oh love. What's wrong?"

He hates himself because he can't stop, it's like a damn broke and Harry can't control his ugly crying anymore. He grips Louis with forbidden strength and breathes brokenly into his neck. His fingers pinch Louis’ hips as he extrapolates comfort, stuffing it into his senses and sobbing _like a child_.

"My Harry." Louis can't get him away from his neck, but he peppers kisses on Harry's shoulder and neck. "I love you. Baby Bean loves you. My love, _please._"
He soon understands that Harry has to do this. He’s been absorbing steam and horrid intakes from the world and the people within it, without any opportunity to exhale. He combs Harry's hair and rocks them slightly with sweet words whispered in Harry's ear.

Louis holds him until Harry is almost asleep again, kissing his lips and thumbing the tears away. He kisses the damp skin, controlling his emotions so they don’t spend another hour consoling him.

"I know it feels awful in here." Louis places his hand over Harry's heart and the man immediately covers it with his own. "I also know that you're the strongest, bravest man I've ever met. You had a bad life, didn't you love?"

Harry's bottom lip wobbles slightly but he's done crying and whimpering, yet Louis knows anyway.

"I'm here now, love. You're away from that terrible place and you're here with me. Are you happy?"

He gets an energetic nod and firm press of Harry's lips against his. Allowing the kiss to deepen then pull apart eventually, Louis can sense yet another change in Harry.

"I'm going to take care of you." Harry finally speaks and he sounds just as he did when Louis first met him.

Harry was cold and hostile when Louis first met him, and it was a mission to get him soft. Louis couldn't go back to that, not with their baby in their picture.

"Harry? Harry love, look at me." Louis raises Harry's gaze and makes their eyes connect. Stormy emerald and earth-shattering blue. "Don't leave me here. Come back to me, okay? You can't go back to that, honey. You have Bean now and a new life."

"I know. I know, darling." Harry's hold on both of Louis' hands grows a little tighter and the darkness in his eyes lightens. "I love you both so much. Gonna keep you both safe, I promise. I'm not going anywhere, ever."

"Good." Louis smiles through the flood of relief coursing through him. "I love you, Harry." Harry's eyes are familiar green not hostile green, and he's present to hear everything Louis said rather than possessing selective hearing. Louis gives him a kiss that involves too much thinking and chasing tongues to be simple.

They had no sex on Harry's first night back, but that was only because both of them were so high strung. Harry was okay now, and Louis had his Harry back.

"I've missed you." Harry squeezes Louis' bum without shame. "Missed this."

"You don't have to anymore." Louis sits up slightly to kneel and remove his clothes.

Harry watches him with lust burning away the mossy green in his eyes to hungry black. He attacks the boy's body with reverent kisses before he's even on the bed properly again.

Despite Harry needing to go in to the Bureau early in the morning, they spend the night making love. They hardly take breaks and Harry always kisses Louis slowly, gently while he's thrusting with perfectly deep precision. When they're spent and sweaty like undisturbed lovers, Harry pecks Louis' torso down to his baby bump and pauses. He thinks Louis has already fallen asleep but the boy manages to stay awake to listen.

"Hello, little Bean." Harry brushes the sides of Louis' bump with his fingers. "I'm your father. I know I haven't been around recently, and I'm so sorry, little one. Mommy has and that's good. I
hope....I do hope you'll know me even a little when you see us. I love you, Bean. I love you very much and I promise that I'll be around whenever you need me.

The small speech brings tears to Louis' eyes and he wipes what he can away before an inevitable sniffl e comes out.

"Love?" Harry crawls up to his eye-level after placing a kiss on his belly button. "What's wrong?"

Stretching up quickly, Louis kisses Harry's pink swollen lips. "You are going to be the best Dad to our son."

That does it for Harry because he tickles Louis' sides in gratitude and kisses his cheek adoringly. Louis does actually fall asleep then, slipping into his comfy position amongst the pillows and Harry arranges them so he's not hurting his back. He notices a special pillow that's grey and curved to keep Louis' bump perched and away from crushing his lungs, so he positions that properly too. With a wet flannel Harry cleans Louis and himself off, then climbing into bed beside his little spoon to cuddle asleep.

His first day at the Bureau starts at seven in the morning and Harry tries not to groan irritably when the blaring alarm rouses him from his slumber. Louis has a day off today so he kisses the boy's neck and goes to shower alone with his thoughts.

He stands under the hot spray facing the wall with his head bowed, trying to figure things out. Things have fallen apart for him in recent times, for him and Louis. He wants so desperately to fix it before it's completely gone and he's left all by his lonesome in a world where people like him are despised. He didn't hate himself, he saw himself as a meaningful vessel of intelligence that's capable of criminal adaptation.

Louis is not in the bedroom when Harry exits the bathroom, and the man's worry spikes incredibly. "Louis?!" He calls out in a haste, leaving their room for the kitchen.

Unfortunately, his madness has somewhat ruined the esteemed self control and indestructible front he forces out there. He trips over something small and not at all enough to toss a man of his structure, but his damp skin was the cause of his detriment.

"Harry!" Louis shouts and rushes over in a fit of worry when Harry's face-down on the ground.

"Love, are you okay?"

Louis can't bend over but he immediately kneels and cradles Harry's head to check his condition. He is unharmed and Louis wouldn't know if anything hurt because Harry didn't feel the awful impact of that fall.

"I'm alright." Harry insists, but doesn't push Louis away - he would never - when the boy places his head on his thighs and brushes his hair aside.

"What happened?" Louis asks softly, something hidden in his voice.

Harry instantly looks for the cause of his misery and finds Bolg on his back wiggling his little reptilian feet. Louis sighs and turns the creature back around after checking his unbesmirched shell.

"Your knee is cut." Louis dabs the light flow of blood with the towel around Harry's waist.

"Is it?"
Louis looks at him and nods slowly, as if having an internal battle with himself. "Let's go to the bathroom and I'll put a bandaid on it."

"That's not necessary, Lou."

"The risk of infection is not pretty, Haz."

He finally gets a plain bandaid on Harry's knee after cleaning the cut and kisses the man's lips once it's done. Harry holds him close, heart rapidly beating against Louis' right ear and his lips at the other.

"I love you." Harry whispers into his ear. "My princess."

Louis smiles and Harry even gets to witness a small blush make its way onto his cheeks. "I love you too."

"And?"

Harry nips at Louis' throat and the boy giggles. It's magic, Harry swears. "And?"

There's a soft, harmless growl that comes from Harry's chest and Louis bounces up on the toes of his socks to smother it with a sweet kiss.

"My Daddy."

* * * * *

It starts with bringing Abrams, Josh and Freddy in. Harry swore revenge on the wall of his prison cell and he will get it if it costs him another finger. Granger listens to him diplomatically and allows him the means to investigate evidence. He will not make an arrest without proof.

He works until two and texts Louis every hour to check on him. When his therapy session arrives, he gets an interruption at the desk he's been assigned to remind him.

"Mr. Styles. How are you?" The therapist is a one Ms. Swift with red hair and almond-shaped dull blue eyes.

Her skin is well tanned but her skirt is too high and her blouse is buttoned to the top, although it is two sizes smaller than her actual size. Her nails are short but glistening and her lipstick is a frightening shade of red. Harry despises her at first glance.

"Fine." He answers in a grunt.

"You know why you're here then?" She gestures to a love seat and let's him sit opposite to her.

"Enlighten me."

"You're recently released from prison and are currently working with the Bureau." She taps her pencil on her notebook. "I know your history, Harry. I'm here to help."

His narrowed vision settles her and watches her squirm. "Our help is neither wanted or needed, Dr. Swift. I'm fucking fine."

"Would you prefer we sit in silence for an hour?"

He nods curtly because he really would.
"Then what do I put in my report?"

"Fine." He glares at her professionally. "Ask me questions and watch me deflect every meaningful topic. This session is bound to go nowhere because I'm not going to let you and your inexperience pick at my brain."

"Is that what you see therapy as? A reason for me to pick at your brain?"

"What else will you do?"

"I will give you closure. Closure that you need."

He scoffs out loud and laughs. "You are in over your head, Dr. Swift. You've not had any patients before that are remotely akin to what my mind consists of."

Her lips fall into a thin grim line. "Let's start simple then, shall we?"

Smirking, Harry waits for her to go on.

"You're working on bringing in the men who got you arrested, yes?"

He nods.

"How's that going?"

The session continues and Harry feels utterly unaffected by anything the amateur had to say or enquire about. He goes back to the office and his desk without a word, switching his phone on to text Louis.

'Darling, do you want me to pick up dinner tonight?'

He still had money which Harry could breathe a long sigh of relief for. Granted, some of his and Zayn's assets were frozen but he didn't need those as much as he needed his own current assets. His phone beeps with a response and he puts his pencil down.

'Yes please :) Bean and I want noodles. '

Harry smiles and sends a quick response of his promise and locks the device again. His old phone was taken by the police but he got one the day he was released with Louis that's just as good and purposeful.

He learns that Louis does yoga at around four when he gets a text from his boy informing him so. For now, he simply sends his promise to pick them - Louis and Niall - up since Zayn took them. Slipping the iPhone into his pocket, Harry continues working until there's enough evidence piled up to grab the three criminals.

"Good work." Greene is stirring his third cup of coffee with his empty pen. "We'll make the arrest now."

Harry turns to leave but Greene calls him back and he turns around to listen.

"The team and I are staying in for a long night." The agent says, stepping closer. "The case is new and we'll fill you in too."

"I can't stay, Greene."
"Styles." Greene sighs and puts his pen in a bin. "I'm pulling strings with all my limbs here for you, lad. You caught three people today and that's good, but good isn't enough. Do what you have to and get your ass back here before six."

He doesn't have a choice, and Harry's almost scratching his own skin off just because of that. Since when does he not get a say? Since when is he helpless?

Louis and Niall are waiting in a small cafe next to their yoga studio for Harry to come fetch them. Harry parks in front of the glass window and stays in his seat long enough to take a deep breath before jumping off.

"Hi." His boy is smiling up at him with light dancing in his eyes and Harry is miserable but that doesn't matter because Louis isn't. "I missed you."

Harry isn't so miserable anymore. "I missed you too, love."

"How was work, Haz?" Louis and Niall get their bags taken and dumped in the trunk of their Dodge.

"I have to go back." Harry isn't happy saying it, but Niall's already inside the Dodge and Louis doesn't look upset so it's not so bad. "I'm sorry, baby. I know-"

"Hey, stop." Louis puts Harry's face in his hands and it's the safest place Harry's ever been. "It's going to be worth it. I promise."

At first it's hard to understand what he means because Harry's mind is already reeling, but he gets a gentle kiss on his lips and he discovers new determination to get through a night at the office. He kisses Louis again just because he can, then another time and eventually extracts a musical giggle from the boy.

"I'll drop you off at Niall and Zayn's." Harry declares. He may be mentally scattered but he'll gut himself before he leaves Louis alone again.

"Okay." Louis' so lovely to Harry. He doesn't deserve him.

They drive to their own apartment and Louis packs a small overnight bag for himself. He takes his special pillow and Harry escorts him back downstairs to the Dodge.

"Hey, Louis." Zayn is standing outside his and Niall's apartment complex waiting for them to arrive. "Hi." Louis smiles, getting down from the Dodge with a little help from Harry. "I'm spending the night."

"That okay?" Harry jumps to ask and everyone freezes over momentarily in unstable shock. "Y-Yeah, man." Zayn answers first. "Both of you are always welcome here."

"Thank you." Harry looks at his watch and he curses when he has fifteen minutes left. He kisses Louis chastely but not hurriedly; Louis deserves more than that. "Goodnight, my only love. Be safe and text me."

"Have fun at the office." Louis kisses Harry's red nose. "I love you and I will."

Harry smiles broadly and Louis is enraptured by his boyish physical charm. Those dimples look so different on a changed man. "I love you, princess."

He leaves after he's sure Louis is safely inside the apartment building and speeds along the highway
to the office. The first thing he does is make a cup of coffee and sits in the conference room with everyone else, preparing for a long night ahead.

Louis and Niall watch movies until it's eleven at night and they have to sleep because Zayn reminds them they have classes tomorrow. After spending many nights here while Harry was imprisoned, Louis has claimed the neat guestroom and some of his clothes remain here permanently. He climbs into bed and sends a text to Harry before shutting his eyes.

'I love you, H. Be safe x'

His reply is not instant and only comes two hours later when the team has called it a night after arriving at a conclusive solution.

'I love you, baby. Goodnight xx'

Harry is let into Niall and Zayn's apartment at one in the morning. Zayn doesn't question him and shows him where Louis is sleeping before shuffling down the hall to his bedroom with his better half.

Stripping of his excess clothes, shoes, phone, jewellery and wallet, Harry climbs into bed carefully and kisses Louis cheek when the boy stirs. He doesn't wake and Harry just holds him as he sleeps, completely at peace with the world because he knows it's going to be worth it.
Chapter Thirty-three

The scariest monsters are the ones that lurk within our souls.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Louis was the one to wake up first, and it wasn't because of nausea or Niall bustling about in the kitchen for breakfast. He shot up in bed with a loud gasp, a hand on the side of his baby bump when he felt the sudden fluttering.

"Harry!" He wasn't harsh usually but he shoved the dozing man by his side with all his might now.

There was a groan and murmur of something Louis couldn't decipher. He grabbed Harry's left wrist since it was closest and put it on the spot where he felt the tiny kick. It happened once more, fainter but still there.

Harry froze for two seconds before sitting up urgently and placing both hands on Louis' bump. "He kicked?"

"He kicked." Louis affirmed, kissing Harry's stubbly jaw.

Taking it as a cue to begin a morning conversation so he can get more kicks, Harry presses the tip of his nose to the left of Louis' belly button. "Good morning, little one. Such a strong baby you are, Bean. We can't wait to meet you."

Two more kicks ring out under Harry's palm and he smiles proudly, kissing where he felt it. Louis watches him in this over-excited habitat with heart eyes, running through Harry's Tarzan hair with his fingers.

"Has he kicked before?" Harry leans into Louis' touch and smiles with bright green eyes.

Louis trusts that he is going to die from fondness. "Never. He was a very quiet baby."

"Did you wait for me before kicking, little Bean?" Harry turns back to Louis' bump.

He gets one kick against his nose and Louis laughs behind his hand. Harry's nose twitches to rid himself of the sharp sensation before kissing the bump once more.

"Good morning to you." Harry comes up to press his lips to Louis', a small smirk playing there.

"Likewise." Louis wraps his arms around Harry's neck and holds his close. "What time did you get in?"

"Just after one, I think." Harry draws Louis out from under the covers and onto his lap where it's safer and familiar.

"Did you get enough sleep?" Louis cups Harry's highly defined jaw and searches his eyes. "I'm sorry for waking you up."

"Six hours is the most I can handle." He replies truthfully. "I'm very grateful that you woke me up, love."

Louis hums and rests his cheek under Harry's clavicle on his chest, his fingers laced with the man's.
"I love you." They've been saying it a lot more than usual in these past three days, Harry's stirring inner monster is not grateful. Each time it's said, Harry finds a bit more resolve hardening.

"I love you, baby." Harry kisses Louis' forehead.

They're forced to leave their sweet haven of a circular bed when Niall knocks on the unlocked door. Louis giggles when Harry's chest vibrates with a distasteful growl.

"I don't want to leave you." Harry explains, staring down into two pits of stunning blue. "I never want to leave you."

"You're not leaving us." Louis surges forward and connects their lips. "You're going to come back to us in a few hours."

"Certainly, darling. I love you."

Louis smiles softly and he taps Harry's Adam's Apple with his index finger. "I love you, loads and loads."

* * * * *

Harry stays for breakfast after Louis begs that of him, and detaching from his little Bean and princess brings too much grief to his chest. Zayn is the last to join them at the breakfast counter and gives everyone a small greeting.

Niall gets an attempted kiss which ends with a swat to Zayn's neck because he's frying bacon right now. Louis gets a half-hug and Harry gets that strange shoulder bump.

"Did Niall tell you he wants to sell the apartment?" Zayn sits on Louis' other side with a plate of toast and scrambled eggs.

Niall makes a silly face in response and Louis giggles into Harry's neck. "Why, Niall?"

"Because this apartment reminds him too much of my single days."

Louis is highly amused and so is Harry, as he is sat with a steady smirk while he chewed his food.

"We also thought about selling up." Louis supplies to the conversation.

"Really?" Niall leans against the counter across from him with a fork and his own plate.

Harry nods but he is deeply grateful that nobody points out, even in light of recent events, that Louis should be reminded of much more than just Harry's single days.

"We should buy a house by the lake and live together." Niall says in passing, sipping his orange juice.

"How long do you think we'll last?" Louis asks with his water glass at his lips.

"I doubt very long." Zayn jokes.

Harry's chuckle is almost as it was before he was taken from Louis and their home. "That, I doubt."
"Thanks, Psycho." Niall winks at Harry and it's as innocent as all their interactions but Zayn still glares at his food after noticing.

"What's the plan for today?" Harry gives Niall his plate and stands behind Louis' chair as he checks that he has everything.

"We have classes-" Louis tells him, turning around to drag Harry between his legs. "-so Zayn will take us."

"I'll take Louis to get his stuff from your place before we go to campus." Zayn adds from the kitchen sink.

Harry nods and thanks him before turning back to Louis with a smile he's reserved only for him. He grabs Louis' face carefully and kisses him languidly for a long moment.

"Be safe." He pecks Louis' nose. "I will miss you but I'm not spending another night at the Bureau so I will pick you up later, okay?"

"Okay." Louis doesn't want to get his hopes up too soon but he nods and smiles back genuinely. "I love you. Have fun."

"I love you too. I'll text you."

"Looking forward to it."

* * * * *

The first thing Harry sees when he walks into the Bureau's office causes him to stop in his tracks. Agents walk around him for two whole minutes while he stares back at Josh through the conference room glass wall. With a sharp breath through his teeth, Harry goes into the coffee room.

There's a small coffee machine with large light brown paper cups beside him, a box of doughnuts and a basket of chips. He gets black coffee and caps the paper cup before walking back out. Josh is still there, with Freddy and Abrams.

It makes him smirk around the rim of his cup as he walks to his desk, laughing softly at how funny all this is. He got a month in prison, a month away from his love, but now he's out here and they're in there. Maybe this life isn't so bad, and he needs to show gratitude before it's taken away.

He shoots off a text to Louis about this delightful news.

'Josh, Freddy and Abrams are here in cuffs.'

Louis sees the text after he's showered and gathering his textbooks in a small bag. He worries at first but figures that justice will prevail.

'You sound very pleased.'

Harry answers after Greene calls him to the conference room as well.

'I believe that is my right.'

After telling Zayn and Niall about this latest news, Louis tells Harry via text that he should not be getting distracted and locks his phone. Zayn laughs and Niall looks victorious like this accomplishment is his alone.
They get to uni on time for Niall and Louis' first lecture, before parting ways.

Harry was not paid to be at the Bureau and he's made a total of three acquaintances, since they're part of Greene's team and now he's a criminal informant. Nobody is in his face but he gets stares from at least every person in the office like he's a ticking time-bomb about to erupt.

The highlight of Harry's day is when three familiar faces take turns to grind their teeth and curse at him while they walk past in handcuffs. Prison broke him, and it will destroy men like them. He also takes part satisfaction in knowing that every move he made, someone would twitch and glare. When he sighed or got up for coffee, all eyes followed him out the door.

At four in the evening Greene tells him there's no immediate case that needs attention so everyone can go home on time today. However, a meeting is called in the conference room and not a soul is excluded this time. Harry silently slips into the room and takes a seat closest to the door, leaning forward as he listens.

"We are the homicide department and therefore this announcement got to us first." Greene says standing in front of the flat screen with his tie undone and hair messed up.

"The crime rates were going up so drastically that the president and all who advises him, have come to a decision." Granger is leaning against a wooden cabinet. "It's an um... unorthodox decision and it affects the whole continent."

Everyone's attention falls from their phones and pages to Granger, intrigued by why he sounds so defeated. Harry observes how agents are already frowning and most are confused, even looking at him for answers.

"Listen to this." Greene presses a button on the iPad in his hand and steps away from the screen.

Harry's eyes dart to the fading blue screen. A chubby man with sausage fingers laced together on an oak desk is looking back at them through the LED pixels. He also looks quite defeated, and Harry scans the room to find everyone's expression unchanged.

"This message is to the FBI, all departments included. In this last month of May, we have had an average crime rate in all fifty states of seventy-eight percent. Not only is that outrageous, but never before recorded. Due to this statistic, we will be announcing the annual Purge.

"It may take people a while to prepare and that is why an official broadcast will be made exactly twelve minutes after you, the homicide department, has gotten this. Your part in this is none, you will be suspended for thirteen hours on July first from eighteen hundred hours until seven hundred hours on July second."

"The Purge will allow everyone to release what they've got pent up inside them. All crime will be legal, including theft, murder, arson, torture, kidnapping and assault. You will be regular citizens on that day and if any law enforcement officer prevents a citizen from participating in the Purge, he or she will be persecuted."

Once the tape is off, everyone has either fallen into a stunned silence or is staring at Harry. Of course this should be great news to him, but all crime being legal puts his family in danger. He will not be participating in this Purge, and he needs to find a way to keep Louis and Bean safe on July first and second.

"When was this received?" Harry is the first to speak, and his voice is hoarse from being quiet for so long.
"Eleven minutes ago." Granger answers him stoically.

Approximately two minutes later the phones erupt and every device is ringing as people try to get through to their loved ones. Harry rushes out of the conference room when his iPhone starts to vibrate and he puts it against his ear while he gathers his keys.

"Lou?" He sounds breathless and worried.

"H-Harry, did you see the broadcast?" Louis' end rustles slightly but Harry hears him loud and clear.

"I did. I did, love. I'm coming home right now, okay? Where are you?"

"Zayn brought me home. He and Niall are still here."

"I'm coming. I love you."

"I love you." Louis hangs up and pulls his blanket around his shoulders tighter.

What does the Purge mean? They have less than a month to prepare for a night that is going to include just one thing: bloodshed.

Harry drives like a lunatic and parks in a hurry before rushing up with the elevator. He unlocks the door and slams it closed by accident. He shouldn't be so worked up already, they have time to prepare but maybe it's not nearly as enough.

Louis is on the couch in front of the TV with his bag by the floor beside him. Niall is in their kitchen and Harry can't see Zayn but doesn't care about him when he's rushing to Louis' side.

"Hey, love." He tugs on the blanket a little and Louis wraps himself around Harry as fiercely as he can.

"I-I'm scared, 'arry." Louis is gripping Harry's shirt so tightly and his thighs are squeezing Harry's hips.

"No need, sweetheart. I'm going to keep you and Bean safe, I promise." He kisses Louis' neck and breathes in that wonderful vanilla scent. "No one's ever going to lay a hand on you."

He sits on the couch with a fine suit on and Louis bundled up on his lap creasing the fabric carelessly. It's honestly just materialistic and Harry will personally tear up all his suits if it made Louis feel safe.

"What do you want to do?" Zayn asks from wherever he appeared. "The government's stabbing us in the back."

Harry rubs Louis' bump and massages his lower back while placing affectionate kisses on whatever skin is exposed. "We find a security company with a proper lockdown package."

"I agree." Niall says with a bottle of water in his hand. "Have it installed here and we just wait the thirteen hours out here. Would you mind, Harry?"

"No. Of course not."

Louis is breathing lightly into Harry's neck and one would think that he'd fallen asleep, had they not noticed how Louis was palming Harry through his suit pants. Harry sucked in cold air when he first felt Louis' small hand fidgeting with his button, but got a sad whine when he tried to move it. He simply covered them with Louis' blanket and tried to hide his moans.
"Baby?" Harry pressed his nose into Louis' feathery hair.

His answer was a little extra pressure on his bulging manhood and he moved to suck on Louis' neck and swallow his noses. He was not having sex in front of their friends so he pecked Louis' newest love bite and moved his hand.

"I love you, Lou." Harry comforted him by lacing their fingers together and continuing to massage Louis' lower back where it hurts.

"Love you too." Louis was not subtle about kissing Harry's chest where it was undone.

Niall knew what they were up to and therefore took longer to get out the door. Of course they had a new serious problem to discuss, and Louis will gladly invite them for dinner - as he did - for tomorrow but right now he'd like to get on his knees for Harry.

"I'll see you tomorrow, Ni." Louis squeezes Niall's arm.

"Aha."

He hugs both their friends - he makes a vague note about how they don't have any other friends - and watches Harry walk them out. When Harry's locked the front door, Louis makes grabby hands at him with a bitten lip and Harry swears there's nothing more seductive than a desperate Louis.

"Oh what are you up to, dear Lou?" Harry leans over the armrest of the couch and kisses Louis deeply.

He wasn't going to point out how antsy Louis was just a minute ago, because mood swings were common during pregnancies already. No need for sparking arguments.

"You're mean." Louis tells him bluntly, sitting Harry down and shedding his blanket.

"Am I?" Harry holds Louis' hips when he clambers onto his lap.

Humming with a rather talented roll of his hips, Louis secures Harry's neck with both hands before connecting their lips. Harry groans and guides Louis' body into rutting against his more, always more. Louis' eager little fingers undo Harry's fly and yanks the tight suit material aside to free Harry's semi hard erection.

He pumps it smoothly with a small fist while getting his bottom lip nibbled on. Sometimes he speeds up and sometimes he goes extra slow to trace the prominent vein on the underside with his thumb. Louis uses the dribbling precome as lube and applies some pressure to a little flap of loose foreskin where he knows Harry is bound to give him a good response.

"Fuck, darling." Harry groans into Louis' open mouth and fights a winning battle for dominance in the kiss.

Louis pulls back looking like a *fucking god-like creature* with ruffled feathery hair and swollen lips that Harry caused. He bites his bottom lip and climbs off Harry's lap, and the man's gaze follows him to between his legs.

"Baby, don't get excited and hurt yourself." Harry warns caringly. Even if pleasure - great pleasure - is on the table, he will not allow Louis' harm to be rendered.

His boy looks up at him and Harry falls short of breath at how insanely beautiful he is. "I promise, Daddy."
Their TV goes off instantly and Harry gives his full attention to the wet heat that engulfs the head of his throbbing erection. The last time they did this it was discovered that Louis possessed no gag reflex and drove Harry absolutely insane with just his tongue. The favour was then returned but Louis isn't that far ahead now, he just wants the warm arousing weight on his tongue and to taste Harry's seed.

He leaves teasingly slow kitten licks all down one side of the length, and just the same back the other side. He sucks on the bulbous head and laps up the precum that is leaking faster now, desperate to greet Louis' taste buds. His right hand fondles Harry's sack with his thumb, the left hand gripping Harry's bare thigh.

He can hear several praises and hums happily around Harry when he's deepthroating him, causing vibrations to darken Harry's lustful gaze and turn it to predatorial. Louis hollows his cheeks and withdraws, only to swallow as he takes him in his mouth again until it hits the back of his throat. Harry's hand tightens in his hair but it's nowhere near painful, and he holds him still as he fucks Louis' mouth eagerly. Louis takes it like a champ and peeks up at the man through delicate lashes. "Fucking Hell, baby." Harry pulls Louis up onto his lap again with skin sliding and gliding against sweaty surfaces as he captures his mouth with his.

"I wasn't finished, Daddy." Louis is pouting and Harry growls as he raises his hips slightly.

"Shh, princess." He feels between Louis' legs after stripping him of his pants, and finds a small plug inserted snugly between his cheeks. "What's this, love?"

"Wanted to be ready, H."

Harry really likes his new nickname. He extracts the plug and tosses it somewhere. "Good boy, Lou. I love you so much."

"L-Love you too, Daddy."

Without much reluctance, Louis pulls away from Harry's chest and grabs a hold of the man's stiff length to position it at his clenching hole. Harry brings him down for a sloppy kiss while Louis sinks down fully on the erection. His sharper than most teeth leaves angry red marks all over Louis' neck and chest.

"C'mon, baby." Harry starts to bounce Louis in his lap. "I won't last."

Louis nods and starts to lift and lower himself bravely. Small noises fall from his lips and his nails dig into Harry's nape vengefully, while he rode him with earnest. Harry connected their lips and could still taste himself on Louis' tongue as he sucks it into his mouth as claim.

The boy in his lap starts to pant brokenly and whimper as his own weeping length left droplets on Harry's expensive shirt. He clenched and twisted in Harry's lap to find that perfect angle, seeming over-energetic when he rides Harry. His thighs start to burn but he feels his climax and he wants it, so he whines and Harry gets the hint.

"Alright, darling. You did so well." He shifts Louis' angle by the crook of his knees and starts to thrust upward.

It punches the air out of Louis' lungs because no matter how many times he and Harry were intimate, it always made him feel so full and unbelievably high on emotions of love. He meets Harry halfway in their thrusts and eventually comes hard onto Harry's abdomen. The man follows by shooting into Louis' tight body.
Harry let's their breathing return to normal and checks on Bean's condition by rubbing Louis' bump lovingly.

He speaks next into Louis' neck. "Where did that come from, angel?"

"Wanted to feel safe."

It broke Harry's heart and made it swell at the same time. He leans forward and kisses his boy with all the love in his black heart, circling his waist with a protective arm.

"You're always safe with me, Lou. You know that?"

"I do." Louis runs his thumb along the coarse hair growing on Harry's jaw and chin. "I like how this feels."

"Do you?" Harry raises an eyebrow at him, laying Louis down on the L-shaped couch with a pillow by his bump and head. "Where would you like to feel it?"

Louis knots his fingers through Harry's soft curls and tugs his lips up to his neck. He moans when Harry separates his jaws and bites possessively at his throat. He feels the graze of prickly hair on his sensitive skin and he whines from the amazing sensation.

Harry was extra careful with Louis' bump - their amazing little baby Bean - and is gentle about planting open-mouthed, wet kisses down across it. He pinches Louis' thigh and rubs the soft inner flesh, squeezing and affectionately worshipping.

His lips keep attached to every part of Louis' skin. He locks his lips around Louis' left nipple first, sucking with free enthusiasm. The milk being produced is in a greater quantity and Louis had extremely sensitive nipples from the constant lactating.

It didn't take much to extract all the sweet milk from Louis' body, and leave him writhing with stimulating sensitivity. He moaned and twitched, feeling like someone lit him on a perfect flame. Continuing his ministrations, Harry kissed and licked his way to the space between Louis' thighs. He swallowed the blurbs of come that landed on Louis' body as he went. It was ticklish at first for the prickly hair to be grazing so unabashedly against Harry's own engraved name, or the warm sensitive skin. Once his tongue started to jab at Louis' pink and leaking whole, the pleasure crashed over them both simultaneously and with fierce intentions.

* * * * *

"I really like this one, H." Louis, in the glory of his twenty-fifth week of pregnancy, was nestled between Harry's legs on their bed as they browsed through the profile on the home they chose to buy.

They'd just come back from the doctor's appointment and since it was a Saturday, neither of them had anywhere to go. Today held one other significance but everyone was trying to keep quiet about it until the time for lockdown came around.

It was Saturday, July first.

"It does look perfect, love." Harry kisses Louis' neck and gets a giggle as a reaction to his teeth snagging a small spot of skin.

Two weeks ago Louis confirmed that he would love to buy a new house with Harry and it would be an excellent way to start over. Harry had somewhat moved up the rank of social respect at the
Bureau after a month of working at it, and he accompanied Greene to many crime scenes now as an informant.

The house was in a friendly gated suburb that meant a ten minute drive to Louis' classes or Harry's work. Niall and Zayn had sat down with them to discuss partnering residence, but those plans were tossed aside when the house next to Louis and Harry's chosen one went up for sale.

News of the Purge caused many Americans to flee the continent permanently.

Harry and Zayn hired the best security company to protect their homes and Harry's apartment with their latest Purge Protection Package. It was pricey and costed them both close to six digits in the end to have solid steel doors and shutters, bullet proof glass and a hefty alarm system installed. The houses were protected and Harry's apartment was as well, ready for the long night ahead.

"Darling?" Harry tugged on the rope of Louis' sweat pants until the bow came apart, and he got the chance to re-tie it.

"Hmm?" Louis leaned back against him, as he would with a sigh when he wanted a massage.

Without hesitation Harry started massaging his back that is tight with knots and he slowly works the kinks out now to lessen discomfort. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine, Haz."

"I meant....with tonight."

"I know you'll keep us safe." Louis smiles up at him. "Having Niall and Zayn here will also make me feel safer."

"Nothing's ever going to come near you, I swear it."

They have four hours left when Niall and Zayn arrive. Harry checks on the security system while Louis helps set the table for dinner. Most restaurants were closing up very early, but they managed to get a variety of food delivered before the lockdown started.

"Does the world know what's happening tonight?" Niall is swirling the wine in his glass, staring out the tinted windows at the heavy rain while he can.

"The world knows." Harry answers. "The world can do fuck all about it though."

Zayn looks down at his plate as he laughs, but Louis gasps and frames his baby bump. "H, we have baby ears here."

"Sorry, love." He apologetically kisses Louis' cheek and rests his larger hand on Louis' where they felt Bean's first kick.

"Anyone know how to nap for thirteen hours?" Niall sits back in his seat with defeat sprawled across all his features.

"Consecutively? No." Louis chews his bottom lip, tasting the sweetness from the sauce he'd had with his meal.

If he's grateful for anything during this pregnancy, it's that Bean has opened his eyes to wonderful tasting food that he'd never ordinarily combine. Right then his tummy grumbles for ice cream, but not just plain vanilla ice cream. He excuses himself from the table with a murmur and light squeeze
of Harry's fingers, even though the man's studious gaze follows his back to the kitchen.

"How much time left?" Zayn sets his sparkling fork down.
"Forty minutes, give or take." Harry answers. "Think it's too late to go on vacation?"

"You know you can't leave the country, Harry. Besides, being caught up in the air with Purgers is not what anyone needs."

"I heard the flights were grounded, actually." Niall interrupts.

"Well at least they did something right."

Louis has returned to the table with a ceramic bowl of slightly green pistachio ice cream and cubes of kiwi decorating the top scoop. His odd appetite doesn't even surprise anyone, as they all continue as they were.

"Dessert time, then." Niall gathers his plates and takes it to the kitchen, Zayn following suit.

Harry turns to Louis and the boy fidgets with the bowl in his lap, feeling the burn of Harry's stare on him. "Yeah, H?"

"You're very.....indifferent." Harry says right off the block.

"It wouldn't do much good to stay worked up, would it?" Louis admits.

"No it wouldn't." Harry nods solemnly, pushing his chair back to take his things to the kitchen. "Haz?"

"Yeah, love?"

"I'm proud of you, I hope you know that. And I love you very much."

Louis' sparkling blue eyes glance up at him with a little smile. He cranes his neck slightly so Harry gets the message and bends over to kiss him.

"I love you, princess. You're such a sweet boy and I could never want anything else in this life or the next."

Harry feels Louis' soft smile against his lips and pulls away after he's satisfied with the pistachio and kiwi taste now roaming his mouth.

He puts his dishes in the dishwasher and goes to his studio where the alarm system is set up to monitor the hallway outside and every room in the apartment. First, he checks that Bolg and Bundy are both in their cages safely.

He watches himself insert a code on the bold touch screen and arm the place, listening to the smooth slide of steel over the door and windows.

"It's really dark in here now." Niall states the obvious when Harry walks out of the studio.

"Put the lights on then." Louis answers him from the couch in front of the television.

All the lights stay off however, except for the lounge and kitchen. Everything was open plan and thus led to a soft glow travelling throughout the house. Boxes lay everywhere in piles and bubble wrap on occasion, since Louis and Harry were in the middle of their move to the new house.

"You're spending the next thirteen hours right here." Harry says with firm but gentle undertones in
Louis' ear, after hauling him onto his lap.

Louis giggles into his neck and shares half his white quilt with the man, folding himself up as best as he could and leaning into his chest. "I'll get comfy then."

Harry kisses his forehead and rubs his pregnant tummy under the quilt. Although he had a very sick feeling about tonight, he was not about to raise alarms and cause a panic. He had to remain calm and strategic if they were going to make it through unharmed.

"How-"

A siren that sounds around the city interrupts Niall's question. It rings for six rounds while a female voice speaks into the night.

"This is your warning, citizens of Chicago. For the next thirteen hours, all emergency services will be suspended. The first annual Purge is about to commence."

Harry felt his vision flicker for just a moment. It wasn't all black what he saw, and that was the most frightening thing. The flash is too quick for him to comprehend more than something cold and damp.

"Harry?" Louis' sweet voice beckons him, his small hands prying Harry's tightening fingers off his thigh. "H, lighten up please."

"Sorry, princess." He swallows his disintegrating psyche and let's Louis rest against him. "I love you."

"I love you too, H."

* * * * *

Two hours in and their undisturbed movie marathon is going strong. They were on Prometheus now, after entertaining Niall's request of Step Up.

No screams from outside could be heard through the metal shutters and nobody listened closely enough anyway. There wasn't so much as a shuffle in their hallway outside because the complex tenants were wealthy enough to have security systems installed.

"Hungry?" Harry asks Louis, when Naomi Rapace starts talking of engineers.

"No thank you." Louis is curled up to his ears in his quilt and Harry hasn't stopped rubbing his baby bump for two hours now.

Louis falls asleep an hour later and Harry doesn't move an inch, not willing to part with his baby. Niall gets up however to refresh his glass of water and happens by the door when he is on the way to the kitchen.

He shrieks and the glass falls to a loud shattering on the hardwood floor. Everyone is on high alert when he doesn't move, and Zayn gets up to see to him. Louis is awake and worried about why Niall looks petrified.

"Harry. Harry, fuck! Come here." Zayn takes Niall away while Harry leaves Louis on the couch.

"Harry?" He holds the man's wrist in fear.

"Shh. We're alright, Lou. I promise." He knows he's lying. This is that sick feeling he had acting up.
"Wait here, baby."

He goes to the door, stepping over broken glass. His eyes settle on the small rectangular glass pane that let's him look into the passage. In loopy scrawl, it's written:

'come out come out styles'

That's the second time Harry's vision flickers and he curses softly at how in that moment, his body feels extremely heavy. It's gone quickly with no new sights.

The page isn't moving and Harry doesn't react beyond inhaling deeply and turning away.

"Well?" Zayn questions, disgruntled by this.

"We're not doing anything." Harry replies sharply, walking across the living room to his studio. "They can't get in here so whoever they are, can only cause damage if we go out."

He pulls up the surveillance screens in his studio and everyone is there too, biting their lip or tugging on their clothing. The cameras show everything from an hour ago, when the note came up. Their faces are covered in white masks and hair in black sacks.

"Are they still out there?" Louis asks timidly.

Harry skips to the current tapes and present recordings. "Yes, they are."

Zayn hisses and Harry pushes his hair back. Louis smiles weakly at him when their eyes meet, and Harry can't bring himself to do the same. He pulls Louis back onto his lap after Zayn's gone with Niall.

"You're safe, darling. You know that?" Harry kisses Louis' knuckles and his bent knee. "I do." Louis nods and settles down in this position.

The loiterers outside their apartment stay seated on the marble floor until one of them is brave enough to knock on the door. Harry tenses up as he just got Louis to sleep again, and he doesn't have a single clue who these people are.

"Zayn." He gestures to the door when he walks out after putting Louis in the bedroom to sleep. The other man nods and gets up to peep through the glass pane. He freezes momentarily like someone fills him with the metal lead.

"Fuck." He presses his head against the door and whispers something like a prayer under his breath.

"What?" Niall has been scared once, and he's not going to sleep anytime soon.

"Niall stay there!" Zayn says urgently. Harry tries to get the blond to sit down but he wasn't going to physically hurt Niall either, so he fails in that attempt.

"Oh God no." Niall starts crying when Harry approaches the door and gets a slap. "Do something!"

Not feeling the sting of the slap but still pissed that Niall slapped him at all, Harry looks through the glass and holds himself back from punching it.

There's a little boy with Spiderman pyjamas on sitting on the ground. He's crying hysterically and it's got to be because of the small cuts all over him. His chubby cheek has a red line that he keeps rubbing.
"You have to do something, Harry. That's a little kid." Zayn has consoled Niall and sent him to the couch.

"What do I do?!" Harry bangs the structure with his fist. "If I open up then I put my own baby at fucking risk."

"Call someone then, find weapons or something!" Zayn points to the door. "We don't know who they are but they know you and if they're willing to kidnap a baby, they're willing to kill it."

"There's no one to call, Zayn. I don't keep guns and that boy's parents are probably dead."

"I can't believe you." Niall says in a low voice. "He's innocent, Harry."

"And what the fuck does that stand for tonight, Niall?!" Harry pulls away from the door. "Children are being killed and abused all night tonight and we can't save 'em. This is not our fault, and it isn't our problem."

"So you're just going to leave him out there with those monsters?"

"Yes."

It lasts about twenty minutes before they hear an animalistic growl erupt in the hallway and Niall darts to the door before Zayn can catch him.

"Harry!" He sounds more like he's screeching than shouting.

Harry chooses to ignore him from behind the kitchen counter where he's pouring himself a glass of Scotch with ice.

"Harry, they have dogs." Niall is pleading and if he has enough sense to comprehend his sympathy, he ought to have enough sense to comprehend the danger.

"No, Niall." He curts. "At one minute past seven tomorrow you can burst outside and do what you feel is your patriarchal duty, but tonight you will stay in this apartment."

"He's right, Ni." Zayn tries to justify this act. "It's not safe out there and there aren't enough of us to go against them. Understand, love. Harry has to protect Louis and I have to protect you."

Niall may not really be Irish, but he's just as impulsive and twice as observant. He nods along now and prays that the boy in the hallways survives while he handles these idiots.

Harry eventually goes to check on Louis and Zayn falls asleep on the couch. Niall waits for movement and gets none, so he tiptoes to the door and peeks out into the passage where he sees nothing. No lingering people and no terrifying masks. The baby boy is lying flat on the ground but still breathing and little splashes of tears and blood are flowing on the ground.

He waits another two minutes with sweat on his brow, before slowly opening the white wooden door and being faced with the solid steel barrier. Nobody still shows up from the passage and he quickly types in the password he noticed Harry typing in weeks ago when first trying the system out.

The steel door hisses and starts to retract. He takes everything back regarding what he said about not being truly Irish, because he's just as impulsive and screams just as loudly when someone grabs his ankle.
Chapter Thirty-four

Chapter Notes

the plot thickens

I want you to be free but I can't watch you soar away from me.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Besides Niall screaming, there's the heavy slam of Harry closing the bedroom door to keep Louis inside if he should try to get out. Zayn is up and moving but he doesn't know the code to shut the door again.

Harry's sure this flickering vision is not supposed to be happening. From screaming at Niall, he is somehow yanked into this room that he doesn't recognise. It's cold and dark alright, and he can't fucking move.

He's back here again and his head is throbbing, but not hurting. Zayn has a gun and is pushing Niall away from the door before blowing the intruder's wrist off with a Browning. The noise triggers something in Harry and his sight goes black.

He feels chafing of his skin and when the black cloak is removed from his vision, his eyes fly open. His lungs suck in a long breath that tastes like fungus and trapped insects. Harry coughs violently to his left, blood and saliva mixing on the thin shirt he's wearing. Closing his eyes, he goes black again.

"Harry!" He doesn't know this voice, and it doesn't sound friendly.

"Styles!" He's slapped across his cheek but the sting doesn't register. "Wake the fuck up, you bastard."

"Harry, please." He knows this voice. It's sweet and soft, his saviour in dark tides.

Louis' gone before he can grab him, and his vision switches one last time.

His eyes are bloodshot and slightly bulging in their sockets. He has cut skin everywhere, his restraints having no mercy. His tongue tastes like sandpaper and rust. There's no pain, as there never is any for Harry. His chest is heavy like someone's sitting on him with a ton of hardened cement.

"Good." He is staring up at the ceiling, unblinking, while this female voice speaks. "You're back."

Back? He takes a large gulp of air and tries sitting up, but he is pushed back down. This ceiling is familiar, and has no good feelings behind it. That drip of water and constant screaming background noise is also familiar. Harry screams when he puts two and two together, the veins in his neck and arms standing out.

"Missed us, did ya?" He looks to his right where his shoulder is clean and sees four faces he never wanted to see again staring at him.
"What-"

"Did we do?" Big brother steps forward from the quadruplet siblings. "We tested about eighty different drugs on you in the past month and some days. Those drugs gave you a false memory. This last one had a.....glitch, we think. It failed."

Defeated - an emotion Harry's never experienced before - Harry falls into a hoarse coughing spasm. He feels like a live creature with thorns for skin is caught in his throat. He's back here, where he'd rather rot in Hell than stay.

Briarville.

"Since when....-" He dry heaves into a smelly bucket once he's untied. "Since when?"

He tosses the bucket and wipes the water from his eyes, feeling just how oily his skin has gotten. His hair is matted and containing substances he refuses to think of. There's a tightening sensation around his chest that makes him choke and justifiably fucking angry.

Reggie tries to give him simple Aspirin but Harry pushes him away harshly and the only truly qualified doctor in the room stumbles back over a hospital tray.

"Since you fucked Rose." Eleanor glares at her sister, but there's envy in there somewhere.

Harry doesn't seem to hear that because his eyes followed Reggie when he fell and took a large blue curtain with him. His jaw stiffened at the sight behind it.

On a soiled hospital bed lay a dead body that was female and had blonde hair. Besides the awful stench of decomposition that now ran rampant through the room, Harry saw how thin and useless her skin has become.

Her left arm detaches and falls loosely to the ground, and the sudden movement causes a swarm of flies to pick up from her naked chest.

"Where's Louis?" Harry feels disgusted and disgusting.

"Kitchen duty, last I heard." Rose is the one to answer him. "Oh for fuck's safe, Reg, close the damn curtain!"

Their sibling yanks the plastic cloth sheeting closed after it's hooked up again. Harry exchanges glances with him briefly before looking away with a cold, dead look in his eye.

"Want me to take you to him?" Eleanor is scribbling on something down on her clipboard.

"Now." Harry is not fucking about with anything anymore. He's been fooled once and made to leave Louis all alone.

Rose clears her throat and nudges Eleanor so hard that her pencil flies across the room. There's no apology coming her way either.

We'll get out of here. Not easily, but we will. Harry missed that reassuring voice in his head, and smirks down at his legs when he hears the serpent again. Finally.

Eleanor sees him smile, like being back at Briarville isn't properly registering. He's a strong mind and not easy to break at all, but it's getting easier now that all the recovery he once had under his belt has been reversed.
"Rose, if you do that one more fucking time I will rip that foetus out of you." Eleanor threatens heatedly.

Harry's head snaps up, and the serpent in his head rears its head with interest. It peeks through the windows of Harry's eyes and much like Harry himself, snarls at the extra little pudge on Rose's tummy.

*It's lies.*

Harry wants the serpent to be right and he's willing to give blood to uphold that. Rose steps forward with her white doctor's coat and crisp clean clothes underneath. She reaches for Harry's hand and ignores the ugly frown on his face. Smiling gingerly, she places his palm on her front where the pudge is.

*The whore's a liar.*

"No." Harry pushes her away, not worried about harming her.

"Why would I lie to the father of my child?"
Chapter Thirty-Five

We loved with a love that was more than love. - Edgar Allen Poe

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Finding Louis is Harry's first and only objective as soon as he's gotten the turmoil in his druginfested body out into a metal bucket with force. He changes into clothes that aren't paper-thin and anti-insulating, while staying locked in a tiny room that smelled of death and body fluids.

It's a mess. Everything is. Harry's mind is jumbled and he will never have time to get things straight because the wasted time will cost him something dire. He won't give Rose the time of day and the reptile that slivers about in the confines of his brain agrees.

The whore is a liar.

He's left to find his way out of this new wing on his own and he takes a little longer than needed so he can map out what passageways there are. Rose has left by the looks of the empty room he steps out into from where he changed.

The first thing to capture Harry's attention is the bed that he spent the last month on, with its flickering overhead light and thin mattress. He had the blisters on his back and thighs to prove that contraption's lesser standard, and of course the cruelty of its owners.

How could he not realise it was all fake? All his own imagination when he wanted nothing more than for it to be real?

Don't be weak. This is not the place to be weak.

He got out of Briarville in that dream and maybe there were a few dozen obstacles thrown at his beloved and him in that alternate life, but he'd give anything to be there instead.

Go to Louis.

Harry doesn't waste another second, and starts on his way to the common room. He knows where that is, and almost wishes he didn't. Those tall double doors, ones he thought were once long gone, stood before him now like they were mocking him. He thought he and Louis escaped them? Such idiocy.

Don't let it fucking eat you. You didn't get out, fucking fine. We'll do it for real this time.

"I know." Harry will never give up hope of getting Louis out, even if it's just Louis at the end of the day. "I know we will."

He pushes the door open with his forearm and walks through. It's like stepping into a furnace with only box fans to circulate the warm air and continuously swirl it about until every person inside is sick.

The walls were dull and falling apart as usual, the patients were in their regular spots from before Harry went under and their attendents are just as tempremental. There's no Zayn on the couch they had claimed by the door, nor is there Louis.
The chicken bone girl from before when Harry was telling Louis fantastical stories about getting out and being free, is knawing on her bandaged index finger and leaning against the couch leg. Harry watches her for a few seconds while she shouts incoherently at another patient who tries to sit on the couch. That patient is far from scrawny and it's so sudden like a silent movie when he he grabs the chicken bone girl by her hair, and throws her down on the couch.

Her screams get louder and more pained, but the attendents seem to enjoy the show more than care about saving her from her rapist. Harry's fists curl and tighten, but he doesn't move forward either.

*No sentiment. There's no point in saving someone like that. Go to Louis.*

Picking up the pace through the common room, Harry bursts through the only open back door and is welcomes by the smell of oil and bread. The kitchen, anyone would know this. His wild eyes search for *that* familiar face, not just anyone with features he recognised.

A humble elderly in a nun's dress is kneading dough at a table in front of where Harry stood. It's strong and made of sanded wood, with people seated on either side. She looks up from her hands and smiles a gentle smile.

"Louis? Look, love." She is looking at someone directly opposite her, who is seated and seems suddenly frozen with nerves.

Twitching fingers and actively eccentric, Harry waits for the two seconds it takes Louis to stand and look at him.

Even though Harry spent the last month - in his head the time span was greater - gazing at Louis and loving him in ways he yearns to now, it's like waking up from a lifetime coma. Louis' only been pregnant without him for a month and his precious baby bump jutted out just a bit under the knitted sweater he wore. No dirty facial hair, not even greasy skin. Louis wasn't radiant but he was truly, undoubtably beautiful in Harry's eyes.

"Louis." Harry is well coordinated and very vigilant in any of his acts, but when Louis' stepped past the bench that separated them he pulled him into a carefree embrace. "My darling, lovely Louis."

"Stop talking." Louis smells of pastry and talcum powder but he's gripping Harry's forearms so tightly and there are tears rolling down his cheeks when there shouldn't be. "Just....stop."

He let's Louis have this moment at the expense of having everyone in the room watching them. Neither can care because they've been onguard when it came to people's eyes, but now they care not. Harry keeps Louis against him like no force in the world can get to them, tear them apart. His left arm is steels around Louis' waist and the other around his back.

"Where were you?" Louis decides to speak when he's half certain he's got all the saltwater needed out of his body. "Where *were* you?!

"I'm sorry." Harry has to nearly fight to put a kiss on Louis' forehead because the boy is squirming and twisting about. "I can never truly say how sorry I am, love."

Louis locks his arms around Harry's neck so that he stays bent and close to his shoulder. His thumbs rub back and forth over the red, rough and bruised skin. If Harry could feel the pain, he'd be experiencing the worst itch and most troublesome soreness.

"You're thin." Louis tilts Harry's head side to side and feels his heart sink deep at the sight of sulken bones on his face and arms. "You need to eat something."
Harry's not ambitious enough to try picking Louis up as he still has a good bit of energy to regain before he can do half as many things as he could a month ago. Louis awards him a kiss on the neck where the skin is just damp but not ailing, and takes one arm away from his waist.

He looks over his shoulder at the nun and speaks ardenty. "Please, Sister Jane, he needs food." "Of course, dear. Come and sit." She clears a spot at the table and Louis leads Harry to it, sitting him down on the bench.

Louis pushes Harry down on the seat and makes him eat all that he can, drink water though it tastes like zinc. He pushes Harry's hands away when the man tries to grab him.

"Eat, Harry. Please." Louis instructs as top priority, even if all he wants is to curl up on Harry's lap and hide from the world.

Harry eats like a starved beast of the wild, but nobody calls him out on the gluttany. The patients finish their kitchen duty and leave, so that just the reunited couple and the nun remain.

"Why is the back of your shirt bloody, Harry?" Louis pulls the collar of Harry's shirt aside and let's the sores blossoming breathe. He gasps. "Oh God."

Louis directs Harry's attention forward while he uses a pair of scissors to tear through the shirt. The sight is horrible but Harry can't sense it, can't possibly feel it. He holds back the water brimming in his eyes, and fetches a bowl of water with clean white cotton wool to clean the bleeding blisters. He spreads medical ointment over the broken skin and Sister Jane gives him fresh bandages to cover up with.

He takes time to notice how Harry's muscle has changed slightly. The skin is looser but the tough muscle is sticking stubbornly beneath the flab. The bones of his spinal column and ribcage show through the skin too, and Louis wants to break into fresh tears at the sight.

"Louis, it is late. Take Harry to your room as soon as you're done." Sister Jane tells them upon her exit.

Louis takes care of the blisters on every spot of skin he can find. Thighs, back and some of his upper right arm. He redresses the bandage on Harry's left hand. In the end, Harry needs new clothes and due to Sister Jane he gets more comfortable attire that don't rub against him harshly.

"Wait." Harry feels like he's speaking those first words to Louis all over again when his hand clasps his wrist and holds him near.

Those familiar, grounding blue eyes meet Harry's and even the serpent has nothing to say about how it comforting it is to have this boy back. Harry raises his left hand to Louis' cheek and disregards the emasculating feeling that swells when his palm touches the soft skin of Louis' cheek with one less finger branching from it. Louis leans into him anyway and accepts his kiss when it is offered.

It's slow and unhurried like all their singular kisses are meant to be. It's even nervous at first because what if they no longer work well together? What if Harry's disappearance left Louis all to himself? Harry thinks of all this when he pulls Louis' lips a little closer and the taste of salt from their tears mixes with the intimacy.

"No." Harry shakes his head, drawing back and carefully wiping away Louis' tears. "We are alive and we are together. You must not be sad anymore."

"We are not free." Louis whispers brokenly. "We may never be."
"We will be."

"When we close our eyes and they never open again. That is the only freedom I know, when trapped in a place like this."

Harry dismisses Louis' words and kisses his one more time, mumbling loving phrases to his lips and cheek. "If it costs me my life, you and Bean will walk out of here. I swear it."

"If-" Louis takes both his hands in his. "-it comes to that, know that we will never walk out without you."

* * * *

Things will never be normal again. Not for Louis, and certainly not for Harry.

Neither has changed in the month that Harry was strapped down on a hospital bed and drugged until his mind was mashed into nothing. Louis learns that the drugs took a big chunk from Harry, and he was still getting bits of his memory and focus back.

They were allowed outside when the sun shone but Harry stayed in their room, locked behind a steel door and Louis never left his side.

"You need to get out there, Haz." Louis brushes Harry's hair back and puts his head on his shoulder. "You need exercise and the fresh air would do you good."

"I'm twenty-six, aren't I?" Harry picked at their pillow and loosened all the threads.

"Yes."

"When is my birthday?" Harry knew this answer, but he was trying to drive a point home.

"February first." Louis looks at his own lap and sits back against the wall.

"I'm twenty-seven." Harry's voice is a husk of the strong man that stood outside these walls and took on every challenge with a smirk. "I'm twenty-fuckin'-seven and I'm stuck in the worst place on earth. I can't protect you and Bean here, I can hardly keep myself in check."

Louis sighs loudly and turns towards the wall for a moment. It draws out for another minute until he decides on what's the right thing to say. "I just got you back, Harry. Please don't provoke these people by doing something rash."

We won't. "I won't." If we did, we'd be signing our own death wish.

"Promise?"

Promise him. "I promise."

* * * *

A day goes by and Harry's blisters close up but they will take a lot longer to heal completely. Sister Jane supplies the medicine and bandages, but Harry would rather cause a scene than let her touch him. Only Louis can.

"Harry, Louis will just be doing the same thing I would." She holds her hands up as if she's dealing with an untamed animal.

"Then he can fucking do it." He snarls, wiping the kitchen table clean of all its dishes and food. Everything flies and lands across the floor.
"Harry!"

"Fuck off!" He shouts back, twice as loud and a great amount more threatening. "I need Louis!"

*He said don't bring attention to yourself.*

Harry ignores the voice in his head. It's been heavy all morning and the drugs are still being flushed out of his system, so he can't eat without throwing up. He's sluggish and can't find the strength to not scream, because nobody's taking him seriously if he's not shouting and breaking things.

Louis hears the commotion and comes in from the common room. He stares in stunned realisation at the mess on the floor, the fearful expression on Sister Jane's face, the caged beast look that darkens Harry's eye colour.

"Harry?" Louis sets the tray in his hand down and steps forward. He frightens Sister Jane with his quick footed movements forward but Louis knows no matter how lost Harry is he will never lift his hand to him.

*Get the hag out. You just need Louis.*

"Leave." He looks at Sister Jane, and when she hesitates he doesn't refrain from raising his voice.

"Leave!"

Louis shoots her an apologetic look on her way out, and he rushes to Harry where he pushes the unruly hair away and examines the bags under his eyes.

"Gonna tell me what's wrong, Haz? You scared the only person I trust here." The boy says slowly and softly with an adorably endearing lilt.

*What is he saying? "What about me then?!"*

"I meant, people who were here beforehand. We need their help."

*No we don't.*

"We do."

Harry looks at him incredulously. He knows he didn't say that out loud. Louis giggles - even the serpent sinks and listens closely to the beautiful sound - and winks at Harry. An outsider would deem him mentally unbalanced for being so lighthearted with Harry when he's like this but as Louis' certain of his name, he knows there's no other way to helping Harry right now.

"C'mon. I'm tired, Daddy."

Harry follows Louis out of the kitchen dutifully and doesn't look up from where their hands are connected. He can see his long thumb stroking Louis' knuckles like he always does and finds himself moving just a little closer to his wonderful boy with so much patience for him. The hallways are cold and the floors are damp but their rubber-soled shoes are good enough to keep the water out. Louis gets them to their room in one piece and they slip inside to find it just as they left it.

"Lock the door please." Louis asks politely of him with his back faced to him. How rude.

Harry does so quickly and looks back at Louis expectantly. The boy is pulling a plastic package that held his nipple pads and a little roll of medicated tape.
Warm fingers slide across Louis' bare skin when he removes his shirt. He gasps and settles back into the touch when he recognises that feeling, that endearment. Harry presses up against his back, large hands overlapping on his hips and lips ghosting over his shoulder.

"Help me put them on please." Louis turns around in this calming embrace and Harry's hands slide over to his back.

Harry nods and without warning drops to his knees in one fluid act. He hits his knees on the cold stone and Louis tugs harshly on his hair to get him back up, but he's already mouthing at the boy's chest like it's his job.

Louis moans and hisses at the sensitivity, his head rolling back on his shoulders when Harry sucks one nipple until it's angrily red and perky. The slight swelling on each side goes down with Harry's gentle treatment. The man seems saddened when the first nipple is drained so he slowly rubs the warm skin around it until the last drops of Louis' milk come out.

The second side has Harry completely wrapped around Louis' waist and burying his face in the skin of his chest. He nibbles and suckles until there's nothing left but the moisture of his own saliva, and he withdraws but doesn't move away.

Louis cards his hands through Harry's hair with his breathing rapidly slowing for the sake of Bean. Harry gives the bump a loving kiss and whispers something soft to his developing baby before standing up.

"Thank you." Louis says against his neck after the new nipple pads are taped down and they're lying on the iron bunk bed together. "What happened with you earlier, Haz?"

_Tell him nothing._ "I feel helpless."

"Why do you feel helpless?"

"You've managed to earn the respect of most of the patients and workers. They protected you when I couldn't. I was drugged and held down for a month and when I get out, I'm still just a walking experiment."

"Who told you that?" Louis looks at him worriedly, angling his face towards him when Harry looked away.

"No one has to tell me, Lou."

"Let me say this then." Louis sits up on Harry's lower front and makes sure he's listening. "When we were out there, you took care of me and made me feel safe. That's what counts because in here people will go at you for a certain amount of time before they're bored. In the real world, the torment never stops. The danger never goes away. You kept us safe during that, Bean and I. Just like I know you will when we get out of here."

"What do you think is holding me back now then?" Harry asks in pondering.

"You're holding yourself back, Haz." Louis answers. "Set your mind on getting us out and I know it will happen. But not now."

"What?"

"I want you to get better first. Regain your strength and be able to think clearly."
Do it and get it done fucking fast because neither of us can survive in this place.

"I fucking know!" Harry curses at the voice.

"Harry?" Louis is leaning away and has this hurt little frown on his features.

"Not you, Lou. Never you." Harry turns on his side so he doesn't mess the only sheets they have with blood from his blisters, and brings Louis in close to him.

"What's wrong then?" Louis' lips are moving against Harry's throat as he spoke.

"The voice is back. I thought I didn't have them anymore."

You had me before you had him.

"Want me to distract you?" Louis asks innocently, fingers playing with the curls on Harry's cheek. "I can just talk to you."

Harry gives him an encouraging squeeze. "Tell me what this month held for you."

Louis begins to tell him all about the different patients he learned to tolerate while Harry was away. He plays with Harry's hair and occasionally kissed a spot of skin, tries to keep his cool for him. Harry finds his exhaustion putting him to sleep before Louis is done speaking. He hugs Louis' middle and sleeps with his eyes closed like he would if they were in their own bed.

The night falls soon after Louis goes to sleep. The boy wakes up moments after the first scream, but he finds Harry fast asleep buried in the front of his shirt. He blocks his ears and falls asleep again, no longer feeling the dread he felt the first time.

* * * * *

"We've done our tests." Reggie is sitting at the desk in their room. "We should let them go."

"Let them go?" His brother mocks as he walks pass as lies on the bed. "Let them go and have them tell the whole world what Briarville is up to?"

"With our tests done, we can move to Spain as planned."

"That plan's been altered, don't you think?" Rose is sitting cross-legged against the headboard, gesturing to her pregnant tummy.

"We're not leaving until Styles does something about this." Eleanor contributes. "He will do right by our sister because it's his fucking spawn."

Reggie tries not to point out to them that Harry did not contribute wholeheartedly to that baby. He just sighs and rubs his temples tiredly. "I don't think it's fair. Louis is having the only baby Harry will care for."

Rose glares at her brother and her love for him is momentarily overshadowed with anger. Envy too. Envy because Harry loved Louis and his baby, but he pushed her own poor baby away. How could he be so cruel?

"Don't worry, love." Eleanor assures her and their lesser understanding brother also pats her tummy affectionately. "We will see this done."

* * * * *
Zayn's been here for a week and he can't say it's better being locked up in Briarville's new resident doctor's chambers than out there. He's constantly poked at with a fire poker or jabbed with other strange instruments that leave him pricked and bleeding. He's got a bust lip and broken jaw from talking back one night. It was poorly bandaged and he had excruciating pain there.

"Good evening." The doctor with grey hair but young features comes to sit by him on the sofa.

Zayn can't physically move because he's chained. Ever since that day he got yard duty and Louis got kitchen work, they were separated with Harry not in the picture. This doctor, Tyrell, whisked him off to Patterson's old room and handcuffed him to a couch.

"How's your jaw?" Tyrell's sparkling black eyes are more daunting this evening than any other.

"Should we put some ointment there?"

Zayn wants to close his eyes and shake his head, so he does. He gets a sound smack for disagreeing and Tyrell stalks over to his desk to gather the right cream and oil. He heats the oil over a Bunsen burner and walks back over with a brush in hand. The cream is rubbed in first, and Zayn cries out when he presses too harshly on the swelling.

The oil comes next, and his bloodcurdling screech is enough to alert everyone three floors down that he's being inhumanely treated.

Zayn passes out from the pain and his head lolls to the side lifelessly, though his chest labours to get air in then exhale. He's on his last, the doctor can tell.

* * * * *

Harry woke Louis up by trembling so severely it shook the bed and Louis.

"Harry?" Louis tried to wake him urgently. "Harry!"

The man jolted awake but the shivering never stopped. Louis took him away from the wall and stood up, turning Harry on his front to check the marks on his back.

"W-W-Wha-"

"Shh." Louis pulled Harry's shirt up over his shoulders and grazed the bandages with his fingertips.

The shouting has escalated, the screams and cries for help. The pleas for aid outside and they're safely locked up in their room where nobody can enter, and Louis can't get help from without the area. Louis chokes on his worry as he carefully peels the bandages off with blurry vision, and hushes Harry everytime he tries to talk.

"You're so stubborn." Louis teases but there are tears in his words, pain in his heavy heart.

He has bandages and basic tools for taking care of himself or Harry should an injury occur. He will use it all now, if he can do well enough to fix what's going wrong on Harry's back.

The blisters have worsened suddenly and started to bleed with other matter leaking out from the broken, scabbed skin. There were red worts building around the open blisters, and festering quickly.

"Are you cold?" Louis wipes the sweat from Harry's neck and brow with a clean rag he washes himself everyday in the kitchen.

"N-Nn-N."
"You have to let these breathe." Louis pushes his hair back. "I'll cover you up afterwards."

Harry tries turning around and Louis snaps at him. He's filled with worry and he cannot held accountable for the words that escape him. He is forced to use a little kettle and gas stove on the desk - given to him by Sister Jane for late lonely nights - to heat up water in a bowl.

It would be excrutiating if Harry could feel it. Louis has to clean all the blisters patiently, slowly taking off the scabs and dampening the pale skin with water. Harry is sleeping again, soothed by the warmth of the water and Louis' touch.

It takes a whole ten minutes to get it done and Louis isn't educated enough in this field to know what medication would suit Harry. He just brings the covers up around him but leaves the blisters unmedicated under the bandages.

"You'll be alright." Louis whispers to Harry when, even in sleep, Harry moves towards him and nuzzles Bean's baby bump. "I love you."
Chapter Thirty-Six

Chapter Notes

Twisted illusions

It's like a noose around my neck that slowly grows tighter everytime I try to fight for my life.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Louis has been able to sleep for two painless hours, any other time was spent in irrefutable anger directed at himself. Harry slept soundly except for the sweat that dripped from his forehead and dampened his skin, he sometimes shivered or twitched but that just led to him holding Louis that much closer. The latter would cry a little harder when that happened.

The screaming and violence finally ceased outside and Louis took his first full breaths, albeit they were shaky and made his eyes water. He wiped any sign of bodily fluids away with a tissue and sniffed in the cold, dry air that seemed to never settle on the four stone walls around him.

At four in the morning Louis leaves their room, armed with nothing but a request. He had to beg for something and he'd do almost anything.

"Louis?" A voice that's sweet and frail calls out to him from behind.

He has to turn around for Sister Jane because he trusts her. What he sees is not just the friendly, grey-haired Sister Jane. It makes him shriek and an echo to reverberate through the halls. His stiff hands begin to shake and the individual with curved teeth who has Sister Jane by the neck to grin.

Its dry and taut skin stretches over its face so there are no lips. Just a cowboy's hat and pants clothe the monster and it has its claw-like nails dug deep into the nun's throat. Blood gushes out dark red around them like a glorified water feature.

What's it still doing here? Usually by five it's like they don't even exist. How Louis treasures those hours.

To make a show, the inhuman creature retracts its nails and licks a stripe from the elbow to his fingertip when a rivulet of red drips down his arm.

Louis doesn't know what to do now except place a protective hand on his baby bump and wait for something. Something cold grabs his left arm though and when the antagonising foe charges forward, he's yanked to the side.

"What?!" He shouts when a cell door three down from his own shuts in his face.

"Considering that creature has its eyes set on you, standing so close to the door wouldn't be wise." This new person is male and tall, standing quietly in the corner of the room with just a black shadow to place him there.
Louis jumps back without a peep when the heavy body slams against the door he was so near. The barrier shudders to mirror Louis' spine's reaction, and a bleat of screeching rings out. He turns away and closes his eyes briefly, small hand rubbing over Bean's bump.

"Who are you?" Louis keeps as much distance as possible between them by standing across the room.

"Jacob." The stranger answers, stepping forward and smirking at Louis' gasp.

He's got one working eye because the other is gauged out. The tissue is red and pulled to a tight close over the eye socket. He has a jaw half as stunning as Harry's but his skin is less pale.

"Jacob?" Louis manages to push out with a swallow. The creature outside has finally moved on.

"You're Louis Tomlinson. Pleasure to meet you." Jacob stretches out his arm and Louis blankly stares at it, then his face. "Impolite, Louis."

"S-Sorry." Louis hurriedly shakes his hand and looks away at the wall or the floor.

Who is this strange Jacob person? Why did he concern himself with saving Louis' life? This is not the general public and everyone in here is psychotic in some manner. Louis backs up just a little further at this reminder.

"You really think everyone in here is mad?" Jacob sits on his lonely mattress and looks up at Louis.

"You were captured and you're not fucking crazy."

Louis' eyes widen at how this person answered his silent question. Even Harry can't do that this intricately.

"I'm the devil." Jacob leans back against the wall. "That's why I saved you."

Before Louis can scratch up the wall near him in fear, a loud laugh fills the room. Jacob doubles over in his hysterical fit of amusement but Louis doesn't find anything funny anymore.

"What were doing outside your room, Louis?" Jacob asks sternly. This is a type of person Louis doesn't ignore because the darkness in his eyes only ever existed in one other person.

"Looking for the d-doctor." Louis stammers, hugging himself for warmth. Stone walls are great contributors to a chilling temperature.

"Boyfriend is sick?"

Louis looks away, wading away from his tears.

"Go to Reggie, the softest of those four bastards. He's usually in his office at this hour."

"H-How do you-"

"I'm the devil, Louis. I know everything." Jacob tosses a jacket at him from the back of a chair near him.

* * * * *

Louis is let out of Jacob's cell immediately after the jacket is forced onto his shoulders. He hurries along the creepy silent hallways, keeping away from puddles of water or blood so he doesn't make
any noise. The stench gets to him but he blocks his nose and breathes through his mouth.

The stairs are short and tricky to ascend because of the bright lighting. Louis nearly screams when he hears voices below him, but they're too far down to notice his mouse-like movements. He pushes on until he gets to the third level where Reggie took him for appointments.

"Come in." The voice he has to listen to for an hour every week answers him when he knocks on the door twice.

Louis says a soft prayer in the back of his mind, that Reggie is alone. He can hardly bring himself to do this to him alone, and another someone present would make him turn around right away.

"Louis?" Reggie looks up from his paper work and stands with a scratch of his chair on the concrete floor. "Is something wrong?"

"C-Can you um...-" Louis bites his tongue to stop his shivers. "-help me please? Harry needs it."

Reggie sighs but doesn't hesitate in his quick nod. "What's wrong with him?"

"After he got back to me, there were these blisters on his body and they're just getting worse. I don't know what they are or what to do."

Reggie walks around his desk and goes to a clean white metal tray at the far corner. He opens the first two drawers and takes out multiple things that go into a little black bag before turning around.

"Is he in your room?" Reggie asks, zipping up the bag and approaching him.

"Y-Yes."

They walk out into the passage and Reggie walks behind Louis as they rush down to where the spiral of stairs begins. By then the voices that Louis heard are closer and can be identified as belonging to three men in dark blue uniforms. Police? Louis' seen them before and he can bet his arm they're not real officers.

When the three males stop at Louis' appearance, Reggie gently slides an arm around his waist and tugs him onward. Obviously this works because the perverted insinuation that Louis would spend the night with the doctor gets the crook officers to move. Once they're on Louis' cell level and out of sight, Reggie let's Louis go.

"Thank you." Louis whispers quietly, on their way to passing Jacob's cell.

Louis' eyes dart to the cell and he hides any surprised sound from escaping. The cell is no longer a cell, but a closet with a functioning light bulb illuminating the cleaning products and towels within it. Louis looks at the jacket around his shoulders and frowns.

"Helping you now would be futile if I let those men know the truth. They're nothing but disgraceful perverts." Reggie snaps Louis out of his reverie by answering his comment.

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Louis stops walking once they've reached their cell, and he avoids looking to his right where Sister Jane's body lay lifeless and bleeding out. Reggie yanks the door open after unlocking it from the inside and let's Louis in first.

Harry is awake at this moment of entry, and standing with a hunched look of intimidation. He grinds his upper and lower jaw distastefully at the sight of Reggie, betrayal shining in his eyes when he looks at Louis.
"I woke up alone." Harry sneers ungratefully.

"I know." Louis sighs, stepping over a broken piece of furniture to get to him. "I'm sorry, Haz."

"Did you ask him for help?" The taller of the couple is not above wrapping an arm around Louis, not noticing the jacket but gripping his pregnant boyfriend possessively.

"Had to, Haz." Louis has the ability to appear needy and make Harry turn mellow. It doesn't work this time.

"We don't need his help." Harry snaps, more to Reggie than Louis. "I'm fucking fine, Lou."

"I know you're okay-" Louis presses his finger buds into Harry's bare pectoral and peers up with glistening blue, blue eyes. "-but to just put my mind at ease, okay? Please, Harry."

Harry hollows one cheek as he bites the inside until it tastes of salty blood. His gaze switches between the wall, Louis and Reggie who still hasn't moved from the open doorway.

*Let him do it.* The serpent in Harry's mind contributes and goes back to hissing at every unharmful memory the man has. Harry nods and Louis sags in relief, he kisses Harry's damp cheek and brushes the other with a careful thumb.

"I love you." Louis sounds like he's saying goodbye, and that's the tone they've both been using for this past few days.

Harry drops his lips to Louis' and mouths the appropriate response against the thin, pink entry. He doesn't use his voice or the gravely edge to his tone, just a silent reminder between them both.

"Lie down please." Reggie says when Louis moves away from his dependant counterpart.

Not being very good at taking orders, Harry wants to glare daggers at Reggie until they become real. Instead, he sucks in a sharp breath and lies down on his front with Louis sitting by his head side. His larger hand goes to Louis' thigh and he innocently massages the boy's skin without further intent.

Reggie undresses the bandages and he opens his small black bag. Harry ignores everything that is going on behind his back and looks up at Louis with blown out black eyes.

"Why?" Harry squeezes Louis' thigh lightly. "Why did you leave the room without me?"

"You were asleep." Louis defends, looking away from Reggie and his tweezers. "I knew I'd be quick."

"You locked me in." Harry sounded impassive, but Louis knew better. "I broke the chair trying to get out of this fuckin' cell."

"I was okay, Haz. I-" He stops himself before he can bring up Jacob. "I'm fine."

"Whose jacket is that?" Harry's eyes have just slight green slits around broad black orbs.

Louis is so thankful when Reggie interrupts them. "These are not bed sores, just painful blisters. You're lucky you can't feel them. I used a-"

"Louis, who's jacket is that?" Harry repeats in less than a whisper, with more discerning anger bubbling below the surface.
"Harry-"
"Fuck-"

Louis is interrupted by Reggie who is interrupted by someone new, standing the gaping doorway.

"Well, baby brother. Care to explain?"

Everyone freezes except for Harry, who bolts upright at Damon’s voice. Louis is captured around his waist and hauled backwards until he's behind Harry. The boy is careful when he puts his hands on Harry's shoulders, away from the blisters and bandages that are stained red from medicine. Harry's hand stays on his hip even though the angle is painful.

"Leave, Damon." Reggie wakes up to approach his brother and blocks his view of the couple.

"It's past hours, brother." Damon unfolds his arms Reggie sees something that makes his eyes widen.

"No, Dam-"

There's a muffled gunshot that misses Reggie's side and nicks Harry's neck. Louis screams behind his hand and scrambles up in a horrible fit of panic to aid Harry. It's not a bullet though and he relaxes just a bit, because something toxic in the form of an orange vile could be just as awful.

"What did you do?!" Louis shouts at the intruder, pulling the vile's needle out and holding Harry's head cradled in his lap.

"It was meant for you." Reggie has the courage to answer above his brother. "It would have made you lose the baby, have a miscarriage."

Louis stares in horror at the droplets of blood that leaks from the tiny puncture mark on Harry's neck. He swipes it off with his finger and brushes Harry's hair back. Bean. He has one hand on Bean's bump just in case.

"Nothing will happen to the beast." Damon says, sounding disgusted by the pure thought that someone could get upset over someone so far gone in a world of darkness. He directs his attention towards Reggie. "Learn your fucking place, or the next vile to leave this gun won't be so forgiving."

This is horrible. How can someone be so cruel to their sibling? Their twin, more so. They shared their mother's womb for nine bloody months.

"You've put them through enough, Damon." Reggie bites back, even though the younger of the two has made it past him already.

"A bit fucking accusatory there, Reg." Damon glares at his twin. He stood too close to Louis for comfort. "It was you who was fascinated with this beautiful bastard."

Damon grabbed a tuft of Louis' hair during those last words, yanking him to his feet with the brutal grip. Harry was squeezing his eyes shut and trying to wake himself because he could hear the commotion, he could hear his Louis' screams.

"Damon!" Reggie took a step forward, hell-bent on taking care of his brother's arrogance now. "Leave him alone!"
The most selfish in the room blocks out that command from his bigger brother like it never fell into the air. He loosens his hold on Louis just slightly, and he presses Louis' baby bump with the other. It's not fatal pressure but it's enough to make Louis feel like he's being compacted into a box. He wants to scream but a new set of lips land on his own, smothering those cries and crippling his need for help.

Reggie's outrage is also stopped when a hand grabs his elbow. He looks back at this person and as much as he despises his sister, Rose still gets him to stay put with a finger to her lips.

Damon releases Louis after his lip was bitten bloody and the boy stumbles back against a wall. He rights himself and Damon wipes his mouth, gun tucked into his waistband and ferocious glare set on the youngest in the room.

"You bitch. I'm going to-"

"Complete that sentence." Harry has finally joined the party - Louis keeps his exhausted remark to himself. He is a tower of brute strength shielding Louis in all respects. "I fucking dare you to say what you plan to do."

Harry's got eyes that are hard to trust at this moment in time. They're blown wide and so deep in blackness that nobody can tell exactly who he's looking at. He can't even hear the serpent in his head, that's how violently the simmering blood is rushing through his veins. At first he saw a threat, then he noticed the threat was directly pose at Louis and truly, he's let Louis down too many fucking times to let it happen again.

Damon doesn't back up when Harry steps into his space, a head taller and overall appearance forming an image that's dark enough to give outstanding citizens nightmares.

"Say it." Harry smacks the gun out of Damon's hand and everyone tries to finger out where this new strength came from. He grabs the man around his throat, continuously tightening his right hand until the skin started turning red.

"Stop it, Harry." Reggie was speaking and Harry will only listen to one person, one voice right now. Louis isn't objecting, so he won't stop.

Keeping all this horror locked up was pushing Harry's temper to a borderline. When he saw the scene playing out before him in this cell, something broke in his mind and it may never be repairable. He saw things with blinker vision and the murderous look in his eye gave a direct passage to the unmistakeable flaming hatred in his head.

Damon was lifted off the ground and Harry saw Rose standing frozen in the doorway. He dropped her brother instantly but didn't release him when he fought against his hold.

"Harry." Rose meets his eye and tries calming the situation. Harry won't fucking stand for this anymore.

To teach them a lesson for merely trying to convince him to stop protecting his family, Harry's lips curve upward into a sickly smirk. His sharp canine becomes visible and he decides that should be enough of a hint to them of his intentions.

Louis can't seem to look away, his eyes not even blinking. He watches Harry apply agonising pressure to Damon's throat to paralyse his resistance, and how Reggie does nothing to stop him. Rose is too petrified to move at all.

Most of all, Louis wishes he could see the man he fell in love with in the Harry he saw now. Harry's
back was still littered with formidable blisters and scars but that did nothing to lessen the horror of his appearance. This Harry is the man who existed pre-Louis, with two black pits for eyes and deadly strength.

This Harry would still fall to his knees for Louis, and he loves Louis with all of his otherwise empty heart. Louis knows he can never love anyone or anything more than he loves Harry, with one obvious exception.

Reggie is not all against letting this happen. He loves his siblings, but that love was hardly ever reciprocated. He just manages to look away from Harry's unstaggering stare when those ample fingers wrap all the way around Damon's neck and twist. The sound of an unsettling crunch later, Damon's head is hanging a little off his shoulders.

Harry's not done. He did not go through torture for a month in this disgusting establishment to end a life and be done with it. This monster threatened his family, the only reason he has to live.

He grabs Reggie's tweezers from the bed with lightning speed and finds no challenge in supporting another fully grown male's weight with one half of his body. If anyone blinked, they missed Harry plunging the tweezers into Damon's artery and the spray of blood rocketing to the ceiling.

Blood splatters everywhere and Louis was too lost in his mind to see where it sprouted from. Rose did apparently, because she covers her face and screams bloody murder. Louis winces at the pitch and looks to investigate what happened.

Harry is proud of himself and he lifts his finger to his lips, eyes on Rose. Damon finally sags when Harry releases him. His blood is smeared across Harry's face and neck, staining his skin like fine art. Harry's idea of fine art, since it's repulsive to all else.

Louis' frantic eyes reach Reggie who has studied the wall all through Harry's display, then Rose who is breathing heavily through her nose and finally Harry. Harry isn't looking back at him just yet.

"I still don't trust you." Harry tilts his head to the side and looks at Reggie. Louis knows exactly how terrifying it must be to see that look.

"You killed him!" Rose shouts. Louis knows Harry well enough to label that as a bad move on her part.

"I did, didn't I?" Harry takes a step forward and Reggie steps in front of his sister. Harry cackles maniacally at him.

Reggie will give one victory to his dead brother. He was right in calling Harry a beast, because he was when the time called for it.

"You think you can protect her?" Harry sounded like a lunatic. A ravenous lunatic. "You think I'm going to let you protect her?!" Harry happily steps over one dead body to the other two standing individuals. "After what she did to my Louis, my baby? You're more fucking crazy than I am."

Well, Reggie doesn't totally disagree with him. "She's pregnant, Harry. You don't want to harm an innocent child."

Louis doesn't get his opportunity to process Reggie's first sentence because Harry's still got those tweezers - a big mistake on its own - and its next target is Rose's abdomen. Reggie is pushed aside with massive strength and the tweezers are held tightly in Harry's firm grasp.
The sharp teeth of the tweezers pierce Rose's stomach region at least seven times before Harry takes heed to her powerless screams. "Now we're certain the baby isn't mine."

Again, Louis finds a lack of words on his tongue and major breakdown of his thoughts when he watches this act out. Rose collapses, choking on her own blood but Harry thinks it's all well and done to kick her aside to make his way to Reggie.

"I don't trust you but you will be getting us out." Harry licks his lips and he can't contain his frown when he notes how unsweet blood can be. "If you don't cooperate, I'll do to you what I did to them. Get up."

It's been long enough now. Louis pipes up in a voice that's hardly his own. "H-Harry?"

Said individual's head snaps in the direction of this voice. Harry seems to soften but only internally where Louis would recognise, not any stranger who didn't know his heart. He has to cross the space between them again in a blurred hurry. The tweezers are flung somewhere and the bloody state of Harry's bare chest is disregarded.

Harry wraps himself protectively around Louis and only then does the latter of the two realise the buzz of energy rolling off Harry's body. It's making him shiver just slightly. Louis stretches up on the tips of his worn shoes to embrace Harry tightly, squeezing him around his neck and warding off tears.

One hand is cradling the back of Louis' head and another is rubbing his back comfortingly. The boy is lifted off the ground but he doesn't wrap his legs around Harry's hips until the man growls and pulls his thighs up by himself. Harry's face stays buried in Louis' neck where he doesn't do much other than inhale deeply, recollecting his favourite scent in the world.

This is his. All his. His unborn baby is between them, pressing into his abdomen slightly to remind Harry that he's here. He's getting blood on Louis' clothes and skin but who the fuck cares? Louis is his, and he wants to taste this particular possession.

Louis blocks his mouth when he tries kissing his lips. Harry grinds his jaw so Louis can feel the bones flexing under his dainty palm, but the boy doesn't let up. The blood isn't good for Bean, nor for him.

Harry resigns to kisses Louis' neck and licking at the dry, supple skin. He ignores all others present, and just revels in Louis' taste, his beautiful and rare taste.

"Harry." Louis croaks. "Harry, love, we have to go."

The man could stand here his entire life just putting his mouth on Louis' body, but alas they need to get out before the sun comes up. Something tells them this clean up will be very different to the others.

* * * * *

"Take this car." Reggie tosses a set of keys at Louis, who promptly catches them. "There's a map in the glove compartment."

Harry follows these instructions wordlessly, and gets into the driver's seat. Louis climbs into the Ford Capri in his soiled clothing and breathes a sigh of relief when Harry doesn't pull any homicidal stunts on the man.

"I want to thank you but I can't." Louis says to Reggie truthfully. It wouldn't be justified to thank the
man who participated in their emotional torture for over a month.

"I understand that." The doctor backs away when Harry starts the car.

They drive down the rocky dirt road and get to the gates where a security guard stood. Louis opens the glove compartment to retrieve the map Reggie spoke of, and gasps at the sight of a Browning 9mm.

The gates are locked and Harry doesn't even bat an eye before grabbing the weapon and putting three bullets in the guard's chest. Two heartbeats later the phone in the dead guard's booth rings to inform him that the Ford Capri may go through unquestioned.

Louis doesn't even open his mouth to say shooting him was unnecessary. He uncovers his ears and Harry puts the gun in his own lap, the now empty left hand goes towards squeezing Louis' thigh for comfort.

"We're okay." Louis speaks up after three minutes of driving, glancing over at Harry and turning in his seat.

Harry's mouth curves into a smirk and he shifts gears before answering. "We are. I love you, Lou."

The boy smiles and for a hidden reason, removes his sweater to leave himself in a plain white Tshirt. He folds up the sleeve and dabs at Harry's face where the blood will dry.

It makes Harry chuckle to see Louis do this. "Lou-

"Shh. Wait." Louis finishes up around Harry's mouth - he only worked there - and cuts across the centre console to kiss those plump red lips that are no longer stained. "I love you."

They reach an empty crossroad where there's nothing to be seen for a good long distance. Harry pushes his seat back and pulls Louis onto his lap after tossing the secured gun in the back seat, keeping their kiss deep and connected throughout the action. His hands glide over Louis' shoulderblades and down to cup his pert little bum, their lips working magic together. Louis fumbles with the side bar and eventually gets Harry's seat to recline, smiling when Harry gasps into his mouth.

"We shouldn't fuck." Harry kisses down Louis' neck, not entirely convincing anyone. "We should get home."

Louis pulls away, tiny marks of crusted blood have rubbed off on his cheek from Harry's face. He looks down at the man staring up at him like he's all there is to worship in the universe. "You were scary back there."

"Still am, princess." Harry taps Louis' button nose.

"You don't scare me."

"You certainly scare me."

Louis raises his eyebrow at this. Harry smiles and it's his Daddy Harry making an appearance again.

Harry straightens his car seat and looks down into two amazingly hypnotic blue saucers. "When you say no to me, my world crumbles. When you're sad, I feel disgusted. Most of all however, when you're not with me, I'm terrified."
Louis has a small tear escaping the corner of his eye that Harry catches with his red thumb. He kisses Louis' lips delicately and Louis mumbles something to him.

"I'm never leaving you again." Is what he says.

"Oh I can guarantee that, princess. You're never leaving my arms again."

They're both very literal about this because when Harry starts driving, Louis is still on his lap curled up to use as little space as possible. Harry's hand gravitates towards his swollen baby bump every chance there is to breathe, and Louis places his sweater between Harry's back and the car seat for the sake of his bandages.

"We could run away." Harry thinks out loud when Louis finds idle mannerisms is too boring and starts fidgeting with the small map.

"We could." Louis agrees dreamily. "To a farm somewhere in the mountains."

"We could fuck everyday. You could scream as loud as you want." Harry's eyes are diverted from the road to where he nibbles on Louis' ear just briefly.

Louis turns bright red and giggles, nudging Harry's chest jovially with his forearm. "Make love, Hazza."

"Of course, darling. Every night after I spend the morning fucking you raw."

"Stop it." Louis blushes deeper, and looks at the passing buildings that are starting to become more frequent.

"Don't you want to run away?"

"What good will it do?"

"An escape from the apartment where everything utterly horrible has happened."

"Not everything." Louis corrects. "We can.....buy a new place?"

The mention of a new home gets Harry thinking about the illusion he had during his month of druginduced sleep. A new home, where Niall and Zayn wanted to reside with them.

Harry slams the breaks and prevents Louis from flying forward by holding him tightly. He makes a wide U-turn on the highway street and speeds up.

"Harry?" Louis' heart rate is picking up as he starts to see the top of Briarville's building again.

"Harry, stop!"

"Zayn!" Harry answers in a loud, abrupt tone. "I fucking forgot Zayn!"

Louis loves Zayn, he's a true treasure. But he will not step foot in Briarville again.

He turns Harry's head to look at him. "We can't go back, Harry. I haven't seen Zayn for weeks, he probably got out before us."

Harry's not listening and Louis can see the fence again. He wants to cry again.

"Harry, I'm begging you. Stop, please!" He pleads loudly, desperately with tears threatening to spill over his cheeks.
The breaks are hit once more and Louis jerks forward closer to Harry's chest. They're back again, before the Briarville gates but not on the property. The sun is rising and that means everyone is going to start waking up soon.

"Harry, listen love." Louis swallows thickly and cups both sides of Harry's face. "You can't go back. I can't go back. We'll never truly leave. Please, we have to go."

It doesn't take long for Harry to register this. He sighs heavily and reverses into the street again when the first nun comes outside. She sees the car but they're already on their way back to freedom. "I'm sorry." Louis whispers guiltily. "I just couldn't risk going back there."

"No, love. I never should have done that." Harry kisses Louis' forehead and the discussion is closed.

They drive East on the only road available for ten minutes, then the city starts to appear and Louis brightens up. Chicago hasn't changed and their street hasn't either. Louis sees the spice store they buy their vanilla essence from, the Starbucks Harry gets his favourite cookies from and the park they walked through when they found a lost boy.

It feels like a lifetime ago since Louis saw all this and he grips Harry tightly as he starts to cry.

Harry doesn't question or judge him, just holds him really close and peppers loving kisses everywhere. The side of him that came out at Briarville is neatly tucked away now, until it's needed again.

"C'mon, love." Harry tilts Louis' head up and kisses his lips. "Let's go home."
Chapter Thirty-Seven

*Loving me will not be easy. It will be war. You will hold the gun and I will hand you the bullets. So breathe, and embrace the beauty of the massacre that lies ahead.* - R.M. Drake

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Harry held Louis all night, never letting up even after Louis fell asleep in his arms. They did nothing intimate after a long, warm shower except cuddle up under the covers - sans clothing - and tried to sleep. Louis shed no more tears but Harry was always prepared to comfort him through any sad fits.

While his princess slept soundly on his back, Harry got down between his legs and planted his face on Bean's baby bump. He was turning cold and curt to the world but his own baby will always have partnered ownership of the softest part of his heart.

"Bean?" He rubs the sides of Louis' tummy reverently, slowly. "Baby Bean?"

The bump doesn't answer since in fact it is too early for Bean to kick against his palm and get him excited. He sighs and presses varying kisses to as much of the skin exposed to him as he can.

"I'm sorry for not protecting you and Lou." Harry speaks softly, not wanting to wake Louis up when the boy needed as much sleep as he could get. "I've never felt more disgusted with myself. It's my duty to keep you safe and I failed you both. You're out here now and I vow to never let any harm come to you. I love you, Bean." He kisses Louis' slightly taut belly button. "I love your mommy too."

*LOUIS' POV*

I was wrong.

Not wrong about me ever being able to adjust to a routine in life after we got back from Briarville, or convincing the police about the mental institution that kidnapped us and held us there against our will. I was dreadfully wrong about Harry hiding away the ulterior ego that came out at Briarville.

"Haz?" I call with my back to the closet door while I dig around for a decent graphic shirt. The shower has been on for the past fifteen minutes, suddenly being cut off after Harry was done. There's a harmless silence floating through our bedroom when I finally happen across the perfect shirt. I pull it off the hanger, forgetting about my question to Harry, and pull it over my head. It's a little more snug at the front but I find nothing to be ashamed of since it's baby Bean that's making me gain weight.

My heart skips a beat before stopping altogether for ten seconds when someone grabs my waist. It's not an intruder because the arms are soft despite the bulging muscles that's straining under slightly flabby skin.

"Yes?" Harry whispers in my ear so politely and gentle.

"Geez, you scared me." I gasp, clutching my chest over my heart.

Harry's apology is a tight squeeze for Bean and a wet kiss on my neck. "What did you need, baby?"
I turn around in his arms once my heart is back to its usual pace, and peer up into the dark pits staring down at me. The closet may be dimly lit but it's easily noticeable that his blinks aren't frequent and the extraordinary green that stands out against anything is just a slit around a pupil of black.

"Something wrong?" I ask. Why is he like this?

He inclines his head to the left, then covers the distance to his right.

"I wanted to know what time we're supposed to be at the station." I say quietly. "You didn't mention it earlier."

"Eleven. We have two hours."

His eyes never really went back to his proper shade of green eyes, and the mossy emerald colour always appeared as if he was just wearing a mask for the public. He hardly spoke to anyone who wasn't me, or Bean whenever he felt the need.

Harry was struggling to find himself again and I didn't know how to help him.

"Harry?" I sip from my Bonaqua water bottle and lean forward against his chest.

The officers of Chicago PD graciously kept us around all day while they took our statements, gathered a solid case and dispatched teams to Briarville. Harry hid his discomfort well, and would rarely - but still would - smile to ease my own nerves.

"Darling?" He kissed my forehead. I know he had his closed when he did so, because it seems like he always would.

"Did you call Niall for me?"

My question is answered in the form of a frantic blond arrival, who takes off with an officer who doesn't let him through the precinct immediately. The detective in charge of our case gives Niall access to his office where Harry and I waited.

Niall drew in a long, deep breath when he saw me. He briefly glanced at Harry but darted back to me immediately and flung himself forward when I stood up.

"Hey, Niall." I smile into his shoulder, embracing him just as tightly as he did to me.

"Idiot." He contradicted himself by squeezing me.

His tears dampened my shirt and I wiped my wet cheeks with the back of my hand. "I missed you too, Ni."

"Shut up." Niall laughed through a sob and hugged me again. "Just shut up. I'm never letting you out of my sight."

Another presence got closer, a far less jovial and fun presence. As I've always been able to sense Harry when he was around without using the gift of sight, I feel Harry pressing himself along my back as a guarding entity. His large paws settled on my waist and drew me back a little so there was distance between Niall and I.

"Psycho." Niall dove in for a hug from Harry.

It was stiffly accepted but not returned. Harry frowned deeply as if meeting Niall for the first time.
and debating with himself internally. He stepped away from my best friend and put me between them again. Niall said nothing further on Harry's behaviour.

"Where's um....Where's Zayn?" Niall wiped his nose with a torn tissue from his sweater pocket, and asked.

"I...I'm sorry, Ni. We don't know." I look at my shoes. The guilt for leaving Zayn there will never unhook its claws from my soul.

Niall nods and takes it in his stride. I smile gratefully when he doesn't press that subject either. We wait in Detective Timo's office until the dispatched cars return with new people in the back seats. Our statements were printed and now that new evidence was in, we could leave after identifying whoever they needed us to. Whatever they needed us to.

"I don't want to do this." I tell Harry softly, almost entirely well hidden under his trench coat. "I never want to see them again."

"I'll do it." Harry volunteers, lips against my temple. He hasn't stopped touching me since we left the Briarville gates. "I don't mind seeing those fuckers again so long as it means putting them on death row."

My short nails scratch minutely over the soft, stiff fabric of his coat. His palms rub my back over the spot where my muscles strained a lot recently. The pressure works so well to relieve the tension in my difficult muscles.

"Feel good?" Harry moves his fingers in circular motions, diminishing the unease and making me burrow into his chest.

I nod lazily. He presses a kiss to my temple and goes back to wordlessly brooding over whatever he deems worthy in his mind. I look up when the front door outside the office opens, and in walks two handcuffed persons.

It feels like seeing them walk into our lives for the first time. The air is suddenly contaminated with their presence alone, and everyone they pass pauses in their work to look at them.

I look at Reggie who isn't resisting the police, then at Eleanor who looks like she has a good few words for the arresting officer. She doesn't look my way but Reggie does and instead of a steady scowl, I get an indiscreet wink from him.

Harry sees that response too and a very threatening noise leaves his concerned lips. His arms tighten constrictingly against me and he holds me against him.

"Mine." He brands the word into my neck. "Mine."

When my gaze moves from Reggie's retreating back, I hide my face in Harry's chest and feel comforted by his arms steeling around me. "Yes, Daddy."

His lips touch my forehead, and then my own lips when I look up. The insecurities and uncertainties are beginning to resurface now that two faces connected to horrid memories have shown up again.

"We're alright now, princess." He murmurs to me. "We're alright."

Niall offers to accompany me to the vending machine and kitchen for a quick snack, while Harry does the identification and statement-making.
"No." Harry says firmly, shaking his head and making sure to drag me to his side. "No. Louis is staying with me."

"It's just to the vending machine, Harry." Niall defends his noble intentions.

"It's fine, Ni." I give my close friend a small smile and squeeze the wrist of Harry's that's curled around my hip. "I don't want to leave him either."

Niall is a saint for not pressing the subject. He shrugs and goes to the vending machine alone, vouching to come back with the snacks he planned.

"Mr. Styles. Louis." Detective Timo knocks on his open office door, and summons us over to join him in the interrogation room. "Could you join me please?"

The interrogation sessions are short and they're completely understanding of my wish to not see any photographs or evidence.

"I'm really sorry, Detective. I just can't see all of this again." I tell the man in charge who smiles sympathetically at me.

"It's understandable, Louis. Mr. Styles, would you still like to see the evidence?"

Harry kisses my cheek and nods. The manila folder is brought over to the steel table we're seated at and I make to stand up, but Harry frowns and secures my wrist in the circle of his fingers.

"Stay." He says simply and I obey by retaking my seat next to him in a hard plastic chair.

When the folder is opened, I do everything to look away from what's being displayed. Harry answers a regular flow of questions with singular grunts or syllables. He keeps my face nestled in his neck without being bothered by the act at all.

"Alright, love?" He asks when it's all over. The folders are gone and I'm half planted on his lap.

"Yeah." I give him a weak smile and brush my thumb over his chiselled jawline. "Yeah, I'm okay."

"Can we go now?" Harry asks the detective who kept us here for the past five or six hours.

"Yeah, okay." Detective Timo shakes Harry's hand and smiles once more at me. He gives us his card. "Make sure to call me first if anything comes up. Also, I think there's someone in the state general hospital who was asking for you two."

I have no idea who or what he's referring to directly, but if Harry's stiffening posture is anything to go by it can't be very welcome in his world. We exit the interrogation room and find Niall with another tissue dabbing his eyes, three chocolate bars and a bottle of water in his hands.

"Ni?" I call out with a concerned expression, rushing to his side.

He looks up at me and hauls me in for a hug that almost gets Harry's hand to detach from mine.

"Zayn. It's Zayn." My friend forces out. "They just brought him back."

My eyes connect with Harry's over Niall's shoulder but he's too impassive to give anything away. He waits for me to standing on my own before towing me out the door, no farewells or last words said. Niall hides the hurt he feels behind the wall of stunning blue in his eyes, but I promise to call him anyway later.
"I have to drop by anyway." He calls after us. "I have Bolg and Bundy and your um....luggage."

"Then we'll see you later." I pick my most effective smile and wave briefly to him.

I never thought the public would be so hungry for a story as vile as ours. Reporters and television personalities swarmed around the precinct's front doors with microphones and cameras. The terror of being stuffed into a small space with bodies shoving at me takes over and causes me to tighten my hand around Harry's.

"I've got you, darling." He whispers me a promise before pushing the doors open.

He keeps me ahead of him with broad arms harshly forcing back anyone who gets too close. Their brutality in the hunt for scoop could get Bean hurt, and Harry manages to shove a reporter so hard that he takes the whole left side of the crowd with him. The murder in Harry's eye is not to be questioned.

"You alright, Haz?" I ask Harry once we're away from the reporters that crowded the police station's front entrance and gave me the shivers.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

It was mindless fucking torture.

Racing pulses and questions being thrown at them, at Harry. He hated the attention but he loved the way he knew their hearts were racing and skin was heating up. He hadn't had these thoughts in a while - five or so months - but here they were resurfacing like nothing had happened. Stop pretending.

_This is a part of you, if you wanted to stop you wouldn't feel blood lust anymore._ Louis was saying something but Harry was staring at them and their easily torn clothing. His blade would do well on them, so would his bare hands.

*LOUIS' POV*

The line of Harry's vision is always caught up in getting glimpses of the news reporters who are standing on the far edge of the parking garage. They aren't allowed in here because of the officers stationed everywhere.

"Hey." I pull his away from their focus, and his head jerks downwards when I support both sides of his face. His eyes are still burning into their sillhouettes. "Harry? Come on, love. Pay attention to me."

It's not that I imagined Harry as a raging bull, I just did not want anything to trigger a response as brutal as what happened in Briarville.

"Please, Daddy." I look up earnestly into his eyes, disguising my words by speaking extra soft. That's enough to bring him back to me and the prickling energy I felt tumble off his broad arms and rigid movements has slowly disintegrated.

"Let's go home." I tell him.

We're safely inside the Dodge and Harry is not making it obvious that he's rubbing and pinching the knuckles on my left hand with his right.

"Is it Zayn in the hospital?" I ask.
"Yes." He answers simply, not slowing down when people gather around the Dodge.

They eventually move when they realise Harry has no problem with running them over. "Are we going there now?"

"If that's what you want." He pulls into the regular streets of Chicago and visibly relaxes into the driver's seat. "Princess?"

"Hmm?" I look up from my lap where I picked at my pants' threads.

"I want to sell the apartment." He declares, turning left into a narrower street towards the hospital.

"I want to sell this Dodge too."

"Where will we live then?" My eyes widen in their sockets.

My simple question seems too bring a half smirk to his lips. "We will buy another home. Bean deserves a proper nursery and I think a fresh start would be healthy."

"We can never have a fresh start." I say with a sad sigh. "It's cowardly to want a fresh start, isn't it?"

"Given our circumstances, princess, I feel like a new perspective would do us good. Do you disagree?"

I honestly didn't. "Let's get a new home then."

Turns out that's not his final request. "Maybe a dog too."

I giggle, unable to help myself and nod along to that. We have a turtle and hedgehog so why not get a puppy above those? "Right now?"

"I don't see why not. I'll call a real estate agent as soon as we get home for the apartment, and we'll visit a car dealership tomorrow." He parks in the underground parking and gives me a once-over that lingers a little too much.

"What?" I fight the blush rising to my cheeks. How dare he still maintain the ability to get me shy after all this time and drama?

"You're beautiful." He states bluntly and leans over the centre rest to plant a kiss on my neck. "I'm opening your door. Stay put."

That's exactly what he does, and he takes my hand before I can hop down all on my own. We greet the friendly nurse at reception and hurry along the emergency medicine department to find Room 1201 one floor above us.

Taking a shaky breath is all I'm allowed before Harry walks through the closed, guarded door and into Zayn's company. He wants to get this over with, I can tell. The man is lying on a hospital bed looking to be in his worst possible physical shape. Bandages cover half his face and most of his body otherwise, keeping his olive skin covered well in white gauzes.

"Hey, Zaynie." I force my lips into a wry smile.

His brown eyes, bloodshot with strain and tears look up at me and his smile trembles. "L-Lo-ou."

"Shh." I don't try sitting on his bed, and the grip Harry has on my arm can only worsen until he's physically part of me. "I won't ask how you're feeling."
If he could, he would laugh. There's a dead twinkle in his eye, as that's all he can manage.

"I'm just glad you're okay, Zayn. We both are."

Our visit is brief and Zayn can do nothing besides smile with a quiver or mumble something that nobody understands. The doctors say he'll be just fine after intense therapy and rehabilitation for his body's recovery, but they refuse to tell us what is wrong with him to start.

We leave after Niall arrives to keep Zayn company. I only get to briefly smile and nod at him in passing through the hallway.

"So, a dog then?" Harry asks plainly.

He is excellent at washing off a situation's principles. He wanted a dog when he was walking into the hospital and leaving after seeing Zayn so crippled has not deterred that.

"Um...yeah." I fold one leg under the other on my seat and nod more gusto after processing what he actually asked.

"Lou?" He took my hand and kissed each cold fingertip. His lips even nibble on my middle finger so I can't help but let him have a smile.

"I'm fine, Haz." I assure him.

"Is it Zayn?" Harry tries not to sound completely annoyed at the mention of another man upsetting me. "Is it?"

I shake my head profusely and wipe my cold nose with a tissue. "I'm just....I guess I can't sleep this problem away like I used to."

He offers me a pitying smile that tells me he agrees. "Want to sit with me?"

I want shake my head at first, but begin to slow down the motion when I weigh the pro's against the cons. It always felt safest to be on Harry's lap where his arms would wrap around me if I felt so much as a chill.

"Yes please." I change my answer and scramble off my seat, heading to his zone.

He pushes his seat back enough for his feet to still reach the pedals, and for him to cuddle me to his chest comfortably. I had to kick off my shoes and wiggle my toes under the sheath of my socks between his knees. His kisses found my forehead and cheek, some on my palms or neck. He let me play with the lapels of his trench coat or give him kisses whenever we stopped at a red light.

"Better now?" He rubs my baby bump over my hand, gently reassuring Bean that he is there and dutifully being his father.

"Yeah." I press my cold nose against his neck. "Thank you."

"Anything for you, darling." He parks alongside the curb outside a high-end pet shop. "Anything at all."

I smile unashamedly and wait a few more minutes with Harry's hand on my expanded tummy before making a move. "Can we get a Saint Bernard puppy please?"

"Those are expensive, aren't they?" He nips at the tip of my nose and I giggle, but it is short-lived. "Any puppy is fine." I assure him. Really, all puppies are adorable and useful.
"It's alright, baby." He chuckles and pats my hip. "I'll get anything and everything you need."

"But what do you want?" I ask softly.

"Let's go and see inside, yeah?"

The store has a weird French name and Harry pronounces it for me when I ask, smoothly like he speaks the language as his mother tongue. The signboard is orange and the spacious cubicles inside are orange. Pups roam about in open range spaces but the very little ones are put into gated cubicles for their safety.

"Good day, folks." A female attendant greets us, fake toothy smile and all. Her navy uniform did wonders for her curves and long neck. "How can I help you today?"

She spoke more to Harry but that's fine because I wasn't in the mood to be friendly. Her tone drastically sunk to low depths when she was met with Harry's forever demeaning and stormy eyes. I wandered over to the cubicles and read the labels below each gate where an infant puppy dozed peacefully.

"Saint Bernard." Harry says clearly and I look back at him over my shoulder, a little confused.

"Ah!" She claps her hands together. "We only have two thoroughbreds left."

"Do you have....muts then?" I ask, picking on her carefully worded sentence.

"Oh no." She frowns, shaking her blonde head strictly. "We only have pure-breds here, Sir. One pup is five weeks old and the other is nineteen days."

"Are they siblings?"

"No. They've never been in each other's company because if they got attached to one another it would affect their behaviour after being bought by separate owners."

Isolation. There is nothing more foul. I look up at Harry with wide hopeful eyes but I say nothing on the matter because he said they were expensive, and it's his money to spend.

"Would you like to see them?" She asks giddily. Does she get a commission?

"Yes please."

Harry has his hand on my lower back when we're led off to the side of the store by a wide glass window overlooking the busy streets. She gestures to two separate and barricaded living spaces where the puppies were.

One was extremely fluffy with lots of white fur on his body that chewed happily on a carrot cushion. The other immediately tried to leap up and stands but he was still too young and could only make soft yapping noises and crawl.

The brown fur around their eyes hid their literal brown puppy dog eyes.

"Aw. They're adorable, Haz." I comment openly, slowly kneeling in front of the cages to give them my attention.

The extra fluffy one yaps dejectedly when I scratch the other's head. When he gets the attention he desires, he barks and his big brown eyes sparkle up at me.
"We want both." Harry cuts across the playful mood with a firm order to the attendant.

She sputters but quickly recovers. "Both, Sir?"

"Haz." I interrupt before he can answer further. The look on my face, of pure confusion and misconception, makes him understand.

"Leave us please." Harry dismisses the attendant impolitely, but she scurries off to greet another customer at the door. "Do you want them?"

"Yes Haz, but they're so expensive." I enlighten him on his own debate point.

"Are you saying that because I did earlier?" He raises a dark eyebrow at me.

I can't help but shrug. I could never lie to him on the small things.

"I was just stating facts, darling." He pulls me into his arms and tilts my chin up with his thumb for a kiss. "Regardless of price, we can get them both."

"Two dogs, Haz? Bean's going to be a baby when he comes and St Bernard's are very difficult to handle."

"Bean will have extra protection then." He says truthfully. "These dogs are loyal and they will never harm any of us."

I chew my bottom lip. We've discussed a great deal about our future yesterday and this morning. I plan to change my college course to correspondence so I can be at home when Bean comes waltzing into this world, and Harry wants to cancel his classes altogether.

There was no talking him out of it, because he shook his head and explained that he didn't need college. Caring for these pups won't be difficult even when I'm unable to bend over or leave the bed without help.

"Two pups it is?" He awaits my response patiently.

I glance down at the waggling tails and wide eyes watching us curiously. They were going to be big pups, but so soft and harmless. "Two pups it is."

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Both puppies were male and although Louis was reluctant to have two of the same gender under his roof, the attendant provided proof that because the age gap is so great, the older will act more as a parental figure. The older costs nine hundred dollars and the younger is six hundred. Harry uses his new bank and credit cards to complete the purchase.

They buy puppy food for the youngest and regular wet food for the elder. They're put into separate pierced white boxes for transport but the bigger pup shoves the lid off to peer out into the world. Louis giggles at his innocence and tries to help Harry load them into the Dodge.

"And what are you doing?" Harry questioned with a curious smirk that dented one cheek and gave him a look of exquisite boyish charm. It was never complete though, because Harry still had a haunted type of hidden connotation.

Louis offers up the bag of dog food as his answer and Harry quickly snatches it up. He pecks Louis' cheek and pinches his waist.
"No heavy lifting." He warns, and the humour in his eyes is easily doubted. "At all, love. Understood?"

The boy nods and whispers his sweet apology. He was just really excited about having puppies to care for, like practice before Bean is born in six or so months.

"We can stop for food before going home." Harry offers after helping Louis into his seat and getting in himself.

"Okay." Louis had his seatbelt on but kept peeking over his shoulder at the white boxes placed neatly in the back seat.

The bigger pup was looking back at him through the open handle in the box and Louis had to smile at the gentle creature. The baby one was pawing at the box and made Louis coo. He didn't like his puppies being upset.

Harry and Louis feel a little lighter in their chests, because they had a new something to worry about. A gentler, furrier something. In fact, two somethings.

Louis set his feet on Harry's lap because there was enough space for him to do so. He ensure that his knees were bent comfortably so Harry could handle all the controls. The man would rub Louis' small ankles whenever they stopped at a red light or he was driving more leisurely.

"Baby, what do you want to eat?" Harry is moving forward is a slow drive thru queue in a reputable food joint.

"Anything." Louis shrugs. He has the greatest urge to gather both pups and snuggle them.

"Do you want one of those massive bagel burgers?"

"Okay. I want chicken wings too, and jumbo chips."

Harry nods with an amused chuckle and places their orders at a small glass window. They wait for a few minutes before their food is brought to them with two bottles of water.

He stares at the digital clock beside his speedometer, waiting for the woman to bring their food. It was getting physically harder to sit here and not be slitting someone's throat. Maybe it's a relapse, or maybe Harry never fully recovered.

Louis gets to carry the food up to the apartment and Harry braces himself for two trips to and from the Dodge. He refuses to let Louis help so the boy makes a point of leaning against the elevator door and giggling at him.

"Princess." Harry slides his calloused hands down Louis' back and slips them under his sweater's fabric. The skin just barely scratches his baby soft skin and makes him hum.

"Daddy?" Louis leans forward, cupping one side of Harry's face.

"You're mocking me." He twists his smile into a scowl and it's dark enough to frighten a newbie. Louis just rolls his eyes and stretches up higher.

"I'd never mock you, Daddy."

Harry gives Louis' bum a firm squeeze through his jeans. He bumps Louis' forehead with his own to change the angle of his neck. His lips seek out those soft thin ones that fit so effortlessly with his
own. These are the lips he worships and reveres, they make him forget about the demon in his head. Louis grips Harry's jacket with one small fist, while his other hand acts more bravely. His left palm glides over glossy leather and tough jeans, until it lands in Harry's back pocket.

He blushes when Harry's lips curve into a sly smile. Louis gasps when a loud beeping begins that signals they've been holding the door open for too long.

No time is wasted for Harry steps forward and presses Louis' back against the mirrored elevator wall, letting the doors slide closed behind him. His broad shoulders hide his smaller better half from seeing past him, and he lines their bodies up.

"The b-button, Haz." Louis says breathlessly, extracting his hand from Harry's pocket to press their floor number.

The lesser pleased individual growls and takes Louis' hand back, pinning it above their heads with one hand. He ignores the four little eyes watching them in ignorance, and pulls Louis' body so much closer to the heat radiating off his with a hand cupping his curvaceous behind.

Sex has not been on their minds for as long as they can remember now, which really shouldn't be a short month and a few days. Harry had other worries, grave troubles that needed his attention. Louis had pregnancy clogging up his libido's fully functioning regime, and his constant discomfort was not positively contributing to its recovering.

"P-Please." Louis turns his head away with hot tears threatening to spill down his cheeks.

Being so close to another person reminded him of clustered smelly spaces with people who plotted to harm him. He doesn't want to have to experience the tightness, the horror again. He loves Harry and that makes him cling to all parts of the man he can reach, but it isn't getting the message across fluently.

"Please what, baby?" Harry on the other hand, is ready to throw out his internal terrors by burying himself in his petite perfect boyfriend.

"Stop." Louis whispers the one word and Harry does so immediately.

He pulls away from Louis and frowns when the boy tries to tighten his grasp on his jacket and jeans. Louis' confusing him. He will never hurt the boy but why is he holding him so close if he doesn't want intimacy?

"What then, Lou?" Harry tries to keep the bitterness out of his voice.

The elevator doors ding and he slams the close button so harshly the vibration on hollow metal makes Louis shiver. Any reaction to something scary meant *Harry* to him, and he would hold onto the man until he felt safe again. Now he does that but Harry is a lot stiffer than usual.

"Lou?" He rubs Louis' back and expels the shudders running through his boy's body. "Talk to me. I don't understand."

"I'm sorry." Louis wipes his cheeks with his sleeves, but doesn't let up from around Harry. "I'm sorry, Haz, but I can't do this."

"That's fine, baby." Harry tells him. "You're never pressured, lovely."

"I love you, Haz."
"I love you too, my darling boy."

* * * * *

They bathe the new pups in a plastic tub. Harry got Louis to smile brightly and freely again by putting a lot of effort into not strangling the creatures whenever they tried to chew on his arm. They used dog-friendly shampoo and Louis tried them with two fluffy towels that is now set aside just for them.

"What should we call you, huh?" Louis was taking his time drying the little puppy with a towel rather than exposing him to the harshness of a hair-dryer like Harry did to the older pup.

"Thomas." Harry remarks, finishing up with the dryer and frowning only briefly when the pup leaps into his arms.

"Thomas." Louis sounds it out, setting the dryer on its lowest setting and aiming it at the dog. "We have Bolg and Bundy. Maybe Lego for this little guy, as in Legolas."

"Lego for him." Harry scratches the pup he's holding behind its ears. "And for this one?"

Louis shrugs and removes the crawling baby dog from the counter. His claws stick to the towel and he yawns adorably with slightly pink paws and pink flaps for lips. His eyes are hardly opened but Louis caught glimpses of him looking through bleary eyelids.

"Hello, Lego." Louis lifts the very dependant puppy up and holds him close to his chest.

The puppy makes a helpless yapping sound and clings to Louis' shirt. He rubs the puppy's curved back and smiles down at the dog. Harry watches admirably while he tries to get the puppy in his hands to stop nuzzling his cotton shirt.

"He looks like a Thomas." Harry reiterates his first option.

Louis decides that since he officially named one puppy, it will be only fair that Harry gets to name the other one. "I like Thomas. It suits him."

Harry gives Louis a crooked smile that is hidden partially by Thomas' constant climbing attempts. The man may not have his expensive coat on, but the jeans and shirt he wore stood with value too. Louis wasn't upset anymore and Harry decides that's worth a thousand expensive closets of clothing.

"I think it's about time for our own bath." Harry concludes in suggestion after the pups settle down in one cushioned basket in the studio.

Giggling, Louis grabs the food and sets it on the dining room table. They will eat after another fulfilling shower. Harry joins him on the trek to the bathroom and the quick trip into the closet for fresh clothing. He gets a pair of Harry's sweats and a long-sleeved cotton shirt.

"Let me." Harry takes Louis' hands away from his own chest and the soiled cotton nipple pads.

Louis locks his hands together in front of him and let's Harry go on to remove the tape and cotton pads. Strong and agile thumbs brush over the swollen nubs and makes Louis shiver and hiss. A drop of clear liquid escapes a layer of his pink skin and Harry thumbs it off, before licking it.

"Darling." Harry warns, and the curt edge to his voice is not hard to detect. He's been in need of this interaction with Louis whenever he's started to feel tense.
Swallowing his reservations, Louis chews his bottom lip and lets Harry attach his mouth to the left nipple. He groans and shudders at the pulsating sensation that courses up his stiff back. Harry extracts all he can of the protein substance, swallowing greedily and making pursed suckling noises. His own plump lips turn red and framed Louis' perky, dusky nipple while his roamed Louis' body. From swollen, Louis' nipples turn red and painful.

He locks his fingers into Harry's hair and pushes him away with a stifled mumble about sensitivity. Harry retaliates in response to his depriving act by widening his jaws and biting down on Louis' left nipple with his teeth. Louis cries out at the pain and does all he can to resist Harry.

"H-H-Harry stop please it hurts-" He pants desperately, digging his nails into the man's shoulders and shoving the tough muscle. "Slow. Please go-o slow."

Harry takes heed to the urgent advice and shortens his long sucking motions to quicker and less painful suckles. Louis relaxes when his sensitivity starts to dive down in degree.

When he's finally released, Louis takes three steadying breaths and relaxes against the shower wall as warm water flows over him. It stings where Harry bit him and he covers his chest with his hands when Harry comes closer, gloriously naked.

"I'll take care of you, my love." Harry promises, taking the soap from their stand with a soft cleansing sponge.

He takes his sweet time in cleaning Louis' body and even goes as far as trying to make the boy giggle by paying extra attention to his bum. Harry rubs the soap all over his body, lathering the white foam across such supple and soft skin. After a decent amount of time spent returning the favour, Louis pecks Harry's cheek and asks to be dried.

Harry completes the request by drying the boy with a fresh towel and dressing him in warm clothing.

"Won't you be cold later on?" He asks while slipping a pair of baby blue cotton panties up his delectable thighs. Even his remarkable self control can't keep him from planting soft little kisses on the skin.

"No." Louis argues with him on the matter of wearing concealing clothes. "You'll keep me warm, won't you?"

"You can count on it, princess." Harry ignores the uncomfortable crustiness of his skin and leans over Louis to kiss his forehead.

Louis slips on a very large, very black sweater with ankle socks and goes to fetch the first aid kit from the bathroom. When Harry had his blisters examined at the precinct, he was told that regular changes on his bandages would do wonders for the healing process. Naturally, Louis volunteered to change those bandages every few hours.

"Princess....." Harry sighs when he sees the little red bag.

"You have to, Haz." Louis chastises softly, gesturing to the bed. "I promise to be gentle."

That gets a chuckle out of the man, soon followed by a frown when the pitter-patter of smaller footsteps enter their carpeted bedroom. Their newly acquired pets, Lego and Thomas have spotted their softer owner and followed him into the bedroom.

"We have an audience." Harry drags his tongue over his teeth and creates a clicking sound.
Louis never minds them until he's done with Harry's back. He straddles the back of the man's thighs - the blisters there had healed over - while Harry lay on his front stiffly.

"Talk to me." Harry's voice is slightly muffled by his pillow.

"What should I say?" Louis sounded softer and less coherent, even if he had no obstruction. "I don't want to focus on what you're doing."

"Um...okay."

Warm fingertips deftly wipe up the damp blisters with prescribed disinfectant and cotton wool. Harry hisses when the drops Louis has to use is too cold and touches an open blister. It didn't hurt, it just chilled a nearby nerve and became uncomfortable.

"What kind of home do you want to find for us?" Louis asks casually after apologising for the cold medicine.

Harry smiles against his pillow, and it's one of the rare honest smiles. "Big garage. Reasonable yard. Two floors. Easy to maintain."

"I think that a pool would be nice. I agree with the easy to maintain bit, I don't want to have to be constantly cleaning up messes."

"A housekeeper then."

"A stranger in our home? I don't like the idea, Haz."

"A professional from a reputable company. She can live in separate quarters if you want."

Louis hums to himself in thought. "Bean can have a lovely nursery too."

"Yeah." Harry agrees proudly. "In a suburb then?"

"There are suburbs near campus for when I need to drop my work off, and that means there are schools and take-away's too."

"We'll get a convenient suburban neighbourhood. Can I turn over?"

Fresh gauzes are taped down over the multiple marks and the skin around the bandages is wiped dry. Louis gasps as if Harry's question in itself is a crime. "Nope. Do you feel uncomfortable?"

"Yes."

"I'm sorry."

With an amused sigh Harry continues tearing little pieces of tissue apart until Louis' actions cease. "All done." The mounted boy announces, balling up the plastic wrappings after kissing Harry's cheek.

The youngest of their two puppies stumbles when his baby paw gets stuck on the carpet. He attempts to wake up again but the carpet has him caught and he whines helplessly when he can't move without being hurt. Louis scrambles off Harry.

"Louis!" Harry calls in concern.

"I'm fine!" Louis answers his worry. He knows fully well he's not supposed to be running or
jumping after pups.

Carefully, Louis unhooks the little pup's paw and continues to cross his legs on the carpet as he sits down comfortably. He cuddles the seemingly emotionally wounded pup to his chest without pressing his chest painfully.

"Aw, Lego. I'm sorry. Does your paw hurt?" He whispers in a baby voice. The puppy looks up at him and rolls over in his arms, wanting to be praised. "So strong, aren't we?"

The bigger pup who is older in age and bulkier in build wants Louis' attention too. He comes strutting over until he's sprawled out across Louis' lap, wagging his tail and nuzzling the baby bump harmlessly.

"That used to be my spot." Harry comes to join them on the floor, removing the dog that's moulded to Louis' tummy.

"You haven't been replaced." Louis assures him with a kiss to his jaw.

Taking that as a type of consensus, Harry helps Louis onto his lap. The boy gasps in surprise when Harry does this as his large hands are cupping his bum in a very forceful manner. There will definitely be bruises there tomorrow.

"Hi." Louis says skeptically when he's astride Harry's thighs, his legs folded behind the man's back. "You are beautiful." Harry cups the side of Louis' face. "You're all mine."

Harry looks down at the pup in Louis' hands and goes so far as tickling its tummy when it rolled over. The dog is appreciative and continues to roll over. The elder squeezes in between their bodies until Louis giggles and scratches behind his ear fondly.

Louis takes his hand and kisses his pulse delicately. "Do you doubt that?"

"I doubt everything now."

Feeling guilty for earlier on when he denied Harry physical comfort, Louis looks at the floor sadly. He wants to fix the brokenness in his head first before helping Harry but that's so selfish. But, Harry's stronger than him. Why does he need Louis?

Maybe he does. Maybe he really does.

Louis internally squashes the red flags that warn him to be careful, to not go beyond a border that he can't come back from. Being too drastic with his sensitive psyche could damage him.

He forgets those warnings and sets the puppy down before grabbing both sides of Harry's face to kiss him hard. Harry's surprised and he's not responsive against Louis' lips, but he too recovers in time to pull Louis closer and deepen their kiss. Their bubble of mild passion gets heated right after the dogs leave the bedroom, and Harry seems overtaken by a raving lunacy.

He's finally getting his chance to rid himself of that place and he's not ruining it. Louis' giving his body and no way in Hell is he throwing that opportunity away.

Dropping Louis onto his back, Harry begins the process of shedding clothing. His frenzied behaviour gets him to tear a second pair of Louis' panties and throw the two halves aside with hate. He takes Louis' length in his hand and works him to a full erection.

Louis tries to fight the burn on his back from the carpet and the pressure of Bean on his lungs, with
the horrid memories flooding back to him. Tight spaces will never be acceptable again, and he puts his small hands on Harry's shoulders to create some space.

"Harry, careful." He pants, thinking strictly of past sexual escapades with Harry to get his body ready.

The man nudges Louis' sweater further up on his tummy and looks into Louis' deep blue eyes with lustful green. The hunger in Harry's eyes runs so deep that Louis feels every fibre of his being respond to him. He stops his slight resisting and accepts Harry's invasive lips when they connect with his.

Their tongues mesh and Louis' back arches magnificently. He digs his nails into the clean carpet and controls his soft noises, while Harry pushes just the front of his boxer briefs down hurriedly. Louis' eyes widen when he sees Harry doing that. The man's eyes are focused as he takes his length and guides it to where Louis will accept him.

"Prep, Harry." The boy panics, feeling the blunt head of Harry's member pressing his rim.

"Shh." Harry pinches his thigh and Louis desperately grabs both his hips.

He's hardly a match for the physical strength that Harry's packing. The man pushes into him without hesitation and Louis screams into the air. It doesn't hurt - his first time with Harry was real pain - but it's true discomfort. He scratches Harry's hips and wraps his legs around the man's waist so that he let's him adjust.

"Thank you, baby." Harry whispers wetly in his ear, kissing from there to his lips. "Thank you. Fuck, I missed your body."

Louis whines and bites his bottom lip as tears roll down his cheeks. Just a few wet the carpet and his skin until he's adjusted and his body is relaxed.

"Move." He drops his thighs and Harry shifts up onto his forearms.

His hips roll forward once, and his eyes meet Louis'. He is mindful of Bean's bump as he leans down to kiss his favourite person in the world, dominating the filthy kiss and stealing taste from the boy's mouth. His fingers curl and he blows out against Louis' lips when the boy's soft blue eyes become highly responsive.

Whilst trying to keep his fears at bay, Louis let's himself be taken. He manages to turn away once while Harry's pounding into his bruising hole, and stares at the space under their bed. Harry's boxers brush his thighs and his skin is turning a wonderful red from skin-on-skin contact elsewhere. His mind cruelly reminds him of Briarville's over hot water supply, the sweat on Harry's neck is making him think of the sweaty patients after a meal. That inevitably renders thoughts of disgusting food and the horrid circumstances they were under. The people that put them there, and he doesn't breathe once fully before going soft completely.

Harry stops moving his hips altogether when he feels the change in Louis' body. He frowns but it's not an angry one, and Louis pushes out from under him.

"Princess?"

"I-I'm sorry." He stutters stupidly.

Pulling his sweater down over his bum, Louis rushes into the bathroom with tears streaming down his face.
Chapter Thirty-Eight

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Louis stayed locked in their en-suite bathroom until Niall came around with their possessions he'd kept. His shivers stopped and his chest stopped thumping unsteadily. He swallowed the scared lump in his throat and breathed deeply because he was home now and nothing was going to get to him and his baby.

Harry sat leaning against the wooden door while he tried with all his words to coax Louis out of his hiding, still bare and uncaring.

"Lou, baby." His head thumped against the door. "Are you hurt?"

There's a soft sniffling noise and Louis wipes his last tears with some tissues from the bathroom counter. He isn't hurt. Harry fusses with the doorknob until he realises that the abrupt metallic noise frightens Louis. He grumbles irritably and slams his fist against the wall out of anger.

"Do you want to stay inside there?" Harry tries to hide the gritting of his teeth and just how foul his words are meant to be. He hates this separation.

"J-Just for a-a little while, pl-please." Louis replies shakily from the other side.

"Fine." Harry declares in a grunt. "I'm staying here until you come out."

Louis sits on the toilet with a closed lid, rubbing a small palm over his baby bump and staring at his reflection in the mirror.

He felt sick. His chest was heaving like a belt kept tightening around his ribcage with each breath, his head was a little heavy and his eyes burned from the hot tears rolling down his face. Tissue fibres stuck to his cheeks and lips from where he'd wiped his tears off his cheeks and saliva off his mouth.

Not wanting to disappoint Harry proved to be an even worse decision, because now he felt like the world was too small. The walls to their apartment were too close together and the dust particles were lingering just above his head. The air was too thick and his nausea was picking up again.

"Lou?" Harry called again, sounding a lot calmer and less frightening to Louis now.

Louis pulls his very loose T-shirt over his behind and kept the cold toilet porcelain from making his bum fall asleep.

"Baby. I-I'm sorry." Harry wasn't crying, but he sounded like he was close to doing so. "I should never have pushed you, or let you push yourself. Of all people in the world, I'm supposed to understand what you're going through."

Louis didn't feel guilty. He couldn't point fingers at either of them because both of them were at fault. His little fingers worked to tear his tissue apart.

"Let me in please." He asked again, getting closer to bordering on a command.

The boy is about to get up and unlock the door because he's afraid of making Harry just edgier with anger. They've both been to the edge and back way too many times this past month. As much as
Louis wants to rebel and just stay in here with a big point to prove, Bean was getting rumbly with hunger.

He bravely walks up to the door and prepares to open it because Harry’s not going to hurt him once there are no barriers between them. His reason for not wanting sex is valid, and they’re both going to have to handle that until he’s feeling secure again.

"Louis." A voice hisses. It's undoubtedly Harry's, but where's Harry's controlled demeanour and supportive tone?

"Yes?" He finds himself compelled to answer. He doesn't want to make Harry angry, because despite his harmlessness Harry is scary when he's angry.

"Do you plan on coming out, love?" It's too sweet now, and Louis retracts his hand from the doorknob.

"J-Just....uh- washing up." He lies. Lame.

What the Hell is this bipolar life of his? Why is he hiding in their bathroom with a frantic boyfriend person on the other side of a solid white door? He knows - if he knows anything certain in this world - that Harry won't hurt him, because he's got Bean with him. But that also seems to be the only thing Louis can reassure himself with.

"Alright." Harry huffs but he's not tired, just annoyed.

Ten minutes later the tap hasn't shut off, because Louis never turned it on. The door is still locked and Louis hasn't moved a bit.

"You know very well I can break this door, Lou." Harry's fingers are drumming against the slightly hollow structure.

And suddenly it hits Louis like a train running on an express line with the finest coal supplying it's engine. This is Old Harry and boy, has Louis missed him. Why? God fucking knows, but Louis suddenly has weak knees and heat rising to his cheeks.

Woah, what was happening?

Old Harry was domineering and sometimes hurtful but he never doubted his bold decisions. He held too tight and bit too hard but he made Louis turn to jelly. Nothing was wrong with who Harry became when they stayed in Chicago, except that they both know Old Harry would never have let them get close enough to being taken to Briarville.

Old Harry was violent.

Louis felt brave. Bean seemed to do that for him, like the unborn baby felt Harry's change too. "Can you?"

He knows Harry's smirking. They're that attuned to one another. "Darling, if I have to force my way into the bathroom we will never get to talk about what's upsetting you."

"Why not?" Louis pulls his T-shirt down to cover his privates almost shyly like Harry can see him being so modest.

Old Harry made him forget that he was ever so frightened by his own mind in the first place.
"You really do ask too many questions, princess." Harry said this to him before, Louis knows it. He finds himself tracing the engraving on his inner thigh that will forever stand to show that Harry's the sole owner of his heart, mind, body and soul. So that's when Harry told him that.

"Do you want to take a shower?" Harry hated to ask. He never wanted his Louis to be alone so he subtly set the question out like this. What he really wanted was for Louis to be with him, so he could apologise and set things straight.

"Y-Yeah." Louis inhales a deep breath.

Their doorbell rings - there's only one person who ever used it - and Louis curls his toes on the small bathroom carpet when the chill of the tiles finally gets his notice.

"Niall's here." Louis clears his throat. "I-I'll shower later."

He makes no move to get out and Niall starts to knock urgently on their door. Harry growls and for a sheer split second he finds himself moving forward just to put a cruel halt to the noise. He manages to stop himself.

"I'm going to let him in. Take your shower." Harry says and the noise of his feet shuffling cross their bedroom begin.

Louis hurries to unlock and yank the door open. "But I want to see him."

Harry's turned figure freezes and he spins around on his heels, eyeing Louis up and down with a strange look. Niall's knocks turn into rampant banging. "I thought you wanted to shower."

"I will." Louis promises the dark glint in Harry's eye that he hasn't seen since....well, since Middleton. "After I see Niall."

"Niall can wait."

"So can my shower."

The tension in Harry's body causes his skin to burn and jaw to stiffen. Even the green slit around his eyes manage to succumb to pure black, and the serpent that commanded it.

"Princess, you have two options." Harry forces his voice into a sigh. He stalks forward clothed in just black joggers that let his black ink roam intimidatingly free, until he's got Louis backed up against a wall and two arms on either side of his head. "Your friend can wait for you in the living room while you shower, or I can leave he out there in the hallway while I fuck some obedience into you."

Louis gasps because *Harry just said that*. To him, no less. He said something so wildly sexual after what just happened on their bedroom floor with Louis going soft and crying. The boy was strangely - very strangely - unable to gather up enough disliking or hatred for Harry's bluntness. Maybe Louis desired this straight-forwardness in order to force himself to get over the trauma. As hard as it was - it really actually wasn't - to admit that Louis maybe needed Old Harry, there was enough said to ensure them both that they really did need that.

Irrespective of this new frontier, Louis still couldn't bring himself to let Harry do anything intimate to his body. "Do you promise to be nice to him?"
"I promise to neglect him completely while I warm some milk and sharpen our knives."
Louis giggles because that's one of Harry's seriously un-funny jokes. He hopes. "Don't cut yourself."

Harry's notorious smirk makes another appearance, and Louis can place his less man, more inner monster expression all the way back in Middleton. "My blood won't be spilt, beautiful. Not tonight."

As it is a natural feat to need to ask questions, Louis opens his mouth to ask why Harry said 'not tonight' as a last addition to his statement. That was too cryptic and Louis is not happy about it. Unfortunately, Harry sends him off to the bathroom before leaving him entirely on his own to let Niall in.

Niall gets help from Harry in taking their luggage from their hotel a month ago to the bedroom, then Bolg and Bundy's cages to Harry's studio. The animals are let free with open cage doors to allow them roaming time. Their new puppies seem to love Bolg's ability to turn into a pure shell when they wanted to play, and how Bundy just scurried away when they were near.

The pups made an effort to not hurt their buddies in play. After ten minutes, all four animals were on the living room carpet nudging each other when the pups rolled over or when Niall tickled them.

"Where's Lou?" Niall asks the man who is behind him in the kitchen working around a pot and box of fresh milk.

"I already told you." Harry is frowning at the milk he's stirring, when he curtly responds. "It sure is a long shower he's having."

Harry ignores him and goes about adding cinnamon and vanilla essences. He rinses Louis' bottle with a nozzle and a clear glass tumbler for himself. Wishing they had cookies after hunting through all their cabinets and shelves, he decides he will just go to the cafe down the street and buy some. Not wanting to inform Niall of this, he scribbles a note and sticks it onto the counter before covering and removing the milk pot. He grabs his keys and heads out the door without a word spoken.

"Where did Harry go?" Louis asks his best friend who is silently playing with Lego and Thomas on their couch. He doesn't like to have walked out and not know where Harry is.

"Don't know. Psycho just walked out." Niall tells him truthfully.

"Did you call him that and that's why he left?"

Louis raises an eyebrow at the blond lad, before sliding into a seat beside him. He is ambushed by his beloved pets who he hasn't seen in a criminal length of time. Laughing softly, he keeps Bundy from tearing the shirt he's wearing by picking him up and kissing his soft little tummy.

"Hello, little man." He grins down at the creature. "I really missed you."

Bolg bumps into Louis' thigh until he gets some attention too, and Louis will never fail to give him that. He cuddles the turtle to his chest and feels the smooth surface of the creature's shell against his chin.

"Didn't say a word to 'im actually." Niall's eyebrows knit together in a tight frown.

"Well, he's.....been quiet recently." Louis admits to his closest friend, omitting the fact about Harry
snapping back to his old self like an elastic band.

"Bad quiet or really bad quiet?"

"There's no difference with Harry." It's meant to sound like a joke because Louis even smiles at his own words.

Niall is stoically regarding him like he's insane. "He's not... doing anything, is he?"

"No." Louis shakes his head and holds Lego's paw in his hand. "No, he isn't."

He's about to start.

* * * * *

*HARRY'S POV* [A/N: *collective deep breath*]

A simple thing like cookies should not be so fucking difficult to locate. I've been staring at the same menu for twenty minutes and am starting to believe that my back is now a permanent trivial component of the wall behind it.


You know that's not why you're here.

Well if I were to admit it to myself, purchasing fifty of the same type of cookie is not why I'm here in this hipster cafe. I'm here because I started seeing things the way I used to and that shouldn't be happening. I'm back from Hell, yes. I'm not supposed to be so ready to use a chunk of steel from the shelf to my right and jab someone in their artery.

You are who you are.

Yet I managed to change so much about myself because of a certain blue-eyed fantasy. Louis. Why does one relapse?

It's like I've been hooked on a drug during the horrid time of my life, and could not set the intoxicant down until later on when a vessel of even darker hope came along. The drug was my incessant need to spill blood, and the vessel stood as a despicable likening to my Louis.

The drug has sprung back into the forefront of my mind, and it seems to be clamping down twice as harshly. It felt unshakeable.

The woman behind me in a tunic and skinny jeans had a slightly blue vein showing through the thin skin of her long neck. It throbbed when she craned that neck or spoke too loudly to her group of pals by the window. In front of me was another girl much younger with waves in her hair that smelt of olive oil. Her back was curved from bad posture and her dark skin made the red of her nails pop out even more.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

A year ago and Harry wouldn't have to choose between which one he'd desire on his steel table more. He'd target them both in reasonable time. Now, he can have neither because Louis will get annoyed and upset. Harry is so far gone past the line of irritation at the fact that he can't do what's primal to him, what's instinct to him.
Imagine needing something enough to inflict pain on yourself just to take the edge off. Harry's past has proven that he needed this drug just as much as he needed his sanity. He doesn't know where Louis stands on his list of importance, but he's fucking certain he's pretty damn high up there. The twisted thing is, Louis may be sitting on the same level as his desire for blood.

After snatching up a box of freshly baked chocolate cookies and a tray of mini doughnuts that smell like grease and melted chocolate, Harry gets himself to the queue at the counter and tries to clench his angry fists rather than have them beat on something. Or someone.

"Packet or bag?" The bland and monotonous girl behind the counter asks him.

He shrugs and stares at the coffee machine behind her like it's the most fascinating object to land on the Earth. She slides his cardboard boxes into a brown paper bag with the cafe logo on it, and Harry pretends like he's studying the counter.

He can't help but notice how deftly and skilled she is at packing the items away. Her long, thin fingers are easily bending and crooking to the crevices of the bag when it needs folding. A haunted thought of what her fingers would look like bent at an unnatural angle reach his mind, and he squeezes his eyes shut to get rid of it.

Harry has to think of Louis and their baby whenever the urge surfaces. If he lets the darkness rule his actions once more, he'll most likely lose himself to it.

"Thanks for stopping by." She bids him adieu with a fake grin after handing him his bag.

He's just about free of the cafe swarming with pulses and healthy bodies that he can't claim. The tingle of the switch blade in his back pocket has finally started to fade. Just, but never so.

Two people enter the cafe with ski masks and none other than guns. Harry doesn't even let fear set in because this is not true fear, this is not real danger like what he's been put through. He's actually quite miffed and stands still leaning against the counter while people scramble out of their seats screaming and ducking.

A strange atmosphere falls over the establishment and Harry can't seem to really hear all the drama, the shrieks and baby cries. The girl behind the counter loses her apron and nearly gets shot when she noisily falls to the ground in hiding. The dark girl with red nail polish in the queue is crouching to a height that's below Harry's knees and maybe she's shivering.

One of the two criminals is shouting at Harry because he's so indifferent to the situation and what's going on. Their gun is pointed at his chest but still can't find the need to move, or the mere thought of doing that.

He's just waiting for them to get close enough.

At home, Louis finishes heating and pouring his milk from the pot into his bottle. Harry's stays in the pot for whenever he decides to have it. Bolg has turned possessive and follows Louis everywhere even if it means biting their quilt to climb off the sofa and crawl behind Louis' feet as he moves around.

"You're going to get hurt, little fellow." Louis laughs at the little creature. Exotic animals were very attached to their owners.

He has left Niall to play with their new animal buddies while Bundy sat peacefully on the love seat in their closet and Bolg continually bumped into his socks. He sets Bolg up next to Bundy.

"Think you can help me set these bags?" Louis asks the two animals that watch him like he's going
to disappear on them again.

He's done with half of his own suitcase when the front door opens after a swift unlocking, and Harry pushing through the front entrance. All seems well for just about a full two seconds, before Niall screams bloody murder.

Louis dashes out of the closet and bedroom with a careful hand placed over his protruding tummy. "What? What's- oh no."

Stopping short by the sight of Harry in the doorway connected to the dining room is impossible. Stopping short by the sight of Harry in the doorway connected to the dining room with a gun tucked into his waistband and bag of baked good in one of his two bloodied hands, definitely is possible.

"Harry!" Louis hisses aggravatedly with his eyes darting from his frightened best friend to clearly unoffended boyfriend.

Niall's going to pass out from the sight of so much blood on someone he knows in his small circle of friends, when they have zero injuries. Louis looks pissed and surprised but not like he was thrown off the deep end.

Niall is confused. "Why does he have blood on him?"

Harry and Louis seem to be having a conversation via their staring competition. The former is quite pleased with himself but Louis looks to be ready for a screaming argument.

"Why does Harry have blood on him?" Niall tries again and his enunciation on each word guarantees that he won't be ignored again.

"Tell him, H." Louis crosses his arms and leans against their bedroom doorway.

He's not supposed to be reacting this way. What's with the smirk? Where did the lack of hesitation arise from?

Harry's head snaps up from Louis' legs - that he was shamelessly ogling - to his bright blue eyes. They weren't showing any signs of disappointment or irritation. What?

"The cafe I went to got held up." He simply says.

"By.....By you?" Niall swallows between syllables.

"No." Harry snaps at him, growing annoyed by the accusation.

Louis covers the distance between them in double time and removes the weapon from Harry's jeans waistband. He pulls Harry's frustrated gaze away from Niall and holds his stare for two seconds before beginning the routine check for injuries.

"You're okay?" Louis asks, caring and worried like how Harry imagines he'll be with Bean once the infant is born.

"Fine." Harry puts both of his flat palms on Louis' lower back. "Just fucking fine."

"So you're not fine." The boy combs his hair back and wipes a red smear off his cheek with the sleeve of his jumper. "Later?"

He gets a stiff once-over nod. That's just about enough for whenever Harry got like this, mean and curt to everyone. He doesn't force a longer response from him and detaches himself from the
dampness of Harry's shirt.

"A shower sounds good, yeah?" Louis proposes, treating Harry like a toddler.

Harry thinks that is just fine, up until he got back into his own body.

"Shower." He nods his consent. "With you."

It wasn't a question. If Louis resisted, he was bound to be carried into the bathroom and stripped anyway for a good wash.

"Let me say goodbye to Niall, okay?" Louis opts for a safer route. "He's my best friend, you know."

The last statement makes Harry's body ooze frozen terror, directed at whoever threatened to take Louis away from him. He grips Louis' hip and baby bump possessively with an inhuman noise clawing its way up his throat.

"I'm your best friend." He growls into the softness of Louis' neck where he's left tens of love bites before, and just about starts on another one.

This one involves more biting than Louis is accustomed to, although Harry tries his best to not make it hurt as much. The spot of pale, ultra smooth skin turns bright pink then flaming red under all the attention. Louis gasps and squirms with two strong arms keeping him captive.

They seem to forget that Louis' closest acquaintance - second closest - is looking at them like they're overdosing on pills from somewhere linked to the underground world.

"Yes you are, Daddy." Louis assures him with a small but prolonged kiss to a clean spot of Harry's jaw. "I still have to say bye to Niall."

Harry nods curtly and returns the kiss by pressing one to Louis' neck, causing the boy's head to be nudged suddenly. He gasps when the prickly stubble of Harry's jaw scratches his sensitive love-bite. The man pulls away reluctantly - the thought of hauling Louis into his arms for a type of simple kidnapping has not completely left his mind - and strides off towards the bedroom.

"What was that, Louis?" Niall does not let Louis breathe and stalks over to him, arms crossed and eyebrows raised.

In the corner of his eye, Louis can spot Harry pause in his step and his back go all rigid. He holds his finger up and turns to give Harry a reassuring smile, telling him to just go on. Harry hesitates but does so. Louis would never lie to him.

"Well?" Niall presses the matter.

"The cafe was held up, Ni." Louis shrugs and sighs. "What do I say?"

"Telling me why Harry turned into a grizzly bear would be nice. Why you weren't scared to see blood on him too."

Louis was stumped. He's not accustomed to it but he certainly won't scream when he's seen the sight of Harry with blood stains or streaks.

"I...I didn't mean for it to look like it was something familiar, Ni. It was just that Harry-"

"Don't bother lying to me."
"I'm not, I swear." Louis pushes his hair back and breathes heavily. "I don't know what to tell you."

"Does Harry come home covered in blood everyday?"

"N-No, Niall. Of course not."

"Okay. Does he hurt you?"

"Niall!"

"Does he? Because you both become very different people when-"

"He never hurts me, Niall. He wouldn't."

"Wonderful to hear." Niall's fake smile is a strong competitor for Louis' own. "Is this what he did in Middleton?"

"What do you mean by 'this'?" Louis is forced to become defensive and slightly irritated.

"Coming home covered in blood."

Louis doesn't want to lie to Niall. "No."

"You're lying, Lou."

"I'm not lying!"

"I never really asked about your relationship with Harry, Lou. How did it start?"

Louis helplessly sputters. "I-It's irrelevant now."

"Is it? How much about Harry have you disregarded because he's tall, dark and handsome?"

"Nothing! This is not an intervention. Do not lecture me on my relationship. I love Harry."

"And he loves you as well?"

"Yes!"

"Yet you know nothing about him. Where was he born? Where's his family? Favourite colour? Birthday? Bad habits?"

"I'm not his parole officer." Louis seethes. "Stop being mean, Niall."

"How sure are you that he loves you?"

"Niall!" Louis couldn't believe how inappropriate his best friend is being. What is happening to the world today?

"Do me a favour-" Niall grabs his jacket from the coat rack by the door and holds the doorknob in his pale fist. "-and ask him yourself again."

He nudges his chin towards something behind Louis and when the boy turns around, Harry is standing not six feet away with his arms crossed and eyes black with pure, unhindered frustration. Niall opens the door and leaves with a flourish.

"Hi." Louis let's his defeated body sag for just a moment while he holds his tears back and hugs
himself.

"My darling." Harry brings Louis under one arm and presses three kisses to the boy's forehead consecutively. "Don't give a fuck about Niall."

Louis brings his arms up around Harry's neck and keeping his head bent towards his own neck. He feels comforted by the warmth radiating off from between Harry's neck and shoulder junction. The man is all too willing to comply and keeps Louis in the circle of his arms.

"I think he's right though, Haz." Louis sniffles and whines when Harry peppers his newest love-bite with kisses.

"What do you mean?" Harry's got the span of his hands circling Louis' thighs and lifting him up off the ground.

"I don't know anything about you, you know." He's being carried off to their bedroom, then straight to the bathroom.

"What would you like to know about me?" Harry sets Louis down on the bathroom counter to begin the process of stripping.

Louis lifts his arms and lets Harry remove his now dirtied - with blood - sweater. Harry is quick to remove his own clothing as well. He gets his hips jerked forward when Harry tries removing his underwear. By result, his legs fall slightly open and Harry soothes his whimper with a gentle kiss on the lips.

"Okay, princess?" He rubs loving circles into Louis' hip as he heaves him off the counter as the slightly squirming mass he is, completely naked into the shower.

"Fine." Louis pushes down on Harry's shoulders until he's pulled himself up enough to hike his thighs around the man's hips. "Can I really ask you anything?"

"No." Harry immediately answers, a little too cold for comfort. He turns the shower tap on to a luke temperature.

"No?" Louis looks crestfallen.

"You may ask me about my future and my present." Harry clarifies strictly.

"But your past?"

"No, darling."

"Why not?"

"It is irrelevant to the future or present."

"But I want to know." Louis wiggles and locks his ankles around Harry's slender waist.

"I know nothing of your past either, yet I do not ask."

"My family died in a car crash. I had a sister and two amazing parents. I was valedictorian and speak four languages." Louis summarises the past nineteen years of his life, and thinks he did a good job of it. "Your turn."

"No, Louis." Harry takes the sponge and soap for the second time in two hours.
"You won't tell me because you don't-"

"Don't you dare say I don't love you." Harry looks convincingly thrown off the deep end.

"What your friend said holds no standing in our home and between us."

"I know but.....- Why won't you tell me then?" Louis looks down at his fingers when Harry stops the lathering motions on his back.

"You never wanted to know before."

"I'm asking now, Harry."

"Don't push me, Louis."

Louis huffs in irritation and pushes Harry's hands away when they try to get onto his body again. The man shows off his immediate retaliation by dropping Louis to his feet and crowding him against a wall.

"Listen to me." Harry puts a hand on Louis' baby bump - an item of fondness they shared. "This baby is mine, you are **mine**."

Turning away, Louis yelps when his earlobe is bitten unkindly and Harry slams his flat fist against the tiled wall.

"Listen!" He repeats, in a low shout. "There is nothing more important to me than you and Bean. No object, no person, no possibility. **Nothing**. I belong to you. The only past of mine that matters is the day that became a reality. November eleventh last year when I first saw you at your school. Nothing before that will ever matter."

"I disagree." Louis, although greatly moved by Harry's declaration and small speech, will not back down on this subject matter. "Everything about you matters to me."

Harry looks up from the drain to his eyes, connecting their gazes for a long second. A bit of the tough shell he built cracks but doesn't crumble.

"You're so sweet, my love. Sweet and innocent." He tucks a dry lock of Louis' hair behind his pink ear. "I'd cut out my heart before letting anything destroy that."

"I want to know. I will still be innocent afterwards."

Harry's Adam's Apple bobs with his swallow and the hollow of his cheek gets screwed tighter. "No you won't."

"Please, Harry."

"No."

Without verbally making the annoyed 'Fine' last word of his argument, Louis swallows his disappointment and leaves the shower when Harry's right arm drops in time.

"No, baby. Wait." Harry tries to get him back in vain.

Louis gets a towel and dries off before deciding to spend the day in bed alone with maximum clothing on. Unfortunately, he only gets a pair of panties on before Harry's shower turns off and he's leaving the bathroom in a wave of steam. Nothing is said until after Harry's dressed in clean grey
"Lou." He says to Louis’ offended person, climbing up the length of the mattress.

Stubbornly, Louis closes his eyes and looks the other way when Harry gets very close to him. He would like to share with Harry what every other functioning pairing does, and it isn't fair that Harry won't let him. It's extremely mean, in his books.

"My love?" Harry tries again. He even manages to pull back the duvet when Louis tries keeping it to himself. "Can I at least rub some lotion on you?"

Louis shakes his head and smashes his face into the pillow. He wants his pets to cuddle with him while he grieves over Harry's stupid selfishness.

"You'll never stop being persistent won't you, princess?"

With a drawn out sigh of something deeper than remorse, Harry extracts a bottle of Louis' lavender lotion from their dresser and catches sight of something else too. In the midst of some other products, lay Harry's obsolete cross necklace with its chain strewn across nameless cosmetics. He takes it in his fist and with the lotion, gets back onto the bed.

He finds that Louis has recovered himself with twice as many covers and makes a solid effort to remove them again. His back begins to feel taut because of the blisters that are slowly but surely healing, and he's going to have to change those bandages. Louis comes first though.

"You'll want me to tell you right up until I actually do." Harry's hands work at massaging the lotion into Louis' thigh. He gets little resistance.

"That's not true." Louis croaks, half concealed by the pillow he's peering out from behind.

"It is, darling." Harry squirts more lotion into his palm and switches legs. "It's that horrible."

"Were you a drug dealer?"

Harry laughs under his breath. How menial is that occupation? "No, no."

"Homeless?"

He scoffs. "No."

"I already know what you used to do to people." Louis smiles into his pillow when Harry starts working - extra delicately - on Bean's baby bump.

"Before that." Harry says tightly. "Before I cut my first person I had a trigger. A fucking ugly one."

"How bad can it be, Harry?"

"Bad enough to make me start taking lives."

Louis sucks his bottom lip in between his molars. "Will you tell me if I guess correctly?"

"Yes, only because I made a vow to never lie to you."

"Okay."

The boy sits up and makes grabby hands towards Harry until he's dragged onto his lap. He folds his
legs and leans forward slightly, relying all on Harry's arms to keep him from falling.

"You get three tries." Harry finally adds. "After that, we forget about this."

"That's not fair!"

"Your first guess?"

"Um...." Louis scrunches his nose in thought. "-you had a bad experience."

"Second guess?"

Louis pouts. "That wasn't my guess."

"Too bad, princess." Harry pinches his bum.

"Was my first guess right?"

"Yes."

Bad experience? "You didn't worship the devil, did you?"

"I have worshipped only one thing my entire life, and that one thing is sitting on my lap right now."

Trying not to blush - he fails - Louis kisses Harry's cheek as thanks. "Romantic but I'm not done."

"You have one more guess."

Louis chews his lip while Harry gathers his necklace from where it was hidden amongst the sheets. He finds the clip and unhooks it.

"You experienced something terrible. Did you lose someone you loved?"

"Yes." Harry smirks. "-but that's not the pertinent answer."

"What is it then?"

"There are rules to this game, my beloved. We don't break rules here."

Louis let's Harry kiss his neck and throat but not go further. He tugs on Harry's hair and climbs off his lap.

Harry's unhappy rumble in his chest keeps his nailed to his current spot. The man takes his chain and locks it around Louis' neck, letting it fall against his bare skin.

He places a shaky kiss to Louis' shoulder over the chain. "I was a prostitute."
Chapter Thirty-Nine

Making love was never about you and me in a bed. We made love whenever we held hands.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

December 25th, 1991 (Age: 3)

Christmas in the Styles household was just as merry as all their festive neighbours. Gemma bought gingerbread men instead of baking them. Anne actually made over a dozen fruit cakes. This year she had to make more though because her husband's business associate was coming over for a good ol' Christmas family dinner.

Des, her out-of-drug-rehab husband who insisted they put on a real show for this associate because he held Des' job in the palm of his hand, was out purchasing alcohol. Her son, Harry, was up to his usual nonsense upstairs in his attic/bedroom. She'd recently bought him a wooden train set as his age was appropriate for such toys.

Her hopes of changing his habit of plucking feathers out of pigeons was happily squashed by the three-year-old. Harry gave her an impressive frown that his therapist is very surprised about, and went right back to plucking from his latest sparrow victim.

Their dinner guest arrived at seven in an expensive suit, bearing a bottle of pricey wine. Harry just had his bath and felt no unease at walking around naked. Anne was horrified to see her son asking their guest something butt naked.

"Are you a alk-holic?" Harry asked, eyeing the green bottle as a drunkard would.

"No, son." The expensive man with a name Harry didn't care for knelt in front of him whilst stripping off his jacket.

Des was red in the face with anxiety, but Harry just crooked his smile and began his frown again when the stranger put his silk-leather jacket over his shoulders.

"Go get dressed, H." Des gestured towards the stairs with a stern look. His creepy son would not ruin this for him.

"I don't love him." Harry tells the stranger who was the only one within earshot.

Harry would trust an intelligent individual to understand what he said, in not so many words. His father was just out of rehab and he was still very prone to relapsing, or other worse circumstances. He looked into the associate's dull blue eyes and gives his father a hateful look.

He despises the nickname H, and now hates the look of blue eyes when they look at him like he's on display in a butchery.

Having had lost his manners at birth, Harry skips dinner and ignores everyone's calls for him to please come down to join them. He shakes his head with his hands wrist-deep in the dry soil pit he built using planks of clean wood.

His parents were confused Harry was not their's at one point, as he was nothing like them. He felt like he had an extra light chest with a hole instead of a heart.
"So Dylan-" Anne looked up from her plate of roasted meat and vegetables. "-how did you decide that technology was for you?"

Dylan, Des' associate who planned to employ him on the sole basis of his son's green eyes, sipped from his wine glass. The wine was crisp and tinged with sweetness.

He put on his most dazzling smile and let everyone at the table have a piece of it. His mind was about a dozen stairs away in the bedroom of Harry Styles.

It was a perfectly suited name, Dylan applauded Anne on the choice. He knows Des didn't have any part in it. Harry's electric green eyes were so filled with life, dimmed by self-control and disinterest in childish things. He was perfect. Even as a toddler, his facial structure was delectable and his skin looked so supple.

"Where is your bathroom?" He wiped his twitching hands on the napkin strewn across his lap.

Anne directed him and Dylan hurried away, while three members of the Styles family gossiped about him. He crept upstairs and found the only plain brown door slightly ajar. Peeping inside, he saw Harry's impeccable room and the owner himself seated on the bed reading a book.

They had a brief, ominous conversation that puzzled Harry and left him wanting to go to sleep early. That was disrupted at something to eleven when his door opened again as it had no lock thanks to his antics.

"I told them that I came for my jacket." Dylan stood as a tall barrier by the door, his fingers twitching and mind racing.

Harry turned back over to face his wall rather than the CEO. "I know."

He didn't scream. He didn't cry. Harry only felt hopelessly disgusted with himself when the stranger he could almost treat as just another good Samaritan, pulls his pyjama pants down to his small ankles and left uncomfortably wet kisses on his skin. Prep was no more than two fingers in his extremely unaccustomed, virgin body.

"Look at me." Dylan had grunted with his body joined to Harry's.

The CEO had just a few minutes so he sped things up by completely ignoring Harry for the most part. He used the young boy's eyes and body to get off, before he spat his warm seed into the child's body. He was gone before Harry could have his first shiver.

He told no one and managed his limp artfully. His body was dirty no matter how many times he scrubbed it. He was three years into this world, soon to be four and he's been raped by his dad's boss. Though it wasn't an accomplishment, Harry never felt the need to shout an scream about it. The hole in his light chest was filled with a monstrous secret that would soon evolve into an actual monster.

Twelve years later, he discovered his own real reason for keeping the rape a secret.

February 1st, 2003 (Age: 15)

He's been on the streets for two years, and there is yet to be a thing he loves about this sense of livelihood. He had a home to return to after a late night of prowling the streets as a body to consume, but there was no joy in it.

Since that day twelve years ago, Harry's killed over a hundred animals ranging from bird to squirrel...
to dogs. His family never found out and the neighbourhood was too afraid of him to bring it up. Also since that day, he found fascination in having sex without emotion.

It was not a way to vent extra energy or to spite his parents, Harry hated the boredom he experienced at home after matriculating at thirteen. He found himself at the Red Light District back then and never seemed to leave. Even to him, that was a mystery. His fascination lasted only because he got his first human victim on his birthday.

Before he could offer up any information or twisted smiles to a tinted black SUV, he had his eye caught on someone across the street that clearly didn't want his body.

Short stature and strolling alongside his mother, was a teenager who didn't have tattoos or black clothing like Harry. He smiled ignorantly and even looked at Harry for a brief moment, paralysing the latter at the powerful shade of blue eye colour he possessed. Harry hated blue eyes, but he's never seen his shade before and it might have just become his favourite colour.

Without thinking, Harry pushed off the wall and walked across the street to follow the mother and son. He kept his distance and watched them walk into a tuition building. Once the blue-eyed feminine boy was gone, Harry gathered his senses and got out of there.

The hole in his chest felt a little different, tingly but void of a heart muscle still.

He killed his first person that day, with blue eyes flooding his system and confusing him greatly. He used a bicycle spoke and acted extra vengeful by ringing it around his victim's neck with strength that a teenager can't possess without the help of muscle-building.

November 11th, 2014 (Age: 26)

Gemma hounded her brother until he agreed to take her to school. To make matters worse, she barged into his room in the basement without knocking and saw him tying up someone in a dog blanket. They fought but he kept silent until she realised he wasn't afraid of her words, and grabbed his car keys.

That day he saw Blue Eyes again after eleven long years. Middleton is one of the biggest small towns so it's hardly believable that they never crossed paths for such a long while. Harry was stuck in a stationary position in the car park after he spotted the now insanely beautiful individual. He stared back at him while he tried to gather some words or indications, but Blue Eyes waved with pink cheeks and dashed off towards the back building.

He felt more than a tingle in his chest as he watched Blue Eyes jog off away from him.

* * * * *

"I was a prostitute."

Louis couldn't bring himself to ask 'What?' so he sat there in Harry's safe arms and listened carefully to the heartbreaking tale. From start to finish, Louis felt like he wanted to cry but he didn't.

"Oh Haz." He wrapped his arms around the man's neck and brought him close. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry you had to live that life."

Harry had his Blue Eyes. He has no complaints. "I have you now."

"You certainly do." Louis set himself in Harry's lap and cocooned them in the comforter. "Can I ask you something?"
Green eyes examined Louis' sparkling blue ones, a large hand caressing Louis' defined cheekbone.

"Yes."

"When did you stop......you know-"

"Selling myself?" Harry steeled an arm around Louis' waist - just in case - and revelled in how this boy of his wasn't disgusted with him. "When I turned eighteen."

"What made you stop?"

"You."

"What?" Now, Louis couldn't stop himself.

"Irrespective of the eleven years I didn't see you, I always saw your eyes or smile." Harry traced the respective features with his thumb. "I felt like I owed you something."

"You didn't, Haz." Louis smiles softly, rubbing the tips of their noses together.

"It was more than that." The man says convincingly, rolling over to put Louis safely under him - just in case. "I never felt before, but I did with you. I didn't want anyone else to have you so I hoped that as soon as we met next, I would get to keep you."

"I'm not a doll." Louis giggles and pulls Harry's face closer to his. "Is that why you were so persistent?"

Harry feels unashamed when he nods.

"I felt for you too, Harry. Maybe not as early, but just as deeply. I love you. I'm very much in love with you and I'm grateful for you telling me this."

The man bends lower and sighs into Louis' neck, letting the dead weight lift off his shoulders like it was never there.

His body no longer felt like his own, ironically. It belonged to Louis, he belonged to Louis at all times. He no longer felt the touch of strangers from an old life or even Briarville on his body, just Louis' small hands that slid up and down his back. Louis loved him even if he was without a soul.

"Yours." Harry mouthed at the warm skin of Louis' throat.

"I'm sorry for......for stopping before." Louis chewed his lip and folded his hands on his precious baby bump. "I just wasn't ready, now you told me this and I feel like I did something terrible. I'm sorry-"

"Stop it." Harry rested on his forearms and stared down at Louis with a familiar fog of a personality.

"Don't be sorry."

"But I am, Haz-"

"No. You can't let me touch you if you don't want it."

"I know." Louis responded to the firm and unwavering tone with submissive regret. "I'm sorry."

Harry presses a kiss to the boy's temple and his thumb when one hand reaches up to touch Harry's
jaw. Louis smiles easily but it's not all the way up to his eyes. It's not enough for the man so he continues to nibble on the appendage until Louis' giggling like he used to.

"Why did you stop?" Harry was genuinely curious, but the impassive darkness swirling in his eyes spoke of no emotion.

"I st-started to think about that place and I just couldn't do it. I let myself think. I shouldn't have."

Nodding, Harry did not further the discussion because he understood the truth behind Louis' answer. He sat up on his haunches between Louis' legs to put the lotion away, but small hands gripped his neck and thin lips met his jugular. Harry's a little confused at first but he relaxes when those lips slide into place with his, moving the connection with a mixture of feeling.

He knew better now and wouldn't go beyond what Louis initiated. His palms stayed on safe grounds of Louis' skin and he kissed the boy back with just as much fervour, groaning when Louis parted his lips for him. Louis tasted of toothpaste from this morning and his fingers were snagged on Harry's shoulders.

Against his better judgment, Harry couldn't help but wonder where he'd be if Louis never waved at him on November 11th.

* * * * *

Louis went with Harry on Monday morning to campus, so that they could speak with the Dean about the change in plan. In the morning, they woke up lazily and talked about what they were going to say.

"The police reports are official. We should use them." Harry lay on his front, head turned to the side so his words were clear.

"Oh okay." Louis rested his cheek on his folded arm that he had on Harry's broad back. His fingers traced invisible designs and relaxed the man. "Can we go out for a victory breakfast after we talk to him?"

"Whatever you want, princess. I want to get a tattoo today."

"What kind of tattoo?"

"It'll have to be a surprise. Maybe a piercing too."

"A Prince Albert piercing?" Louis giggles and hides his face between Harry's shoulderblades.

"Do you want me to get a Prince Albert piercing?"

"No!" Louis gasped.

"No? Why not?" Harry warned Louis before switching positions so Louis was beside him, under the weight of his arm.

"Because it's metal in your man parts." Louis' nose scrunches up.

Harry chuckles at the boy's explanation. He curves his arm around Louis' hip and his lips brush Louis' ear. "Wouldn't it feel good inside you?"

Louis shivered. Just because he couldn't go through with sex just yet doesn't mean he can't get
aroused.

"While we fuck....-" Harry drums his fingers on Louis' waist. "-or make love."

"You could get an i-infection."

"Hardly." The man scoffs, latching onto Louis' earlobe with his teeth. "Nobody would get to see it besides you."

"I hope so."

Harry's hand went South and Louis was partially hopeful that it would prompt him into trying something intimate. He even curved his back carefully but the man's hand rounded at Louis' tummy and caressed the baby bump.

Louis was afraid of sex because he somehow felt that this was all a dream and if he gave into that, something which made him completely blissful, it would be taken away. He'd close his eyes to Harry, but reopen them to a stinking hospital bed and scalpels.

"Stop." Harry picked up on the process of his thoughts and barked out the word. "Don't go there."

"Sorry." Louis bit his bottom lip so it wouldn't quiver.

He threaded his fingers through Harry's hair and held him close. It felt very real.

"C-can you do something for me?" Louis swallows. His nose bumps Harry's and heart thumps in his chest cavity.

"You have to tell me what it is first."

"Love me."

Harry frowns. "I love you, Lou."

"No, I mean...I mean make-" He can't bring himself to say it with his shaky voice so he slides Harry's arm lower down on his body.

"No." Harry brings his hand back up, shaking his head.

Louis starts to cry. He's not being selfish or dramatic, he knew that Harry would say no but still prayed that he'd do him this favour.

"Please, Harry." He pleads with his eyes, shivering when Harry wipes his tears away.

Harry shakes his head again. "You're not ready."

"I'll never be!" Louis cries, pulling away from the man and sucking in long breaths to calm himself.

"I wanted to try."

Sighing, Harry refuses to see Louis this upset and ropes him into his arms. He sets the subtly shaking boy on his lap and brushes through his tossed hair to get his lips on Louis' cheek.

"I love you, princess." Harry folds their legs together. "You're being rash. Take some deep breaths for me."
Louis does so and buries his face in Harry's chest, hiding with and in shame directed at himself.

"I will not take advantage of you again." Harry thumbs away Louis' tears to dry his cheeks. "How about we go baby shopping today?"

His plan of distraction works because immediately Louis looks up at him with hopeful bright blue eyes. Harry bends and kisses his red nose.

"Can we?" Louis hooks his chin over Harry's shoulder.

"Anything you want."

Their day started off rocky but Harry tries his utmost best to get Louis smiling and giggling again. They share the task of making breakfast and showering before they decide to head out. Louis' in a pure black jumper with elasticated black jeans.

Whilst he straightened out the sweater, he was met by the sight of Harry dressing in a button-up and forgot that he was staring until Harry caught his eye in the mirror and winked. A faint pink blush coloured his cheeks.

"Hey, Niall. It's Louis. Call me back please if you still possess even an ounce of will to talk to me. Harry and I are uh...coming to campus today so if you do want to talk to me, meet me at the courtyard bench we used to spend all by time at." Louis left his third voice message for his - hopefully not ex - best friend.

"He's being difficult, princess. It's no fault of yours." Harry walked into the dining room where Louis sat, in the process of clipping on his watch.

"No." Louis sighs and sets his new phone down. "He shouldn't have seen us that way."

"What way?" Harry's noticeable eyebrows knit together in a defensive frown.

"You know what way."

Louis gulped down at least half of his water from the bottle he held in one go, playing with the straw he never used.

"I don't think I do." Harry sat across from him behind a pile of his paperwork, accepting the water bottle when offered by Louis.

Louis watched Harry take a sip with his unblinking gaze never lifting off Louis' face, without an answer.

"Are you ashamed of something about us, princess?" Harry didn't say princess like he usually would. He said it like he did in a supermarket weeks ago.

"No, Haz." He laces his fingers together around his phone. "To be fair."

"To Niall?"

"Yes, to be fair to him and people in general. It's not a norm for couples to behave like we do. You walked in with blood matted to your skull and I didn't care."

"I'm glad you didn't."

Louis remembers that he never got around to asking Harry what exactly went down at that cafe. He
will soon.

"Normal couples are at least upset, or angry. He saw me being completely calm and you with that creepy smirk of yours."

"I'm hurt, darling."

"No you're not."

Harry would glow if he could at Louis' brave statements. Bold and true. "Okay, love. Your blond friend has no fucking idea where we've been and what we've been through. We've both seen blood spilt and now we are indifferent to it. If he, or anyone for that matter, dares call us not compatible because of that I will end them."

Flattered and minutely appalled, Louis rolls his eyes and sits back in his comfy chair. "I'm swooning."

Harry chuckles at the dripping sarcasm. "Is this matter settled then?"

"Yes."

"Good. Let's go."

The car ride is filled with the ten o'clock news bulletin about a robbery on the other side of town, a mother who gave birth to six kids at once and eventually a report on none other than Briarville. Louis was lightning quick to switch channels on the radio until they got the latest sporting news.

"I would have thought that of all teams, Juventus would have beaten Barcelona." Louis comments casually after the broadcast was complete and a not so catchy song came on.

"I've never watched soccer."

"I can teach you."

"I'd rather not."

"Why?" Louis pouted. He loved helping people learn things, and now especially because the topic held such an interest for him.

"No interest in the sport. American football is no better."

"Soccer is riveting." Louis defends. "Do you like any sport besides boxing?"

"None."

"I'm gonna teach Bean all about soccer." Louis rubs his baby bump affectionately.

Their campus is swarming with a student body bustling about to move around and get the day's tasks done before they're penalised. Harry parks outside the head office and doesn't get around the front of the car fast enough, for Louis hops down gracefully.

"You know better." Harry raises both eyebrows, having effectively cornered Louis against the car door.

"Than to get out of a car? Haz, I can do that just fine." Louis argues with a bemused smile that tugs on his lips as he peers up at the green eyes studying him.
"I don't care." Harry says darkly, voice low and dangerous. "Don't do it again, princess."

Louis nods and sticks his bottom lip out just a tad so it's very visible how pouty he's feeling. "Okay."

Harry's not pleased with such a brief response, and he makes a soft rumbling sound of discontent. His hand captures Louis' smaller fist and forces his fingers through the spaces between Louis'. He jerks Louis forward away from the cold metal door and squashes the boy's delicate between their torsos.

"Say again, darling?" Harry doesn't waste time nibbling on Louis' earlobe, his teeth bite the soft skin and leave red indents on the surface.

"Won't do it again, Daddy." Louis gasps between the endearment when strong fingers grip his bum like they're not in a very public place. "Haz."

"Shh." He gives Louis one firm squeeze before releasing him. "Our meeting is in ten minutes."

The Dean is reluctant to go through with their requests as Louis is one of the university's fine students and so is Harry. However, he agrees to Louis' course switch and refunds Harry's tuition fees. It was still just July so less than half a year's fees were given back.

There's no belongings of Louis' that are on campus or in the dormitories so they walk past the courtyard Louis told Niall about before heading to the parking lot. Niall didn't show and Louis didn't blame him.

The mall was a different one from Greenstone, and had many more stores with multiple-zero price tags. Louis felt out of place but he really wasn't here to buy designer clothing that he could get for a halved fraction of the price at a department store. He followed after Harry, their hands interlinked, through the electronic sliding doors and into a cool air-conditioned breeze.

"This says the baby store is two floors up." Louis hates the touch screen guide situated next to the information desk, but he controls his need to throw a chair at it.

"We'll take the escalator." Harry knew of Louis' disliking for the specialised equipment and struggled to hold back his smirk.

The baby store has soft neutral walls and could go on for miles behind the thin wall at the far end with just storage. Louis feels giddy with excitement but he wasn't going to go crazy and buy things now at an inappropriate time.

"We can pick out a colour for Bean's nursery." He suggested, tugging Harry towards the colour scheme and design isle.

They spend twenty minutes arguing on colour choices until Harry gives in and let's Louis have his light grey. It was neutral enough for them both.

"You know next week I'll be thirteen weeks." Louis held a back cushion in one arm and Harry's hand in the other.

"I do know." Harry's been admiring Louis' electric nature since they stepped foot in this store.

"That means we can find out Bean's gender."
"I have a decent feeling on what Bean will be."

"Oh yeah?"

"Boy."

"Wishful thinker, you are. A baby girl would be just as wonderful."

"I agree but Bean is a boy."

Louis turned to face him with an eyebrow quirked challengingly. "Wanna bet?"

"We are not betting." Harry steps closer as another couple walks past, looking like proper churchgoing people. "We are not betting on the sex of our baby."

"I say we are." Louis went back to browsing baby clothes. "What will you have to do if I win?"

Harry decides to indulge Louis, and their friendly bet. "I win, you wear lingerie."

"I'll wear lingerie now, Harry."

"You wear the lingerie I choose and."

One broad arm goes up beside Louis' head to keep their words within this circle. "-I'll fuck you until you come dry eventually."

Louis swallows. He'd gone into subspace twice after coming just two or three times. What will coming dry to do him? He's both terrified and dangerously excited.

"Fine. If I win, you get a Prince Albert piercing and wear a cock ring while we make love until I come dry."

Harry’s green eyes darken to hunger and intrigue. Yes, this is an excellent idea. They needed this distraction and Harry's quite overly fucked if that didn't make him a little hard in his pants. He loves how Louis changed fucking to making love, and how much of a sport he's being.

"Shall we shake on it?" Harry tames the aroused and active monster in his mind, winding an arm around Louis rather than exacting a handshake.

"We shall." Louis giggles and pulls away to shake Harry's hand lifelessly.

They carry on with their browsing and choosing without bringing the bet up again. It's carved in stone and Louis is a very patient person, something Harry isn't.

White curtains, a white wooden rocking chair, wooden crib and a minimal amount of baby clothes is what they pay for at the till point. The furniture will be delivered but Louis' too eager to look at the baby clothes tonight to let the delivery men bring it over tomorrow.

"Do you want lunch while we're here?" Harry tells one of the many stationed attendants to take their bought items to the car.

"Yes please."

They stop at a cafe that's opened and joined to a book store. The waiter gives them a decent, dim booth at the back behind the book store's display of board games. Louis even spotted a Fifty Shades of Grey monogamy game that didn't look like it would end prettily.
"I want the Louisiana chicken pasta." Louis tells Harry before he can ask, smiling at his private jokes.

"One can imagine why." Harry gazes over the top of his laminated menu to smirk at the boy who has started chewing his lip whilst looking around them.

"Can we go over there?" Louis' line of vision was trained on a section in the house of novels.

"After we eat."

"Okay."

Harry orders two pasta dishes and warm drinks for them both. While he sat on a chair with his back to the entrance, Louis sat across from him with a special kind of glint in his eye.

"Princess?" Harry took Louis' hands in his and got the boy's attention. "I want to ask you something."

"Okay." Louis made space for their drinks and started sipping from the straw of his smoothie.

"Where will Bean's nursery be?"

Of all the strenuous and unkind questions to possibly leave Harry's lips on any occasion, Louis is most shocked to hear these. He honestly should have thought this through before going shopping today, or ordering furniture for tomorrow.

"The furniture will stay in our studio until we're ready but we don't have any physical space for a baby."

Harry and him have discussed this and Louis ended the last conversation ambiguously. Now, the man was bringing it up again in the hopes that a solid answer would come his way. To have a fresh start or not?

"What are you suggesting?" Louis keeps one hand in Harry's and the other on his bump. "That we move?"

"It's what I've been saying." Harry deadpans. "To be frank, I'm asking you out of courtesy. I've spoken with a real estate agent already."

"What if I say no?"

"The call I made would not have changed. The three homes she emailed me the addresses of will still be visited tomorrow and we will eventually move into one of those three."

If there was ever any doubt, Louis knows now that Old Harry is here to stay for a while.

"A home is a giant step." Louis rests his elbows on the table.

"Whether we do it now or you prolong the process by arguing, it is bound to happen." The nonnegotiable white sparkle in Harry's dark eyes stood out. "You're mean." Louis sits back. "You could have told me."

"I do what I do for you. Flatter someone and call it a surprise decision, but I hired the best real estate agent because I can't fucking stand that apartment any longer."

Louis is taken aback and his hand slips out of Harry's falling to his abdomen where he strokes his
pregnant bump over his shirt. "How long have you felt this way and didn't tell me?"

"You don't want to stay there either, Lou."

"I really....I don't have as much of a problem staying there, Haz."

"But do you have a problem with moving?"

"Not really."

"Then it's settled."

"Can we keep the apartment?" Louis thanks the waiter who brings him his pasta dish. "Sentimental value and all that."

"That's a one hundred thousand dollar sentiment." Harry wipes off his fork with a napkin. "We can."

The rule of their meals together is that Harry must never take from Louis' plate unless he's feeling extra generous, but the latter is free to do as he pleased. Harry never wanted to say no to Louis for this as it was just food and Louis' eating for two. He noticed how Louis stole the chicken cubes from his pasta so he avoids eating any, just consuming the cheesy pasta and sauce.

"You wanted to go there?" Harry nods in the direction of the book store while he pays for their food.

"Yes please." Louis really liked the Oreo milk smoothie Harry ordered for himself so naturally the boy made a swap for his pomegranate one. He held the travel mug in his hand and the other hand was just letting go of Harry's.

After getting his card back, Harry grabs Louis' wrist before the boy completely leaves him for the books. "Wait, Louis."

"Sorry." But he's not really paying attention.

Harry sighs and tugs on Louis' arm once they're away from most prying eyes, in the non-fiction section. "Louis."

Louis looks up at him from the small comic book shelf.

"You are not to go anywhere without me." Harry crowds him up against the shelf, the intimidating size of his arms blocking Louis' sight. "What you did wasn't nice back there."

"What did I do?" Louis blinks his innocent blue eyes. Their faces were close enough to touch and Louis was practically encased by Harry.

"Rules are not forgotten because we're in public, Louis. You know very well that I will do in public what I can do to you in private."

Louis knows this. Exhibitionism is not all that Harry's about when it comes to punishment, but Harry was a lot more comfortable with it than Louis. The dark fire in Harry's eye usually blossomed a heat in the boy's middle. The result was a little dimmer but almost just as exciting, and Louis finds that this is actually working to get him over some awful past events.

"Am I in trouble?" Louis held the lapels of Harry's coat with both hands after putting his cup down.

He steps closer by one step and stood on his tiptoes. "I knew you'd find me."
Harry looks disappointed. "That's very irresponsible, princess. You know what happens when we're separated."

Feeling guilty, Louis nods because he really should have been careful. The distraction of a day away from everything connected to Briarville has left him slightly unawares.

"Don't you, princess?" Harry tilted Louis' face up with his index finger.

Lovely blue eyes began to swim in tears as Louis sucked in a sharp breath. "I'm sorry."

"Why are you crying?" Harry bends his knees a little so that he was on Louis' level.

"B-Because I should have known." Louis hides in Harry's chest, tucked under the man's chin and heaving deeply for air.

"It's alright now, love. You weren't sure but you understand now." Rubbing his hands up and down Louis' back, Harry starts to massage the kinks in the boy's lower back region. "No crying, princess."

Louis sniffles and gets his emotional response in check before Harry takes the liberty of wiping his eyes. Their section of the bookstore is still deserted save for them, and Harry finds himself going against his better judgment.

"How about we do something fun?" Harry's tone is monotonous but Louis' learnt to see past that now.

"Like what?" Louis took his cup back and wrapped his lips around the straw, looking curious but uncertain.

Harry swipes his thumb under the rims of Louis' eyes before he kisses the puffy redness and gets a smile as a reward. "Go find some books you or Bean might like and I'll come find you in ten minutes."

"Really?" Louis is unsure. What if something happens? He knows his heart won't be able to handle another tragedy.

"I'll be right here the whole time." Harry presses Louis' hand to his own pocket. "Call me if you need me as soon as you think you do."

"Where will you go?"

In truth, Harry just wanted to give Louis some space to be alone with himself. "I'll go find us a boardgame or something."

Louis loves boardgames and Harry always let's him win because of the light in his eyes that becomes ablaze when he does. Bean may not grow up to like soccer but their baby will inevitably be thrust into the fascinating domain of Scrabble and Chess.

They are apart for twenty-seven seconds - enough time for Harry to completely ignore the boardgame section and wander into the classical music isle that was small and stocked - when Harry's phone rings. Louis' caller identification blinks up at him.

"Louis?" Harry is three short shelves away from Louis and can see no trouble circulating his boy at the moment.

"Hi." Louis smiles, his voice sounding blocked by probably a sip of Oreo smoothie that he didn't
swallow yet.

"Can I help u, princess?" Harry chuckles, eyes searching through album titles.

"I just wanted to say I know what you did." Louis moves out of the way of an elderly woman with a red sweater on.

"Do you now?"

"I do, and I love you for it."

Harry laughs into the speckled speaker. "That was my objective."

"Harold."

"Yes, baby?" They both wince at the nickname. It's bloody awful. Harry clears his throat. He hears Louis' intake of breath and interrupts again as he realises what the boy will ask for. "I love you as well."

"As well." Louis mocks his 'proper' way of saying affectionate things. "Bye-Bye."

Louis hangs up before Harry can stop being amused. The man shakes his head and goes back to his pre-interruption task of gathering enough Mozart and Hans Zimmer to play to Bean. When ten minutes are up, he finds Louis first before crossing that elected distance.

He finds Louis sitting cross-legged on the carpeted floor flipping through a joke book, a pile of other novellas and selections sitting beside him.

"If you weren't so tall-" Louis looks up from the book. "-I'd probably never know you're standing there."

Harry crouches on his left and kisses Louis' dry lips for a short while before looking through the boy's choices. Regular novels, some missing textbooks for his course and baby books for them both. "You are skilled at this."

Harry tells him.

"Yup. Ten minutes and I got all this." Louis proudly pats his pile of knowledge. "Probably don't want 'em all though."

"Doesn't matter."

Harry carries the pile and helps Louis stand. "We'll have a bookshelf at the new house that needs to be filled."

They walk over to the till, Harry carrying sixteen books and three albums while Louis held the bright orange joke book. The cashier is a man with hair twice as long as Harry's - Louis refuses to giggle - wearing an elaborate promotion T-shirt for some new novel release. As his usual interest leads him to new discoveries, Louis scans the counter top for items and cute little trinkets. What he finds is condoms.

His giggle-resistance forgotten, Louis covers his mouth with a hand and laughs softly. His face heats up as a result. He fails at trying to not utterly confuse the cashier and Harry. Eventually, Harry leans down to whisper in his ear and hide his face from the baffled but neutral cashier man.

Warm breath fans Louis' earlobe and lips briefly brush the soft skin. "I don't want all these strangers hearing that beautiful sound. Quiet now, princess."

Harry withdraws after he kisses Louis' shoulder, accepting his card back and the cardboard bag with
handles. Louis takes his joke book from the top of the pile and hopes he doesn't get quizzed on his outburst.

"What was it that got you so giggly inside?" Harry asks as soon as they're done giving the same attendant their things to put in the car.

"Nothing." Louis bites his lip and admires the fountain display in the middle of the centre food court.

"We won't stay for a movie if you don't tell me."

Louis looks up from his book. "What kind of movie?"

"Princess." Harry warns, not as much of a threat in his voice. He quite loves when Louis' face brightens at the prospect of film entertainment and food.

"Please tell me." Louis is not good with surprises. He pecks Harry's cheek as leverage. "I saw condoms on the counter."

"And you giggled?" Harry raises his eyebrow. "What was amusing about condoms?"

Louis shrugs. "What movie, Haz?"

"Haz?" Harry's toying with him and Louis doesn't like when he does that.

"Daddy. What movie is it, Daddy?"

"You'll see."

Harry hasn't got a clue about what movies are actually showing and regrets ever making the split decision when Louis starts asking about each film individually.

"We're going to pick one when we get there." Harry says patiently. "Don't ask me again."

"Sorry."

Louis is quiet for the next ten minutes as they walk over to the cinema complex, reading his joke book and trying not to fall down. Harry wants to bash his own head into a brick wall.

"I'm sorry, baby." Harry holds Louis close and kisses his forehead repeatedly. "I didn't mean to snap at you."

"It's okay. I was being annoying."

"You're never annoying." Harry's not lying or sugarcoating - he never does that even for Louis.

"Don't ever let me hear you saying that. I'm a bastard for letting you think that."

Louis smiles softly as they get closer in the queue to their turn, bouncing up on his tiptoes to kiss Harry's lips. "Don't ever let me hear you saying that."
Chapter Forty

Drag me to the dark side and show me what my body was made for.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

"I don't want to go to the rich people cinema."

Louis told Harry once but the latter doesn't seem to understand why Louis wouldn't want to be comfortable while he watched a good movie. They were in the queue for ten minutes with families and couples being loud all around them.

"Lou, we went there before." Harry held Louis' hand, looking between screens at their choices for films and snacks.

"And I don't want to go again." Louis put his little joke book in Harry's inner coat pocket, facing him as Harry looked down amusedly.

"Alright then." Harry circles his waist and holds him close under the fold of his coat. "What movie do you choose?"

"I want to watch a scary movie."

"Of course you do."

Harry smiles easily and buries his face in the warmth of Louis' neck. He chuckles when the boy swats his bicep and tries moving away. The last action simply leads to Harry inhaling Louis' sweet scent slowly as his arm winds into a slot around Louis' hips, pulling him impossibly closer to him. Their chests were pressed together and Harry's lips were on his skin.

They look like they're slowly trying to become a single unit, with Louis wrapped Harry's middle and Harry's arms holding him protectively. The man could feel Bean's baby bump against his front and it made him - to no doubt - extremely happy.

"How about something else?" Harry's lips slid over Louis' skin below his ear, his head lowered to whisper lowly.

When Louis spoke, Harry pressed his palm into Louis' back pocket. God forbid someone else hear what is intended for him about a movie.

"I like my choice." Louis looks over Harry's shoulder at the people trying not to look at them. It makes him giggle and nuzzle Harry's neck. "People are looking."

"Fuck 'em." Harry put both hands in Louis' back pockets, wanting all those around them with inquisitive eyes to know that the beauty with blue, blue eyes is his.

Louis hums and sighs after everyone's attention disperses to matters of public events that don't border on lewdness. Harry lifts his head from Louis' neck and recites the movie choices to Louis.

"Minions." The boy beams.

Harry visibly pales. Louis' laughter falls on his ears and he relaxes at the sound. "I'm not the scary one in this relationship."
"Aw, Harold." Louis kisses his stubbly jaw. "You're very scary."

"Thank you."

Harry ushers Louis forward to the counter when it's their turn to actually converse with outsiders in order to acquire movie tickets. Louis chooses the darkest possible seats in the corner of the cinema and Harry rolls his eyes while chewing on a fresh stick of gum.

"Want snacks, darlin'?" Harry bent and whispered in Louis' ear again. He felt a little high on Louis' presence, and so settled both hands on either side of Louis' hips while he altered his accent to something Southern.

Louis laughs at the sudden question and pauses in his attempt at getting his order across. "That was awful, Haz."

Harry gave Louis' neck a kiss and corrected his stance to a far more formidable one. Louis gets two different chocolate bars, spicy biltong, a medium popcorn and two bottles of water. Their movie choice manages to remain as a horror one as well as play only up and coming horror film trailers while they get to their seats.

"Warm?" Harry gave up his heavy black coat to Louis when the boy insisted on sitting next to the wall.

Instead of wearing the coat, Louis folded his legs after kicking off his shoes and using the item of clothing as a blanket. Harry didn't even dare question his methods because Louis looked quite comfortable.

"Aha." Louis rested his head on Harry's shoulder. "Harry?"

"Yes, Louis?" He turns his head to press his lips to Louis' forehead.

"Do you promise to watch the movie?"

His soft question elicits a chuckle from the man. "I make no promises, princess."

"But I wanna watch the movie so don't disturb me, 'kay?"

With a scoff, Harry just kisses Louis' forehead and eats more popcorn so he doesn't have to answer. Louis nibbles on his biltong all through the haunted trailers, until Harry moves the armrest between them and he slips.

"Harry!" Louis hisses when his arm bumps the seat.

"Sorry, baby." Harry drapes his arm around Louis' shoulders and pulls him closer, nestled under his chin.

Together they finish the pack of biltong and Louis starts the chocolate bar with a white foamy filling. It gets Louis a small white smudge on the corner of his mouth that Harry swipes. The movie goes on while Harry ignores it. Louis forgets to eat and Harry feeds him one popcorn puff at a time.

"Did you like it?" Louis asks once the screen has gotten lit up and he's stretching.

"You know that answer." Harry admires Louis up and down until the boy catches him and blushes.

"Why don't....-" Harry pulls him onto his lap. "-we go somewhere? I don't want to go home just yet."
"Where do you want to go?" Louis steps aside so they can both stand and make their way out of the cinema.

Louis trips on the last step and stumbles, almost falling over completely when he sees the ground getting closer to his face. Harry catches him with ease and hauls him to his feet at the corner of the passageway that leads out of the cinema.

"Are you okay?" Harry curls his hand around Louis' neck to hold him still by warning and not physical restraint.

"I'm fine." Louis sniffs and promises, shaking off his shivers. "How about you?"

Harry's green eyes pin him to the wall while he ensures that the boy wasn't lying about being okay. He's not too happy about Louis taking this lightly so from then on, he keeps an arm around Louis' waist firm and sure.

"Where are we going?" Louis eventually asks after a quiet trip from the cinema complex to the parking lot.

He's not immediately answered by Harry and it makes him frown. The parking lot is well lit into the evening and Louis sticks to Harry's side even if there is hardly a soul around. Before he can ask again and hopefully tag on an apology for almost face-planting into the carpet, he's pressed against the side of their Dodge and kisses fervently.

At first, he panics. His personal space has deteriorated so rapidly that his heart has started to race. He grips Harry's shoulders and is torn between pulling the man closer or pushing him away. His breathing is harsh and Harry's hands glide under his jacket to grope his bum. Lips suck on his neck, leaving red marks in its wake.

Louis' head rolls back against the car window, fingers tangled in Harry's hair and leg hiked up on the man's hip. Their bodies are pressed so tightly together that the cold nip of the air doesn't get to them.

"H-Harry, st-stop." Louis starts to experience the sick swooping sensation in his abdomen and knows this has gone too far.

Harry growls and pins his wrists at his sides. "Deal with it."

He goes back to biting Louis' lip and dominating his mouth, abruptly ending any argument. Harry massages Louis' thighs through his jeans, sucking Louis' tongue into his mouth and sharing one taste. He slots their bodies together, his coat concealing most of them once again.

"Oh." Louis gasps, eyes closed and body trembling when Harry's mouth starts giving his throat attention.

Harry parts Louis' lips by force again and their teeth clash, tongues dancing to dominate the battle. He pours as many of his conflicting emotions into the kiss as he can, going as far as slipping his hands under Louis' shirt to feel the warm skin underneath.

"You will get over it." Harry pulls back and stares into Louis' wide-blown eyes. "I plan to make love to you all fucking night, and this time I won't stop."

Louis rubs the pads of his thumbs into Harry's collarbone, moulding himself to Harry's front. He stretches upwards and kisses Harry once more. "Please don't stop."
Harry's pants tightened but he held himself together, stopped himself from being convinced into taking Louis in a car park. He opens the car door a little uneasily and hoists Louis onto the seat effortlessly.

"Haz?" Louis laces his fingers together looks over the centre console at the man.

"Princess?" Harry rolled his window down to insert a white paper card into a silver machine that charged them for parking.

There was no surviving a relationship with Harry unless one was brave. "What happened?"

"You're clumsy, princess." He closes the window and turns the heat on - Louis' been needing very warm confines recently. "Believe it or not, you scare me more than anything else in this fucked up world. Losing you or Bean. We're going to be hippies today and spend all of tonight in bed." Louis wonders if hippies even have beds. He always thought they lived in caravans and trailer parks.

Of course Harry had immediate plans for when they got home, it's the only reason he decided the public eye was not worth staying in. Unfortunately, his plans of spending every hour left in the day between Louis' thighs are soiled when there's a blond visitor waiting for them outside their door.

"Niall?" Louis steps ahead, hand still held in Harry's.

"Hey, Lou." Niall stood up from the floor and hugged Louis before saying anything besides a greeting. "I'm sorry."

"I'm confused."

Harry decides that their reunion and mending friendship can take place inside the apartment, so he unlocks the door and let's both boys in ahead of himself. He locks the door again before taking his coat and Louis' jacket off.

"You okay, Ni?" Louis asks once they're in the living room.

Niall looked almost like a wreck. Louis didn't understand why he did, why he made himself feel so guilty over all this.

"Yeah. I'm good." Niall nods. "I went to see Zayn after I left here."

"You did?" Louis folded his legs on the sofa after kicking off his shoes.

"He's able to sit up and speak normally now." He smiles, truly proud and grateful that Zayn is recovering.

"That's great, Ni."

"He told me an awful lot about......that place."

Louis' smile fades and he leans all the way back. Harry is magically standing between him and Niall all of a sudden.

"We're not talking about that." Harry says sternly, extending a hand towards Louis.

The boy accepts his hand and stands pressed to his chest, eyes wondering and a little nervous.
"Wait, wait." Niall stands too, urgent suddenly. "I just came to say that I was wrong. I had no right to judge either of you."

For Louis, it came flooding back. It was nowhere near as harsh or brutal as it was this morning or at the station, but he still spaced out because of it. The stinky clothing, the attendants that never cared, the doctor's tools that were meant for him, the screaming every night. He could always rely on Harry, as he did now.

"Thank you, Ni." Louis whispers, albeit a bit shakily. His fingers are caught between Harry's longer appendages.

"So, I have to go." Niall stepped closer but Harry blocked him off. He didn't want him touching his Louis when the boy was hardly with his senses.

Niall's gone in the next two minutes and Harry tilts Louis' head up, gazing into those sparkling eyes. "Are you okay?"

"Fine." Louis smiles and it's somewhat more genuine than other times.

There's only so long Louis can go on hating that place, having nightmares about it. He's accepted that it is destroyed and he's never going to go back, therefore he needs to move on. He holds Harry's shirt for a short while longer before sighing and relaxing the stiffness in his muscles.

"Harry?" Louis hooks his fingers on Harry's shirt collar.

Strong arms are making him feel safe. Warm breath on his ear is asserting him of Harry's presence, it's reality. "Baby?"

"Take me to bed."

On any other occasion, Harry would have picked him up and ravished him on any surface nearby. Now, he's doubtful about Louis' intentions.

"Please." Louis says, clear and confident. "I want you to make love to me. Now."

Harry kisses his forehead. "You are my dream, princess."

Carrying Louis to bed is more of a task as Harry needs to mind Louis' baby bump now as well. He carefully lowers Louis onto the covers even though his eyes are blown black with hunger and lust. The possibility of being where he's been wanting for weeks is making the monster in his head scratch and claw at him.

Louis leans up and catches his lips with his own, pulling him back down to the bed with him. His arms wrap around Harry's neck as their mouths slide together, his bottom lip caught between both of Harry's. He feels Harry rub his bump and smiles, loving that Harry never forgets their baby Bean. Cautiously, he reaches down to Harry's shirt and slips his hands underneath the thin fabric. Harry groans into his neck when cold fingers touch his shoulderblades.

"Fuck." He mutters, sucking haphazard bruises into Louis' neck.

As he moves lower on Louis' body, the boy pulls his shirt off so he's bare from the waist up. Harry's mouth touches every part of his chest and torso, flicking his tongue over Louis' nipple after he removes the material in his way. Louis shudders and instead of pushing him away, tugs him closer by his hair. His fingers are lost in Harry's hair, his lip being self-bitten and eyes rolling back in his head.
Lips wrap around his pink nipple and suckle greedily on the milk there. Harry's back muscles ripple as he hovers over him, trying not to put pressure on Bean but extracting all the pleasure he can. The man sinks his teeth into Louis' swollen chest around the nipple, coaxing all the sweet milk to fall onto his tongue. The right nipple is treated no differently, his mouth feverish and desperate on Louis' chest.

His head lifts up to lock gazes with Louis. He looks so dishevelled but satisfied already. Those plump lips are wet and red, his hair knotted and untidy. Louis draws him closer for a sloppy kiss, closing his legs around Harry's waist and moaning when the taste of his own milk enters his mouth. Their fronts rolls easily against each other, Harry's zip catching on Louis' softer fabric and leaving a small tear on it.

Gently removing Louis' arms, Harry pecks his wrists and resumes his position at a lower location. He kisses a neat trail from between Louis' nipples to Bean's baby bump. Being the excellent to-be father he is, he plants plenty of kisses all over the bump but going no further. His hands frame the proud bump as he shuffles even lower.

Harry gets off the bed completely and Louis frowns as he opens his blissed out eyes. His vision clears in time to watch Harry untie the band of his loose pants and drag it slowly down his legs. Next his socks land on the floor, and his legs are bent in the air.

"I want to." Louis sits up with parted knees to unbutton Harry's jeans.

It was always Harry praising Louis' soft little body, wanting sex to be all about Louis. The boy isn't sick of it but he's fairly certain it's time they switched it up. He pushes Harry's jeans down and stands up, capturing the man's mouth in another urgent kiss where lips were bitten and tongues were dominated. He ran his fingers down Harry's sides to his boxers, feeling the muscle and bone. His hand was small on Harry's length but it worked a miracle to get the man fully hard. He pumped the well-endowed length with their lips connected, making Harry groan and kiss him with both hands securing his face.

Not letting Harry get him back on the bed, Louis pushes him back to make space and gets on his knees. The soft carpet was gentle on his knees and shins. Harry does not say anything when Louis takes his length in his hand first, then the wetness of his mouth. He bites his lip and watches Louis bring him closer to his climax in admiration and lust. The boy peers up at him through perfect eyelashes, making Harry moan and grip his hair tighter. His length fits past Louis' lips and goes down a good enough amount.

Louis pumps the remainder of the length that he can't reach with his mouth, the salty bitterness of precome dabbing his tongue. He presses his tongue to the slit and forgets about getting himself off, even though he's just as hard between his own legs. He hollows his cheeks and swallows around Harry's length, moaning so that pleasant vibrations travel up the man's spine.

"Enough, baby." Harry pulls him off with a pop and pulls him up for a kiss. He didn't want to come anywhere except inside this wonderful boy. "Get on the bed."

Doing as told obediently, Louis giggles when Harry ensures he has a pillow under his head. The man comes back to grip Louis' sides so it's an almost ticklish touch, and blow into his neck. Laughter fills their bedroom and Louis stops without breath when lips seek his out. A hand holds Harry's cheek, the other sliding down his back to his behind.

Harry smirks and grinds their crotches a little harder, feeling Louis become achingly hard in his panties. Louis blushes and for once Harry let's him have access to his mouth, Louis' little tongue tastes the warmth and lays claim there. Harry spreads Louis' legs and slips a hand down Louis' back,
a dry finger rubbing against his hole.

They pause to breath harshly into each other's mouths. Harry presses just the tip of his finger past Louis' fluttering rim, rubbing the slightly wet walls and swallowing Louis' noises. He retracts the finger and reaches over to their small table for lube. If it were up to him and not Bean, he'd lick a stripe across Louis' rim and push in only for the boy to be very sore later.

"Gonna have a taste." Harry bites down on Louis' earlobe, his free hand getting between the boy's thighs and rubbing him through his underwear. "Panties on or off?"

"O-Off please, Daddy." Louis even starts to take them off for him, wiggling his hips.

"I quite like them." Harry trails a wet finger down Louis' front to his hips. "Let's see what we can do with them."

Going pliant, Louis searches Harry's eyes momentarily before leaning back comfortably again. He gets a peck on the lips before Harry shuffles down to have his face between his legs, his thighs thrown over Harry's shoulders and a pillow under his hips. Harry kisses over his engraving, licking each letter and sucking an impressive bruise alongside it. Louis moans and whimpers, digging his fists into the comforter. He's hard and wanton, but Harry is disregarding the fact that he's hardly coherent.

One hand finds its way to Harry's wild hair, curls into the silky locks and Louis tugs him closer to where he wants him. The scratch of his growing stubble makes Louis shiver and gasp, his sensitized skin is burning at the roughness. He loves it.

Harry coats his fingers with flavoured lube thoroughly before trailing them across Louis' entrance. He pushed the cotton panties to the side for easier access. The boy's breathing is chopped and he tries moving back on those fingers. Harry kisses his tummy and holds him firmly with one hand whilst fitting one finger in him, shoving past the hesitancy. The intrusion is welcomes and Harry pumps his lone finger for a short while before extracting it. He replaces the position with his tongue, securing Louis' hips as he sucks and licks the fluttering muscle.

His tongue delves into the tightness, tasting the lube and Louis' precious body. He opens his mouth and licks around the entrance with dedication, before entering again.

He eats Louis out until his jaw starts to stiffen. His finger slides in next to his tongue and he adds more lube to the mix. Louis feels the invasion and feels the departure when Harry pulls his mouth away to work his fingers alone. Louis sits up with his legs open and on either side of Harry, bringing Harry up to his level for a kiss. He momentarily distracts the man but Harry squeezes his hip and continues to fuck his fingers in and out of him, their lips moving together again. Louis' sounds of pleasure and oncoming ruin fill Harry's ears.

His two fingers get a third and Louis bites his lip at the stretch, loving the burn. He arches his back off the bed at an angle that makes Harry fall in love all over again. The sweat gathering on his clavicle tickles him and the cool chain on his chest is conflicting to the heat. Louis sees himself coming very soon and he doesn't want to before Harry's gotten a chance to get close.

"Ready?" Harry pulls his fingers out and drags Louis' panties down his thighs to rest right in the middle.

Louis nods and blinks away the tears blurring his vision. Harry kisses his again with as much love and lust as he can muster without busting a vein somewhere. His length is painfully hard and curved up to his stomach. His lips nibble on the skin below Louis' ear as he positions himself to push in.
"Relax, baby." Harry puts a forearm on either side of Louis' head, looking down at the flushed boy as he slowly inches his hips forward. "You make me feel so good."

It's tight and clenching around Harry. He groans and focuses on bottoming out without hurting Louis or Bean. Louis drags his fingers down Harry's back, scratching some places and digging in other places.

"Good?" Harry kisses the corner of Louis' closed eye while he waits for him to adjust.

Louis' chewing his bottom lip when he opens his eyes. The blue is stunning and dilating as Harry stares back at him. "So big, Daddy."

Harry presses their foreheads together with a devilish smirk. "Nothing you haven't had before, baby."

"Deeper, Daddy." Louis swallows, nails pressing into Harry's hips.

Obliging, Harry grips the headboard and pulls himself up so that he's buried undoubtedly to the hilt inside Louis. The boy cries out and fumbles for a grip on something, feeling nothing but pleasure jolts up his back. He can see the muscle in Harry's torso straining.

"Deep enough, beautiful?" Harry holds Louis' thighs so they bracket his sides. "Can I move now?"

Nodding is all Louis can manage, and he gets the breath knocked out of him when Harry starts pivoting his hips. Working with opposites, Harry slams into him at a fast and hard pace before slowing down so their bodies stretched and worked together. Skin turned red and air was tainted with breathless noises.

Harry felt the panties on Louis' legs brushing his thigh and he hated that he could only part Louis' legs so much with them on. He tore through them with desperate fingers, flinging the ripped cotton away before returning to Louis. The boy connected their swollen lips and created red lines on Harry's back, punctuating each thrust with a kiss. Harry held his waist and rolled into him with precision, planting kisses elsewhere simultaneously.

Large hands slid under Louis' back and groped his bum, holding the cheeks apart as Harry thrusted deeper. He bit down on Louis' neck and poked at where they were connected, feeling the warmth unfold in his abdomen. Louis starts to make incoherent noises as his orgasm nears, and eventually punches out his energy. He comes across their front, harder than any time he had before.

Immediately, his body gives out from the death of his energy. Harry doesn't though, because he keeps driving into Louis' body with a tremble in his biceps. The sensitivity spikes and Louis starts getting hard again, his length fattening up on his tummy. Harry always makes him come untouched and Louis never doubts that he can.

Seven thrusts later Harry is spilling into Louis' body, having nailed his prostrate with crazy precision. Louis comes a second time and breaths heavily to regain his equilibrium.

"I think that was our best." Harry kisses Louis' cheek and pulls out to lie on his back beside him.

"Hmph."

Louis turns on his side and just about falls asleep again when he feels Harry moving. Two seconds later there's a warm flannel wiping him down and a nifty plug being pressed into his hole, firing up the blush in his cheeks.
"Can I ask you something?" Louis speaks tiredly, tracing a tattoo on Harry's chest with his finger. Harry's arm runs down his back under the covers and moonlight, holding him close. "Anything."

"Do you believe in soul mates?"

"I don't believe in God, Louis."

"Why not?"

"Haven't seen 'em."

"That's it?" Louis rests his chin on Harry's chest.

"It's real if I can examine it. Religion holds too many questions."

Louis hums and links his right hand with Harry's left over his hip. They were tangled together so intricately they couldn't get out if they wanted to.

"Well what do you think brought us together?" Louis asks, his palm flat on Harry's front.

"It wasn't divine destiny or some rubbish. I was a prostitute and I saw you across the street."

"You could easily been looking the other way."

"I was looking your way because a car had pulled up and I had nowhere else to look."

Louis kisses his jaw. "Oh how romantic you are."

Harry chuckles and kisses Louis' giggling lips. "I'll be anything you want me to be."

"Just be you. A lover to me and a daddy to Bean."

"I plan on being around for a very long time, princess. Lover may not entirely cover what I am to you."

With a yawn, Louis cuddles up to Harry's warmth and drapes an arm over his waist. "What do you think love is then?"

He was curious. If Harry didn't believe in God then feelings of the heart will and must be far more complicated.

"In this regard." Harry uses his thumb to rub a small spot of Louis' baby bump that rested on his front. "I'd say love is something that has nothing to do with religion. For you, I feel something so crucial I'm afraid it'll last through the ages."

* * * * *

"A girl."

Louis and Harry don't look at each other at first, because Louis is staring at the screen that's monitoring their baby. The image is blurry blue and grey, but the clear outline of their daughter is easily distinguishable. The baby girl has developed enough of her physical features to resemble a tiny human nestled in Louis' womb where she slept.

"You're having a girl and I expect the due date to be around mid to late December. As we get closer
I will be able to specify."

Something is mumbled to the specialising gynaecologist by Harry, because a minute later the doctor steps out to give them space. Louis traces the ultrasound photo with a million thoughts streaming through his head.

Harry steps up behind Louis and wraps his secure arms around the boy's frame. Louis smiles with wetness in his eyes and nudges Harry's arm with his head. "She's our baby girl."

"Indeed she is, princess." Harry kisses his neck. "All ours."

"Also-" Louis slips the ultrasound into Harry's pocket and turns around to face him. "-I win."

Leaning in a good few inches, Harry rests his forehead on Louis' with a proud and secretive smirk playing on his twitching lips. "I should never have gone against the mother of my child."

"It was bold of you." Louis kisses his lips. "Silly you."

The car ride back to the apartment was filled with baby name decisions. Louis was very motivated to get his way, and so was Harry.

"I like Olivia." Louis proclaims. "It's sweet and we can her Liv."

"What about a middle name?" Harry pushes ahead in the Nandos drive-thru.

"She doesn't need a middle name."

"I'd like for her to have one."

Louis pouts. "Okay. What kind of middle name?"

"I have a few to offer."

"Hit me."

Looking amused with curved lips and a relaxed stature, Harry waits for their food after paying.

"Paige."

"Maybe."

"Rae."

"Nope."

"Violet."

"Not really."

"Jane."

"Yes."

Harry's about to go to the next name when he realises Louis said yes and not maybe.

"You like Jane?"
"Don't you?"

"Olivia Jane."

"Sounds delightful."

Louis ate his jumbo chips for the rest of the ride, allowing Harry to lose his thoughts to a twisted focus on the pregnancy. He was so astounded that the only person he ever wants around him is now carrying his baby. His daughter. He glances over at Louis playing a game on his phone and getting sauce around his mouth.

It really shouldn't turn Harry on the way that it does.

But it does. The fact that Olivia Jane will be half him and half Louis, a walking specimen and token of their dedication to one another is driving Harry crazy. He tightens his hold on the steering wheel and bites his lip, an irresistible urge to pull over and drag Louis onto his lap is slowly eating at his mind. The inner monster that's possessive and disastrous, is clawing at the inside of his skull. It hasn't happened a lot recently, but anytime it showed up he'd beg for it to go away.

Louis thinks Harry's acting strange but he doesn't bring the subject up. The man still holds his hand when they take the elevator and he's not followed when he goes to change into more comfortable clothing.

Harry leans against the kitchen counter, watching Louis retreat into the bedroom with his lip between his teeth and nails scratching marble. He pours himself a small glass of Scotch and swirls the golden contents as he tries to tame his thoughts, but eventually tosses the alcohol and follows after Louis.

"I know you're there." Louis doesn't turn around while he unfolds some sweats and pulls them up his legs.

"You always know when I'm here." Harry pushes off the closet entrance frame and strides over to the boy.

"Can I help you?"

Sucking his lip between his teeth, Harry rakes his hungry gaze up and down Louis' body. "I believe we have a score to settle."

"We do?" Louis is plain awful at playing innocent.

Harry presses up along Louis' back, inhaling the sweet citrus scent of his boy and running his hands down his sides. He buries his face in Louis' neck, causing the boy's neck to bend and his back to arch. One strong arm wraps around his front from the back. Louis stumbles forward, but Harry presses a hand on the cupboard in front of them, supporting them both.

"Oh yes." Harry drags his lips over Louis' pulse point.

"And where did that come from?" Louis teasingly wiggles his hips so his pert bum rubs mercilessly against Harry's bulge.

With a groan, Harry tightens his constricting arm and rolls back minutely against the boy. "Daddy needs you, baby."

Louis gets Harry to lie back on their bed, the man's legs still bent over the edge while he climbs
onto his lap. He peers down at Harry with a strange light in his eye, batting the man's hands away when he tries holding his hips.

"What are you up to, princess?" Harry watches Louis unbuckle his belt and pull it off.

He doesn't get an answer. He's made to lie there immobile until Louis is done being curious and sensually adventurous. His clothes are stripped except for his shirt. Soft hips are resting on Harry's, with the man's hands tied down above his head with a scarf then cable tie connecting that to the bed. Louis can't believe Harry let him tie him up.

"What do you plan to do with me?" Harry smirks up at the boy planted contentedly astride his thighs.

"Lots of naughty things."

"Fair enough."

Harry feels the pinch but not pain when Louis digs his nails into his chest, his body sliding down to fit his erection inside his warmth. He hisses and Louis moans high-pitched and from his throat, loving the full feeling he's exposed to. He shudders at the pressure applied to his special spot by the head of Harry's swollen length, swivelling his hips to get it back when it's gone.

"I should warn you." Harry's fluent and eloquent speech is broken by ragged breathing and a boy in his lap.

"Hmm?" Louis tangles his fingers in Harry's hair and rolls his hips in figure eights.

"I'm going to break these ties-" Harry tugs on his restraints. "-and bend you over-"

Louis feels powerful like this, even brave. He finds it in his courage to cover Harry's mouth with his mid sentence, slipping his pink tongue into the man's mouth and starting to lift his hips. Harry groans and bites Louis' bottom lip, pulling on it when the boy withdraws. He tries fucking upwards but Louis pouts and sits still when he does, letting them both stew in arousal.

"Feel good, Daddy?" Louis pauses between bouncing on Harry's dick, taking a breath and steadying himself.

"Always." Harry replies earnestly. "Always so tight for me, princess?"

"Yeah?"

"Fuck- Yes! Move, baby."

"How?" Louis bats his eyelashes and rolling his hips again, stretching himself deliciously on Harry's wide girth.

"Fuck princess, if you don't move-" Louis dropping down on his length was enough to ruin that statement thoroughly.

Harry's head fell back against the pillow, eyes wide and glossy. "Untie me."

"Nah uh." Louis continues to fuck himself on Harry, clenching and grinding at the perfect times to please the man.

"I'm going to ruin your pretty hole when you untie me." Harry growls into Louis' ear when the boy leans forward. "Won't sit for days."
Harry delivered as promised, and as soon as Louis got tired he was freed. He dropped Louis onto his back carefully and snapped his hips into him, slamming into the heat and most desirable body on this planet. He nurses from Louis' sore little nipples while the boy whines and writhes beneath him.

* * * * *

Harry got his piercing as per their bet a week after Louis tied him to a bed.

"Are you scared?" Louis swung his legs back and forth tiredly, having been astride Harry in the stiff leather chair for a while now. The piercer hasn't come in yet so they were alone in his appointment room.

"I don't imagine I am." Harry goes from kissing Louis' fingertips to cupping his behind real quick.

"That's not an answer."

"What do you think is the answer?" Harry raises his eyebrow in questioning.

"You're a big boy." Louis combs the man's hair out of his face. "You'll be fine."

They were forbidden from sex for seven to nine weeks, and Harry immediately glared at Louis when he heard that. Louis took to giggling behind his hand.

The pain was, of course, absent but Harry noticed discomfort and swelling as the expensive professional informed them would happen. He hardly admired the ring of stiff metal that's now part of his body, but Louis was not against it at all.

"I don't understand the need for a piercing like this." Harry exited their bathroom sans a towel around his waist and frown on his brow.

"You can take it out, you know." Louis spoke up from their bed, glasses perched on his nose as he thumbed through some baby news. "I just thought it would be fun. Is it uncomfortable?"

"No." Harry sighed and fell into bed stark naked. "It looks like my c*ck was shot."

Rolling his eyes, Louis keeps a hand on his baby bump and leans down to kiss Harry. "Maybe you can tell people that."

* * * * *

Zayn was discharged three days before Harry's first fight.

Harry has been a regular member of an expensive gym these past two months and he's already gotten to become their best boxer. He fought training sessions and now got his first actual gig in a while, and was eager to let off some steam.

"How certain are you?" Louis joined him at the gym today, sitting beside his bag. "You don't have to do this, Haz."

Louis was worried. He doesn't doubt Harry will win, but the risk of the opponent being a reckless arse is high enough to scare him.

"I'll be alright, princess." Harry kisses Louis' lips and both wrists. "Bean and you can wait for me."

Training included regular routines that bored Louis, and the boy often just sat reading a book whilst eating a strange combo of snacks. Biltong and sour worms. Speckled egg candy and popcorn. He
always sat on a steel table against the wall, cross-legged and watching everything happen. They received word that Zayn was being discharged, and drove him from the hospital to his apartment with Niall. Niall insisted they move in together because Zayn was capable of losing an arm whilst painting. Zayn had become a sucker for Niall.

"On a scale of one to ten-" Louis sat on their couch, watching Niall unpack Zayn's stuff. ",how do you feel?"

"A decimal of nine." Zayn cracked a shaky smile and shrugged. "I hear you're fighting this week, Harry."

Harry kept Louis' legs across his lap, a firm hand around his waist. "How the fuck did you hear that?"

"Through the grapevine. Were you going to invite us?"

"Invite us where?" Niall walks into the living room with pudding cups for all.

Louis makes grabby hands at the treat and Harry ends up giving his to the pouty boy as well.

"Harry's in the ring this Friday." Zayn sits back in his double sofa, smirking proudly because of the drama he started.

"He proposed?" Niall's eyelids rapidly form a shutter motion. "Lou?"

"What?" Louis looks up from his pudding cup mournfully. "No, no proposal. Zayn means fighting in the ring."

"Oh." Niall exhales. "Where?"

"At my gym." Harry clears his throat. "Under the ground floor."

"Is it illegal?"

"No."

"We'll be there."

* * * * *

Another two whole months passed before they were recognisably moved into the new house. Bean - that was now officially named Olivia Jane - was six months along and Louis was ecstatic.

It was the middle of November and the next day was the eleventh, which meant Harry felt an obligation to them both to make special plans. It's been a whole year of them going through shit experiences, and here they are finally at a benchmark accomplishment.

"Good evening to thee." Louis greeted Harry from their unorganised dining room table where he was doing coursework and scratching Lego's head with blunt nails.

"Good evening." Harry bent forward over the back of Louis' chair to kiss the boy's lips. "I remember leaving you in this position two hours ago, princess."

"Maybe." Louis sipped water from his glass. "How was the gym?"

Harry had joined a nearby gym that everyone seemed to go to on their street, and went religiously to
regain the stamina he'd lost. He hated leaving Louis alone at home but their neighbourhood was gated and their dogs were pretty massive in size.

"You ask me that each day and I always respond with the same answer." Harry isn't satisfied with one kiss and opts to get more out of Louis.

"Surely there must have been something to distract you from me today." Louis gave Harry an Eskimo kiss, nothing else.

"Nothing will get my attention off you." Harry secures one side of Louis' face and melds their lips together in perfect unison. "Do we have plans for this Friday?"

"We never have plans, Harry."

It's not a lie. They've been non-existent to an outside societal world for all of five months. Zayn was scooped up by Niall as soon as he was discharged, and they moved in together after Niall demanded it. Zayn was a sucker for Niall.

"I have a fight this Friday." Harry informs him from the open-plan kitchen, while opening the fridge for a bottle of water. "I want you there."

Louis' attended all of Harry's boxing matches for the time that's past. There was usually one every second Friday and Harry never lost. It brought in a lot of money, and paid for Bean's nursery entirely.

"Haz." Louis taps his pen on the table. "I don't want to put Bean in that environment. She can hear things now."

Harry's matches got chaotic more often than not, and on a special occasion it became violent. Louis and their company were always in a box of seats somewhere off the ground, or in the locked changing room if it got too dangerous outside.

"Think about it." Harry says without emotion.

"Who are you fighting?"

"Liam."
Chapter forty-One

Sometimes following your heart means losing your mind.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

"Liam."

"Liam?" Louis turned in his chair with his Bic pen between his lips. "Isn't Liam in prison?"

"They got him out." Harry has his eyes pinned to Louis as the latter male wobbles out of his chair to approach him.

"Why?"

"For this fight." Harry smirks from behind a bottle of water. "Plus, his good behaviour made it easier."

"What are you gonna do?" Louis leans forward on his elbows on the cold counter top, brows leaning towards one another.

Harry sighs and sets the bottle down, before walking around the counter and pulling Louis against him. "Kill him."

It doesn't even phase Louis. The boy settles his frown and rests his forehead on Harry's chest under his chin. It was going to happen and he wasn't completely opposed to it.

"Won't Olivia be proud." He whispers with a roll of his eyes, fingers scratching the musk-scented shirt on Harry's chest.

Harry rubs Louis' sides with reverent and slow hands, holding the boy close and inhaling his soft, sleepy scent from his neck juncture. "That's my baby girl."

Louis blushed and pecked Harry's jaw, placing a small hand on his cheek to keep them so close continually. "Mine too."

"Indeed." Harry sunk his teeth into Louis' neck just enough to be shocking but painless, making the boy moan and bend his neck at an angle.

"N-Niall called." Louis stutters out of the vibrations locking in tight with his sensitive nerves.

"What about?" Harry kisses the red mark on Louis' neck and pulls back to grab his duffel bag. Louis followed him up the stairs into the bedroom with a hand on his own lower back to ease the strain there, and his socked feet padding on cold wood flooring.

"Remember that time we all decided a joint dinner would be fun?"

Harry turns on his heel and gazes down at Louis with an impassive but edgy look. "A double date?"

"Yes but-"

"No."
"Haz, please!"

"I am perfectly capable of taking you out to dinner on my own."

"But wouldn't it be fun? Zayn's fully recovered now and Niall really wants this."

"I don't give two fucks about what Niall wants, Louis."

Louis wants to stomp his foot and pointedly storm off, but his ankles have been painful joints for two weeks now and he doesn't think another trip including those stairs would do him any good.

"Well I do." Louis crosses his arms. "Don't you care about what I want?"

With a heavy heart and long exhale, Harry pulls Louis forward between his legs while he sat on the bed. He rubs circles into both sides of Louis' baby bump after lifting his sweater up. His lips met the warm skin three times before he was entirely satisfied.

"I will take you out on a date, kill or die for you. I will be there when you bring my daughter into this world, and you can fucking count on getting pregnant by me again." Harry stares up into two pits of magnificent blue eyes. "I won't go on a double date."

"Well then you'll have to tell Niall yourself." Louis purses his lips and closes Harry's legs so he can climb onto his lap.

"Enough about your blond friend." Harry frowns. "How has my daughter been?"

Harry is a proud father to their unborn baby girl. Louis is never failed in his surprise because this is the last type of behaviour he expected from Harry, but there's no escape for the possessiveness and pride that Harry carries around with him.

"In the two hours that you were gone?" Louis giggles, curling his fingers around Harry's well-toned and firm bicep.

"You tempt me, princess. That's dangerous." Harry pulls Louis higher up on his hips as he lies back on the plush sheets that never get set neatly.

"You should not be so easily tempted, Daddy." Delicate fingers press into Harry's sides. The pudgey skin that formed after a month of lying drugged in a hospital bed, has toughened up with extensive gym training.

A phone rings.

Louis finds it amusing and Harry scowls up at him as he reaches into his duffel bag to extract his cellphone. Upon seeing the caller identification he rejects the call and pushes his phone off the bed onto the carpet.

"Who was it?" Louis squirms in Harry's lap, adding to the friction on Harry's crotch.

"Your blond friend."

"How rude of you, Daddy." He clearly didn't think it really was because his lips twitched into a half smile.

"I believe we were going somewhere with this." Harry sits up and briefly kisses Louis' lips.

"No we weren't."
"Now we are."

Harry sits up on his elbows, drawing circles on Louis' hips and sometimes pressing a gentle kiss to a worthy spot of skin. He sighs when the phone starts ringing again, with the same dramatic ring tone Louis assigned to Niall's contact just for a laugh.

"Answer him." Louis' two fingers strolled up Harry's chest, one step at a time.

"Alright." He uses the tone he uses only when he had an evil plan brewing in the cauldron of his dark mind. His arm extends over the edge of the bed to grab the device and answer it. "Niall."

"I can't believe you ignored my call, Psycho." The angry boy on the line seethes.

"It must be something urgent for you to call me twice." Harry smiles crookedly up at Louis, who was trying not to let his snigger be heard.

"I don't think you have the right to hear my request yet."

"Fine by me." He hangs up.

Louis gasps and grabs the phone from his larger hand. "Don't be mean to him, Haz."

"You know how he annoys me, princess."

"You annoy him, and he puts up with you."

"He could not put up with me and I'd still be indifferent."

When the phone rings again, Louis answers this time. "I'm sorry, Ni. Harry's cranky today."

Harry listens to the loud chirping response and chuckles when Louis' eyes widen. That instantly fades when Louis' wide eyes start to water.

"Give it to me." He takes the phone and wraps an arm around Louis' middle to keep him and Bean against his front. "What did you say to him?"

Niall sputters on the other end. "I didn't offend him."

"I didn't ask you that. I asked 'What did you say'?!" His voice lingered on the edge of threatening, like an Alpha male daring someone to get closer to his family. It couldn't end well. Louis is crying softly into Harry's neck, arms wrapped around his neck and making the phone call difficult to participate in. Harry just keeps his arm steady and the boy's body close.

"I told him that lazing around a house won't help anybody, and that he needs to make an active effort to actually do something."

It isn't that offensive. It isn't offensive at all really, but his Louis is still upset and wiping his tears on Harry's shoulder. Pregnancy hormones made him very sensitive and they both doubt it will expire soon.

"Lou?" Harry kisses his cheek after hanging up on Niall again. "Come on, baby. There's nothing to be upset about."

"Am I lazy, Haz?" Louis sniffs, wiping his nose with a tissue.

"What do you think?"
"I'm lazy?"

"No, darling." Harry chuckles, cradling the boy in his arms. "You're pregnant and wonderful."

"You're the daddy. You're supposed to think that." Louis cleans his tears and wiggles in Harry's lap until he's comfortable.

Harry's hands rub over Louis' baby bump, indulging himself in the glow that came off Louis' skin during this pregnancy. He kisses Louis' neck right on a love bite he left in place this morning. Harry massages the kinks in Louis' back with firm fingers, his smirking lips grazing Louis' skin and chuckling softly.

"Oh what will I ever do with you, princess?"

* * * * *

Harry's match was at 19h00 Friday and Louis really didn't wake up that morning in the best of moods. He was kneeling in front of their toilet, bringing up all the food he had eaten in the past twenty-four hours. Not wanting to wake Harry up, he managed to get here without making too much noise.

His throat burned and his eyes stung with tears, even when all he could do was dry heave and pray it was over. Finally he felt like a shoe wasn't trying to make its way up his clamped throat and flushed the toilet, only to lean back against the bath tub tiredly. The bed seemed so far away and he needed a shower before getting there. His heavy eyelids closed and his arms hugged his body.

"Bloody- fuck Lou." Is what he hears just as the wonder of sleep overtakes him.

"Go away." He grumbles at the deep voice, trying to roll over and nearly snapping his neck on the sharp edge.

"My silly, irresponsible princess."

Harry cradled Louis' cheek to keep the sharp tile from cutting the skin or his lazy neck from snapping from weightlessness. He picks Louis up and carries him to their bed, tucking him in before crawling in behind his warmth. He's about to ask Louis whether it was morning sickness that just came back to bite their arses, but the boy's soft peaceful snores alert him of Louis' unconsciousness. The morning wakes Harry up at eight for his training session at ten, and Louis doesn't bother moving. His mouth tasted foul and his breath was a nightmare, so he made his way to the bathroom to brush his teeth before getting back into bed.

"How are you feeling?" Harry welcomed him into his arms, yawning loudly as Louis rested his head on his bicep.

"Tired." Louis whispered softly. "Bean hasn't kicked in.....two days. Can you talk to her?"

Their baby girl first let her parents know she was alive and physically excited by kicking at their hands when she was twenty weeks developed. Louis had screamed for Harry from downstairs and nearly caused a panic.

"She'll kick when she feels like it." Harry drapes an arm around the baby bump. "Has she been making you sick like this, baby?"

Louis shrugs. "Pregnancy perks."

Harry lifted his head up to kiss Louis' minty lips. "You'll be fine. Our daughter can't be that
mischievous."

"You never know, Haz. Remember who her parents are."

Humming because he agreed, Harry sucked in a sharp breath. "Why didn't you wake me this morning?"

"Big day today, you need your sleep."

Harry's eyes grew dark, completely expelling the harmless green that resided there when he had just woken up. "You will always wake me up when you're upset or sick. Understood?"

Louis nods against his arm and yawns behind his closed fist. "'M sorry."

Harry leaned in a bit closer and their tangled limbs were covered by the sheets. He encompasses Louis' hip in his arm, rubbing the boy's soft skin as he fitted their bodies together. Their curtains were dark enough to block out the morning sunlight, so it still felt like they had all the time in the world to just be together in this bed where nobody could bother them.

"I love you, darling." Harry kisses the side of Louis' face.

A hand settles over Harry's waist. "Love you too, Haz."

Breakfast included a traditional full-on English breakfast meal. Eggs, French toast, bacon, sausages, oatmeal, butter scones, waffles. They always did this on days of Harry's fights, as well as woke up an hour earlier so they could lie together in bed doing nothing. Harry helped Louis prepare breakfast because the boy was pregnant and barefoot, fitting the cliché ideally.

"Niall called me-" Harry checked his caller log on his iPhone. "-thirteen times. Why do you make such persistent friends?"

"He knows I'm not going tonight." Louis chews his lip. "Why would he call?"

Harry hands Louis the phone in exchange for a plate laden with a variety of foods. The boy dials Niall's number and waits, nibbling on a fried bacon strip dipped in mustard.

"Ni? What's up?" He crosses one arm over his bump under his opposite elbow.

"We're on your street now." Niall replies, the connection getting disturbed by slight rustling.

"Um...okay." Louis covers the speaker. "They're here."

Harry frowns and sets his fork down, pulling Louis between his legs. He nuzzles the boy's soft chest while Louis continues the conversation.

"Is something wrong, Ni?"

"Can't I visit you?"

"You never visit me."

"I'm visiting you now."

The doorbell rings and Harry gets up to answer it while Louis hangs up. He returns moments later with Niall and Zayn in tow. They all exchange greetings before everyone settles down for breakfast.
"Why are you here?" Harry enquires first, free and invisibly annoyed. "Both of you."

Louis doesn't even notice his harshness anymore. It's a natural thing with Harry now.

"Tell 'em, Zaynie." Niall finished his sausage and stabbed his scrambled egg continuously.

Not wanting to be on his feet anymore, Louis goes over to Harry and gets hoisted onto his lap. His feet dangle above the ground and his back relaxes against Harry's protective arm.

"What is it?" Louis' interest piques. "What happened?"

Harry doesn't care. He plants several small kisses on Louis' neck and rubs Bean's baby bump without a worry.

"I got a job." Zayn grins, genuinely happy and proud of himself. He finished his share of their breakfast and politely took his plate to the sink.

Louis smiles and Niall picks up Lego when the very heavy, very cuddly puppy walks in for his food as well. "I'm happy for you, Zayn."

"In London."

Oh.

Louis looks from him to Niall, who is completely avoiding Louis' gaze. Harry is unconcerned and will continue be, as he is not entirely attached to anyone here except Louis.

"When do you leave?" Louis asks after clearing his throat.

"We haven't decided. Actually, I haven't decided if I'm going to take the job."

Niall looks conflicted and Louis feels for his friend. Niall's family is here, his friends. Moving to London would mean just Zayn for him.

"What do you think?" Niall suddenly asks, his brilliant blue eyes trained on Louis'.

"Niall, I can't have an opinion here." Louis sighs, tightening an arm around Harry's neck to keep himself upright. "I'm happy for you, Zayn. I really am."

That seems to be enough for their brief conversation, and everybody feels the thick air ease up when it's gone. Niall and Zayn feeds the animals in the studio room assigned to them, while Louis and Harry clear up.

"Zayn should go." Harry puts supportive hands on Louis' hips, gripping the soft, slightly meaty flesh and kissing Louis' neck.

As an automatic reflex, Louis closes his eyes and bends his neck at an angle to give Harry more access. "Why do you say that?"

"He got this job on his own. He should have been prepared to do it on his own." Harry's hands move to the baby bump, rubbing the taut skin under Louis' sleeping shirt.

"Would you?"

"I don't need a job."
"But if you did."

"I'd go and take you with me."

"What if-" Louis turns around and wipes his hands with a towel. "-I didn't want to come because of ties here?"

"Princess-" The man cups the side of Louis' face, holding their faces close and eyes connected. "-you should know, if there was ever any doubt, that I'm never leaving you alone again."

Niall happened by at the moment of Louis' question and heard their entire endearing conversation. His eyes were on the floor by his shoes and his chest was swelling with guilt. Here Louis was, with an unborn baby and psychotic partner, yet they were so much more dedicated to each other than most couples on the planet.

"Zayn?" He goes back to the studio where Zayn is trying not to get pricked by Louis' friendly hedgehog.

"Hmm?" He looks up with deepset brown eyes, and Niall just now notices the bags underneath them.

"I'm coming with you."

While plans were made and Zayn rejoiced because he could finally sleep for six consecutive hours, in the kitchen Harry was becoming unbearable.

"Haz." Louis whined when Harry started kneading his bum under his large T-shirt. "Daddy."

"You're not helping yourself by saying that." Harry growls in Louis' ear, pinning him to the counter with one hand braced over the baby bump. "You know our routine, princess."

Their routine on Harry's fight days went: morning laziness, big breakfast, sex, Harry's fight. So basically they had an hour of sex due to them, and Harry didn't seem to register the fact that guests were present.

"Wait, wait." Louis tried fending off the long fingers that were lifting his shirt over his bum and sliding his panties to the side. "Harry, wait."

"No." Harry grunted, eyes blown wide and black. He extracted the plug he inserted in Louis last night and stuffed it in the pocket of his joggers.

"What if-" Louis paused to moan, long and loud, as Harry bent him over behind the counter so his baby bump was safe and pushed in his stiff erection. "-someone sees."

"I won't stop." Harry secured Louis' left side of his jaw and pulled him into a sloppy kiss as he bottomed out, pressing right against the boy's prostrate. "You're mine."

Louis surrenders to the deep, salacious pit in his soul and let's Harry fuck him in their kitchen with Niall and Zayn just two doors away down the hall. He bites his lip and grips the counter fiercely, containing his noises as Harry pounded into his body. Hands created bruises on his hips, and lips kissed his shoulders while teeth created angry red bites. The passage of Harry's brutal thrusts was lubed by the result of the previous night's escapade.

"Fuck, princess. You feel so perfect." Harry groaned appreciatively.
He drew them up into a normal standing position, crossing one of his arms with Louis' over his chest to keep him still. He rounded his hips, the head of his length pressed against Louis' special spot so harshly that the boy whimpered and squirmed in pleasure.

"Uh uh." Harry sunk his teeth into Louis' neck. "Behave yourself, darling."

"Daddy please," Louis murmured repetitively, pushing back against Harry and choking on how good it feels. His skin burns and his blood boils, his eyes closed and body immobile.

"Shh." Harry pulls on Louis' hair gently, angling his head so he could suck harsh bites into the pale skin. "Does it feel good, princess?"

Louis whimpers and his free hand grips Harry's firm, muscular thigh where it's pressed against his. His nails dig into the tough flesh as he pants heavily.

"Answer me." Harry growled, his chest rumbling and heating up Louis' back.

"Yes!" Louis gave out on being soft. "Yes, Daddy. Feel good."

"Good boy." Harry smirks, barely holding himself together with such perfect tightness wrapped around him. "Why does it feel good, princess?"

Louis sobs because he can't form full sentences right now. To motivate him, Harry pulls back and slowly pushes in. The agonisingly slow pace drags along Louis' clenching walls, sucking the sanity out of him.

"So tight. So warm. You make me feel so much pleasure, darling. You ruin me also." Harry's breathing was ragged as well. "Tell me how I make you feel good."

Swallowing thickly, Louis parts his trembling lips to answer. He doesn't understand why Harry doesn't hurry up, because their friends could walk in at any time and see them like this. He rushes to answer, and it's truly haphazard.

"Your-Your hands. You hold me so tight, Daddy."

"What else, darling?" Harry rewards him with two consecutive thrusts that drag past his prostrate without relieving him.

"Love your m-mouth too."

"Yeah?"

Louis nods, sensing his victory or something akin to that. "A-And your c*ck too, Daddy." He bites his lip, throwing his head back and scratching Harry's thigh when the pressure gets worse, more beautiful. "S big and fills me so well, Daddy. Feel complete with you."

"My sweet boy." Harry presses kisses over the bites he left earlier, smirking with a single revealed dimple at Louis' hurried words. "Will you ever not want this, princess?"

Louis shakes his head fervently. "Always want you."

"Perfect answers, baby." Harry starts to pivot his hips, not letting Louis lean forward. He breathes heavily into Louis' neck, feeling just as overwhelmed at having to delay his orgasm. "Come now, princess. Come for me."

His words are Louis' undoing, and the boy convulses around him once before coming under his
shirt. He shudders and clenches madly around Harry, pulling his orgasm from him. His fingers interlock with Harry's over the baby bump, face planted in the man's neck and back giving out. "That was naughty." Louis giggles softly, holding onto Harry's shoulders.

"It was." Harry pulls out and replaces himself with a mediocre plug.

After neatening themselves, Harry hauls Louis up into his arms for a trip upstairs. He graciously makes it up the stairs, into their fresh-smelling bedroom and sets the boy down on their bed. Louis didn't have much of a stamina recently and Harry always took care of him after they had intimate sessions.

"I want Niall to stay with you tonight." He brushes Louis' hair aside. "Zayn will be with me."

Louis nods tiredly, eyes closed and body slowly shutting down for a nap. "Niall."

"Yes, darling."

Louis' face makes a cute little frown. "Talking too loudly, Haz."

"I'm going to shower." Harry leans in and whispers. "Sleep well, my love."

He first changes Louis' shirt and wipes him with a warm flannel, before actually getting into the shower. Louis is curled up around his baby bump with a special pregnancy support pillow cradling his back, when Harry gets out.

Harry will spend his day at the gym, then prepare for the fight after closing hours as the crowd starts getting in. That usually means he has to be out the door by ten or eleven. He's just about to make that move with Niall worded in on everything he needs to be aware of, when Louis comes rushing over to him.

"Lou!" Niall panics upon seeing his best friend almost running. He's not allowed to run.

"Princess." Harry sounds disapproving, catching Louis by his waist and steadying him.

"I'm fine, I'm fine." Louis didn't even increase his heart rate properly. "Wanted to wish you luck."

Those crinkly blue eyes are coaxing Harry's unresolved mossy green ones to stare back, a small smirk curling his lip and dimple. He dips and kisses Louis on his dry lips, rubbing both sides of the baby bump as if always checking to make sure their baby is okay.

"Good luck." Louis smiles, bumping their noses together and placing his hands over Harry's. "I'd tell you not to be so hard on 'im but.....-"

"I understand, darling." He tacks on the endearment even though the taste on his tongue is bitter at the mention of Liam. "I'll do what I do best."

"I don't think that's fit for public viewing." Louis' smile turns cheeky as he pulls Harry down to his level because he can't stretch up anymore.

Before Harry can say words with his opened mouth, Louis pecks his bottom lip and bids him adieu, sauntering off back upstairs quickly.

* * * * *

Niall and Louis were watching American Horror Story together under a warm blanket on the sofa when Zayn called to give them live updates on the fight.
"Put him on speaker." Louis says once he muted the TV and sat up with a bitten lip. "Zayn?"

"I'm here, Lou." Zayn stood by Harry's couch, eyes on the ring. "Niall?"

"Here too." Niall sets his popcorn bowl aside. "When does it start?"

"Liam's coming." There's a soaring of noise levels and Louis stares at the phone as it vibrates sometimes. "Bets are closed."

"Bets?" Niall asks, surprised.

"Yeah. You can bet on a player here."

"How much did you bet?" Louis knew Zayn always took Harry's side, spending thousands on bets and gaining double.

"Ten grand. I put half that for you, Lou. Same for you, Ni."

"Show off." Niall rolled his eyes with a small smile.

"Okay Liam's here." Zayn is suddenly blocking out all other noise and chuckling. "Harry refuses to shake his hand."

"I don't blame him." Louis mumbles, rubbing his arms before Niall puts an arm around him.

"Okay wait for the bell." Zayn pauses, just in time for a hoarse shout to be heard above the crowd and a bell to ring. "They're fighting."

"What? What's happening?" Niall asks urgently, unable to not be there for even two seconds.

"Liam said something to Harry in his ear." Zayn doesn't sound amused. "Harry punched him before the bell."

Louis holds his breath. "Is he disqualified?"

"No. Liam's okay, with a bust lip and bleeding nose."

They wait patiently through the cheers and other obscene shouts of spectators. Louis has the urge to bite his nails but he tucks them between his legs and breathes deeply.

"Liam got Harry in the rib." Zayn says after a crash in noise. "He's fine."

Louis is biting his nails. There's no gloves or head gear in these matches. Things can go horribly wrong.

"Harry got him back. Left side of his face and stomach. Harry put Liam down. He looks scary." Zayn doesn't chuckle. "He's not stopping. The round is over."

Everyone waits, deep breaths and cautious thinking. Louis sighs and Niall grips him tighter. "They get two minutes." Zayn announces. "I don't think you should talk to him, Lou."

"Why not?" Louis replies, offended.

"Round two." Zayn clears his throat and some shuffling happens before excess noise is filtered out.

"Liam hit first and Harry dodged. He broke Liam's wrist."
Niall sits back, feeling as antsy as Louis does.

"Whatever Liam told Harry, that fucked him up."

"What? Why do you say that?" Louis leans forward carefully. "Is he okay?"

"Harry's fine. He screamed and punched a barricade but he's fine. Right now, he's beating the shit out of this Liam guy."

Louis didn't mean to smile.

"You two are crazy." Niall raises his finger. "Made for each other, but crazy."

"Harry's not stopping." Zayn sounds concerned. "They need to stop him. He'll kill Liam. The ref got- shit."

"What?" Niall pipes up. "What, Zayn?!"

"Harry hit the ref. Liam's not moving. Hang on a second, they're calling me."

Zayn is running and security is shouting to the onlookers that they're too close to the match ring. Louis is estranged to this feeling of anxiety and feels it churning in his tummy. He soothes the burn with a rub to his baby bump and waits for Zayn to speak again.

"Talk to him, Lou."

He doesn't get a chance to stutter and protest because he's a mess right now in his mind. Niall has decided to take his worry and stress out on their dirty dishes as he washes them in the sink. Louis grabs the phone and switches to handheld mode.

"Harry?" He supports the device with both hands, speaking lowly and desperate.

"Lou." A breathy response comes over the line and Louis relaxes at the sound of his voice.

"Are you okay?"

"Fine." Harry is moving to somewhere quieter, the locker room probably. He's not fine, and Louis knows it.

"Haz?"

Harry was bursting with nervous energy. He took one hit at his own locker and grunted his acknowledgement of Louis.

"Harry!" Louis spoke urgently after hearing the noise. "Listen to me, Haz. Just me. Are you alone?"

"Yes." He forced out.

"Good." Louis lowered his voice, hating that he wasn't there in person. "Do you want to sit?"

"I want you on my lap."

"I'm flattered, Harry." Louis smiles, cheeks tinting a rosy pink. "I'm sorry I'm not there."

"It's a riot here."

"What? Is it dangerous? Harry-"
"No. It's alright, I'm leaving now."

"What's happening over there, Harry? What did Liam say to you?"

Harry makes an angry sound with a deep frown at the reminder of what the filth had told him. "I won't repeat it. That bastard got what was coming to him."

Louis got the gist of what Liam might have said now. He'll ask again because he had to know, but he needed to get Harry home first. "What did you do to him, Haz?"

"What I do best, princess."

"Come home, Haz." Louis stood as if that would make the process hurry up. "Please hurry up."

"I'm on my way. I'll be there in two minutes."

"Stay on the phone with me." Louis whispers, vulnerability on full display, and put a hand on his tummy. "Where's Zayn?"

"Why?"

"This is his phone, innit?"

"He's getting in the car behind me.. Princess, I don't like you talking about other people."

"Oh how possessive you can be, Mr. Styles."

"You're mine, Tomlinson." Harry turns onto their street, feeling the dark embers of an aroused pick up. "I'll prove it to you in forty seconds."

"You're here?" Louis lit up with relief and glanced at their locked front door.

"Down the street."

Louis hastens his pace to the door to unlock it and yank it open so he could walk out onto their driveway. Niall follows him out of the kitchen and his eyes widen in a frenzy when he sees Louis rushing.

"Louis! Don't run!" Niall calls out to him, jogging after the boy to catch him.

"Princess."

"Louis!"

The thin layer of wax on their floors did not go well with Louis' fuzzy socks, and the boy slipped on the smooth surface. The phone fell and broke, the screen completely shattered by the force. Louis' fear plunges through his body like a tropical storm and he reaches for the railing that he misses by a centimetre.

Harry presses down on the accelerator when the phone call goes dead, and Louis falls on his side. He coughs and sputters in fear, panic and strain. His ankle was sprained for sure and he felt a gush of warmth fall to between his legs. Niall held him up but his limbs shivered and shook, everything was muted and emphasised. He stared blankly at his pants that were not wet or torn. His ankle hurt terribly but that's all he knew.

He spread his fingers out over his proud baby bump, hearing two cars screech to a halt. He's trembling and trying to stand but his body's not making the right effort. Niall's shouting or
whispering, Louis doesn't know. The door flies open after being unlocked from the outside and Harry is suddenly there, holding both Louis' wrists with his blistered and split knuckles, staring into his eyes and asking him something that Louis couldn't hear.

The warmth spread and stuck to his body from the outside in crusty, wet waves. He gasped and felt fears spill down his cheeks until his vision was so clouded he didn't know what to do. Harry cursed and was forced to look down at the floor where blood started to gather in a dark puddle. He gathered Louis up in his arms, barked at Zayn to get back in the car and pressed reassuring kisses to Louis' damp skin.

For the first time in his life, he begged *someone* to find a way to make it stop.
Chapter Forty-Two

You broke my heart but I still love you with all the pieces.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Harry's never anguish as he does now, pacing back and forth for what felt like forever in a hospital hallway on their third floor. He's counted thirty-seven people who have walked by him thus far, and thirteen gurneys of injured people. He's completely ignored everyone but watched everything just as a means to distract himself.

When they brought Louis to the Emergency Room, Harry didn't even need to demand anything from the private establishment before doctors took the boy away. Harry remembers what Louis had looked like, how scared he was and upset. That look will haunt him to his last days.

The lights were so bright and clearly illuminating everything that they hurt Louis' eyes. He just had to close them, or hide in Harry's jacket for the irritation to go away. Harry was carrying him and his clean pants was getting spotted with blood again and there was an agonising throb in his lower abdomen.

He was suddenly being put on something softer than Harry's solid body, not that he favoured the bed over the body. His eyes opened to their widest width and he panicked when there were more hands than necessary around him.

"Harry?" He'd called, his voice was dry and sounded more like a groan from the pain he was in.

Harry couldn't go further than a certain point in the hallway. He'd held Louis' hand up until that point, then let go to slide down into a hard plastic chair with a harsh tug on his hair so he could feel pain. There was none. He did it again to at least release the steam that clogged his insides and made him frantic. It didn't work.

An hour after he'd handed his only two loves in this world over to medical professionals, a doctor in clean scrubs came out to speak with Harry.

He left Zayn and Niall at the house to keep it in order, but he almost wants them here so they could hurry along the people for him. He tended to be too harsh sometimes.

"Mr. Styles?" The doctor with greying hair at his sideburns despite his early age, puts his hands into his pockets and smiles courteously.

"Tell me what happened." Harry wasn't one for waiting.

"Louis' fine." The doctor starts off with. "-but we're still learning about your daughter. We ran some tests and cleaned him up. No surgery was needed."

Harry's never been so happy in his life, albeit he'll never show it on his face. He does breathe out in relief and pushes his hair back out of his eyes to make his vision clearer.

"He'll have to stay here for a few days so we can monitor him and the baby. It was a fragile time in the pregnancy but his fall wasn't so drastic. We're moving him to his own room on the tenth floor, and you're welcome to go up there after the details are ironed out."
By that he meant, pay up. Harry hurried to finish up the medical aid details and money transfers before taking the first available elevator up to the tenth floor. Room 105 was situated to his left, and the door was closed. He nearly broke the handle in his ardent attempt at getting through.

The room smelt of unscented chemicals and crisp clothing. Louis was on his back, awake and aware of everything. He wore an oxygen mask and had an IV attached to his wrist. Harry's heart leapt at the sight, and his chest got a little tighter.

"Haz." Louis smiled and the only indication clear enough was that his gorgeous eyes crinkled at the corners.

Harry closed the door soundly and made his way over to Louis' side, bending to kiss the boy's forehead and smile. He was still getting over the fact that everything is okay, and both his baby and Louis are doing just fine.

"Hello, my darling." Harry pulled a chair forward and sat on it, holding Louis' IV-free hand. "Hi." Louis turned his head and spoke beneath the mask. He sat up against the formative pillows and smiled again, beautiful as ever.

"How do you feel?"

"Little tired." Louis holds onto Harry's thumb with all his fingers. "They did some tests and I stopped bleeding so everything should be alright. The bump is still there and there wasn't that much blood so-"

"Lou, baby." Harry felt just as nervous as him, just as scared. "It's alright. I swear to you, we still have our daughter."

Louis believes him even if all Harry's got as proof is his fatherly gut instinct, and irrational hope that their unborn baby is perfectly okay. He relaxes but not all the way, and Louis removes the oxygen mask so he can speak clearly.

"Did they tell you anything?" Louis looked hopeful, getting Harry perched on the corner of his hospital bed.

"They're still learning about Bean." Harry says coldly, rubbing his free left hand over the covered baby bump. "We have to wait for the results."

"Do you think I did something wrong and-"

"Stop." Harry removes his hand from Louis' body and secures both sides of his face, discarding the oxygen mask. "This is not your fault. You're not going to blame yourself."

"But." Louis puts one hand over Harry's. "-she's my responsibility and I was so stupid to-"

"What did I say?" Harry pinches Louis' chin between his thumb and forefinger, tilting his head up. "Sorry." Louis’ bottom lip juts out slightly. "Not my fault?"

"No, because nothing's wrong."

Louis is reassured enough to smile and accept the kiss pressed to his lips chastely. Chaste kisses is not a thing for them, so today must really have taken a toll.

"Your fight." Louis let's it dawn on him. "What happened there tonight, Haz?"

"I already told you."
"Is he.....did you-"

"I tried." Harry cast his gaze lower. "It's not easily accomplished when there are medics on standby."

"Maybe there's another way." Louis runs his fingers through Harry's disarrayed hair. "With Olivia on the way, we have to keep our records clean."

"Nobody's going to do it for us, princess."

"No I know, I just think that maybe we'll have to let this one go."

The door opens in time for Harry's mood to spoil and for the gratitude in his eyes to melt into disdain. "Later."

Their doctor walks in with a clipboard and manila folder. He shuts the door and stands at the foot of the bed without a word. After a brief study of the pages at his display, he glances up and clears his throat.

"The baby is fine." The doctor smiles warmly, a little more aged than the first one and far more comforting. "We put the mask on you to keep you from going into shock, and the IV give both you and the baby the nutrients you need."

Harry's stiff with silence and Louis has to be oh so relieved at hearing this. They hear what else they're told, including that his monitoring period is three days long before discharge. Harry is welcome to stay as the room is private.

"Are you hungry?" Harry stands after the doctor leaves.

"Haz-"

"If you bring Liam up, princess, I will do something that I'll regret. Are you hungry?"

Louis looks down at his hands and settles back into his bedding. The mattress doesn't fit his back like their one at home does, and the pillows are too plush to be the slightly compressed ones they own.

"No." Louis turns on his side with his IV hand tucked under the pillow, the thin blanket concealing his form.

"Do you need anything?"

Louis knows that if he wasn't so wound up by the Liam issue, he'd be asking for pineapple and kiwi with cheese cake, something with chicken and lots of avocado, and a DVD copy of the cartoon Beauty & the Beast.

He shakes his head and closes his eyes tightly, wanting so desperately for this day to end so he can sleep for many hours. Harry's kiss to his cheek isn't half as affectionate as it always is, but it's routine so he does it even if they're in the middle of a tiny fight.

It wasn't tiny. Louis tries to justify that, justify and comprehend why Harry feels so committed to the deed of punishment. He knows he wants everyone involved with Briarville six feet under, they both do. But Bean has three months left before coming into this world and what will unsanctioned murder mean? The homicides on Harry's record are so far in the past that they're hardly there now. He has to stand his ground on this, for his baby girl if not his sanity.
"I'm going to call Zayn." Harry says before twisting the door handle, hoping for a few more words from Louis that will keep him here.

No response.

Harry steps out into the hall and dials Zayn's number. He needs clothes of both his and Louis' closet to be brought over.

Inside, Louis rubs his tummy whilst lying on his side and talks softly to their daughter who he hopes can hear him. Being past the twenty week mark meant she's supposed to be kicking and able to hear everything.

"Hey, little Bean." His fingers dance across his belly button. "You've been in here for twenty-four weeks. You're so well behaved. Aren't you, itty-bitty? What have you been up to?"

As if to assure her parent that she was perfectly fine, the baby starts to kick where Louis last touched his bump. He gasps - glad and surprised - as he bolts upright in urgency.

"Harry!" He calls, with no regard for whether or not Harry is occupied. "Harry, come here!"

Two seconds later and in tandem with two more healthy kicks beneath Louis' palm, Harry opens their room door with a worried frown set on his brow. First he scans the room for any unwelcome presences.

"Haz, come feel." Louis motions for the man to come closer, which he does, and places his hand where his was. "She kicked."

"She did?" Harry cuts the call he was busy with and dumps the phone somewhere before paying full attention to Louis. "How did it feel?"

"Like butterflies." Louis holds Harry's hand firmly in place. "Big, strong butterflies."

Harry's smile extends to the twinkle in his eyes and he pulls a chair forward loudly so he can be at level with the baby bump. He presses his lips to the warm, stretched skin and mumbles a greeting in a low voice. He gets a small kick towards his hand, just missing his thumb and he grins.

"She knows who you are." Louis says fondly, combing through Harry's hair with his small fingers. "She's proud of her daddy, you know."

"Why would she be?" Harry caressed the flesh of Louis' hip, kisses the exact spot where his daughter made herself known.

"You keep her safe, don't you? You keep us both safe."

The kicks finally cease and Harry has his lips pressed to the final spot where they'd struck. He peers up at the blue-eyed boy with confusion and does not respond immediately.

"Your methods of doing so are questionable-" Louis giggles and Harry stares at his innocence. "-and it has to stop but it has been effective."

Harry doesn't want to stop. He doesn't want to forfeit what awarded him the undoubted reassurance of his family being safe. How else can he do sans violence? He's never tried to before, and imagines it will be the hardest thing he's ever had to do.

"I want to promise you that I'll never feel the need to kill again." Harry takes Louis' hand and kisses
his knuckles. "I've told you that before and it has been a lie. Louis Tomlinson, you take me as I am to be our daughter's father and your lover or you reject me as both."

Harry's giving him an ultimatum, the opportunity to give his baby a good start in life. He took in Harry's desperate eyes and silent pleas to understand where he was coming from. His hand tightened in Harry's and his lips met Harry's forehead briefly in affection.

His heart was heavy in his compressed ribcage, making each breath difficult and each moment hard to blink through with blurry vision. He sucked in sharp breaths and teared up at the difficulty of the decision he had to make, for his sweet daughter who didn't deserve this life.

"Harry-" He cut himself off when the air in his lungs got too thick. "Please, Haz. You know I can't...can't put Olivia in danger anymore, love. She's been through so much already, I don't want her to see things she shouldn't as she grows up."

"Lou." Harry gets up and bends at an uncomfortable, strenuous angle over the edge of Louis' bed so he can loom over the boy as a complete shield. "We just started fresh, bought a home. All for her, our baby girl."

"We just got out of the worst place on Earth, Harry." Louis says with conviction, his eyes singing with tears. "The worst place. We've been surrounded by death and blood for months. Yet, you can't bring yourself to stop. What do you think that says to me?"

"My life-"

"No, stop. Your past is nothing but the past, Harry." Louis turns away when the man starts inching closer to him. "Your past does not decide who you will be in the future. This-" Louis takes Harry's palm from his cheek to his bump. "-does. Your daughter needs you to be the best daddy to her, and I want the same."

Louis knows he's right in this argument, knows he's got the winning side's debate. Whether Harry's ready to let go of his darker side for them - Louis and their baby girl - he doesn't know, but he does know what he'll do if Harry isn't.

"I have to leave, Haz." He bites his lip so hard that eventually blood drips onto his tongue. His ugly sob cause him to inhale deep shaky breaths.

Harry starts shaking his head, pauses then resumes the action more vigorously. He frowns angrily and his green eyes turns into an angry black. "No. No, don't-"

"I'm sorry, but I have no other choice." Louis' bottom lip quivers.

Louis pushes Harry away so he can straighten up, but the man is so much stronger than him. He cradles the back of Louis' head and easily hauls him up for a heated kiss that turns sour when Louis turns away with all the energy he has.

"I have to."
Chapter Forty-Three

*NARRATOR'S POV*

"I have to."

Harry's heart stops beating, and the gaping hole it once took over begins to clench and squeeze his chest until he can't breathe. Louis' looking back up at him with sheer heartbreak and torment in his eyes. He's hurting just as much as Harry is, in physical form and in his heart.

Shaking his head in vivid desperation to get Louis to change his mind, Harry clasps both sides of the boy's face and minds the bump as he shuffles closer.

"No. No, darling." Harry grapples for reasons to solidify his argument. "You're staying with me. You're always going to be mine, sweet boy."

"I want to." Louis is crying, hideous pathetic tears roll down his cheeks and graze Harry's face with how close they are. "I want to be yours. I am yours, you know that."

"I won't let you leave me." Harry says with grave determination. "Never."

"You won't change." Louis chews his lip, and oh so boldly nips at Harry's lower lip when the man tries to kiss him. "What have we seen of this terrible world and you still won't change!"

Harry has no words, just listens to Louis - his beloved - preach to him his own arrogance. It claws at his insides and tears his heart into broken pieces.

"What do I have to do to make things different?" Louis implores passionately. "We're not good enough to make you stop, are we? Bean and I?"

"No." Harry insists, chapped lips wobbling and eyes desolate.

"Harry, you know I'd stay with you even if my life was at stake." Louis twists a lock of Harry's hair in either hand, his fingers shaking with emotion. "But it's not just my life anymore. It's Bean's too, your daughter."

Harry's gripping Louis' waist like he's the only anchor the man's got planted in this world. He presses uncivilised kisses all over Louis' face and neck, half covering him with his body weight just to assert his reality.

"If losing you is the price I must pay-" Harry stares into Louis' deeply wounded Cerulean eyes. "-I would rather gut myself."

It brings a smile to Louis' face, albeit a shaky and wry one that hardly seems to be enough. "But what does that mean, 'arry?"

"It means that-" Harry swallows a rather big lump in his throat and he curls his fingers around Louis' throat. "$I was...I am not going to lose you."

Louis shakes his head no. "It's not that easy anymore, Haz."

"It is." Harry begs, begs from the bottom of his shallow heart. "It can be. Please."

"You won't." Harry pulls the oxygen mask so hard the string snaps off and he hauls Louis onto his lap, shakily breathing as he holds the boy protectively. "I'll be right here."

"I can't let you." Louis cries, tears dampening Harry's shirt. "What if you hurt her?"

"I'd never-

Louis has to stop him. He's well aware that Harry would rather drown himself over and over again that cause their daughter pain in any manner.

"I know, I know you'd never hurt her. I'm sorry." Louis scratches the tough fabric of Harry's jacket. "What if you get taken away? I can't...put her through that. I can't go through that."

"Is it Liam? Just him?" Harry crosses his arms around Louis' back. "I won't kill him. I won't lay a hand on him if it keeps you with me."

"What if you're lying?"

Harry wants to break down and cry because Louis doubts him so much, even if it is a little it's far too much. The pain in his chest expands and begins to consume him. "I'm not lying. I'll shed my own blood to prove it to you."

Refusing the violent offering, Louis pulls away and presses their damp foreheads together. "Promise her. Not me, your baby. Promise her you'll never harm Liam for revenge, or anyone for any reason."

A man who does not believe in God or any supreme being will never believe in promises, until they are handed their first born. Harry is a hardly proven to be a man of his word, but to his baby girl he is anything she wants. This is the biggest sacrifice he's ever going to make, ever going to finalise. He's going to throw away the years of defending himself and shitting on society for his family, the sake of his fatherhood that he wants more than he needs air to breathe. It's a big, grand decision that will inevitably strip him of one of his greatest reasons to live. Looking down between them at the baby bump that concealed their baby Olivia, he was perfectly content with saying goodbye with that part of him.

Louis was prepared to leave him for the sake of keeping their daughter away from Harry's brutality. That was a selfless thing to do and Harry was not going to let the boy go through with it.

"I promise." He keeps his eyes on the bump, his large hand cradling one side lovingly. "I swear to you, Olivia Jane, that you'll never have to see me at my worst. Louis." He looks at Louis, his absolute better half. "Louis, I swear to you as well."

There's always reason to doubt a person, but Louis couldn't see an ounce or trace of distrust or lies in Harry's grieved eyes. They were full of rancid emotion that told of his utter truth.

"Thank you." Louis controls his breathing so that he doesn't medically require the oxygen mask again to keep him conscious. "I love you."

"I love you." Harry held him close, careful to keep Bean's baby bump secured. "I love you both so much. Never leave me."

"I won't. We won't."
Louis' stay at the hospital truly put his life into perspective socially. Outside Niall and Zayn, he had no friends. Not that he'd ever need more - especially with the baggage their group carried - but it was a sad truth he had to come to terms with anyway.

On the second day of Louis' stay, his cravings got specific and very untimely. After their heartfelt and frightening conversation the day before has had Harry never leave Louis' side except for bathroom breaks. Harry always had his hands or otherwise touching some part of Louis in an innocent way for the sake of intimacy.

"Do you think the cafeteria has lima beans?" Louis asks Harry, the man's head resting with an ear pressed to his bump.

"Do you want lima beans?" Harry listened closely to the thump of life hidden beneath the taut skin of Louis' abdomen.

"I think I do."

Niall was said to visit in approximately ten to fifteen minutes, but Harry's too set of proving his worth to Louis and his daughter to wait that long. He kisses Louis' front and his lips each twice before sliding off the hospital bed to go about his task.

"No, stay." Louis kicks his legs out from under the thin but well insulating blanket and traps the man's hips between them. "Stay here."

"Don't you want-"

"I don't want lima beans. I want you to stay here."

Harry sighs and places his hands on Louis' thighs, massaging the soft flesh under Louis' hospital gown. He kisses the boy's lips as his thumb rubs over the engraving he proudly put on Louis' skin forever.

"I will ask your blond friend to bring you some lima beans then."

Harry reaches over to his duffel bag set on a hard plastic chair. He takes his phone and shoots off a message to Zayn about the lima beans, and rests back against the hospital pillows with Louis against his chest.

"What did you dream of?" Harry asks, hoping to sound casual as he rubs the boy's lower back.

"Nothing." Louis tucks his feet between Harry's thighs. "I haven't dreamt in weeks now."

"Why not?" Frowning, Harry looks down at the boy in his arms.

Louis shrugs. "Haven't slept properly in weeks, I guess."

"Lou, you haven't told me-

"Why don't you call me 'princess' anymore?"

Harry is caught off guard by this question, but he's calm enough on the outside to prevent a sputter. "I....I thought I lost the right. Yesterday, when I almost lost you for my stupidity."

"You haven't." Louis traces his finger over Harry's Adam's Apple. "You're also not stupid, but
maybe you could be my favourite fool in the whole world."

Smiling because it felt like he was walking on a feather light tightrope, Harry squeezes Louis' shoulders and kisses his forehead. "I'll be your anything and everything."

They're disrupted by a knock on their closed room door, before a nurse walks in with a pink uniform and polite smile. "How are you feeling, Louis?"

"A lot better." He sits up straighter and feels Harry's arms slip lower around him. "Thanks."

"You've got some other visitors here. Shall I send them in?"

"Yes please." He smiles back and leans into Harry's chest when the man kisses the back of his neck. "That feels nice."

Harry's smirk is pressed against the warm skin of his throat. "Does it?"

Louis hums and closes his eyes to feel more of Harry's wet lips on his excitable skin. "I'll never stop then."

When Louis' just about to part his eyelids and smile in awe at Harry, a second round of knocks on their door interrupts their bubble. Niall steps forward first with a black plastic container and fork, while Zayn carries the actual heavy weight.

"Lima beans!" Louis proclaims happily, hugging Niall briefly and taking the container from him. "Hey Lou." Niall sits on the couch to their left after kissing Louis' temple. "Psycho."

Harry grunts and nods at Zayn when the latter notices him. He lies back against the pillows shirtless and with sealed eyelids, Louis between his legs eating his latest craving.

"So what did the doctor say?" Niall leans forward against the armrest of the couch.


"Good. We're so relieved to hear that." Niall finally leans back against Zayn's arm that's thrown over the back of the sofa. "How long must you stay here?"

"Today and tomorrow, then I'm discharged."

"What happened at the fight after I left, Zayn?" Harry speaks loud and clear, head tilted towards the new arrivals.

Everyone is quiet save for Zayn's shuffling forward. "Everyone cleared out before the police got there. I have the cash from your win, still the full deal."

"And Liam?"

"Alive but barely living."

Louis was aware that this news wasn't the least bit pleasing for Harry to hear. It had to be. He looked down at the lima beans and spicy rice, not wanting to eat it anymore.

"On to lighter news." Niall clears his throat and claps his hands together once to get everyone out of their ditches. "We were going to invite you both to a party."
"Party?" Louis raises his eyebrow, stabbing a lima bean and nearly splitting it in two before swallowing it.

"A dinner." Zayn corrects.

"Whose dinner?"

"Ours." Niall says with a small smile. "A house-warming dinner."

Niall and Zayn just found their brand new apartment in an expensive complex close to campus and Zayn's job. They'd fully renovated and bought the flat above theirs to convert it to a two-floor studio apartment. Louis' only been there once during construction and is eager to see the final product.

"Sounds fun." Louis nods his acquiesce. "Haz?"

"We'll go." Harry says in response, drawing circles and squares on Louis' hips.

"Who else will be there?"

They hesitate, but Niall decides it's best not to lie. "Maybe Zayn's boss and his wife."

Louis stops chewing and glances over at his friend. "Niall."

"Now, I know neither of you do well with new people but-"

"He owns art galleries, Harry." Zayn speaks up to Harry who has said nothing concerning this.

"You'd like him if you met him."

"We're not going." Harry says with finality. "Congratulations on your new apartment, Niall and Zayn."

"Harry, come on." Niall clasps his hands together. "This could be good for both of you, for Bean. If this guy's got art galleries, you could sell your paintings to him."

"I don't want to sell my paintings. They're mine."

"The money could be for Bean."

"We have enough money for Bean."

Niall's about to surrender this debate, scowling at Zayn like it was his fault. He did tell the latter that informing this particular couple about the attendance of another less introvertial one would solidify their reluctance. How simple, yet Zayn refused to listen.

"We'll think about it." Louis intervenes, after he reviewed his latest realisation about not socialising enough. "When is it?"

Harry's fingers got a little tighter on his hips, but it did not deter the boy enough to change his plan. Niall looked pleased as he answered. "Monday."

Today is Saturday it would be the day of Louis' discharge from the hospital. "Why a Monday?"

More hesitation. Louis figures the plan was made around Zayn's boss, so he doesn't press the issue. "We brought the stuff you guys wanted." Niall suddenly chirps, reaching over Zayn for the bag they brought with them. "Harry's drawing thingies and gummy worms for Louis."
"Why did you bring such a big bag for a few things?" Louis asks with a curious brow, watching curiously as Harry sits up straight against the pillows to take his belongings.

"Niall wanted it to look suspicious on purpose." Zayn crosses his legs, one ankle resting on his knee.

"Good on you, Ni." Louis rewards his friend with a gummy worm. "I'd have done the same thing."

Harry is serving as a straight back rest for Louis, setting his navy case of art utensils on Louis' knees over the blanket and holding a blank A3 page in one hand.

"What will you draw?" Louis feels the odd texture of the thick page with his finger.

"Something distracting." Harry kisses his shoulder, whispering into his neck.

"Can you teach me to draw?"

Harry nods. "I'd take great pleasure in teaching you anything."

Louis turns head and kisses Harry's artful cheekbone. He appreciates that Harry is willing to teach him a skill that one is either born with or has to do without. It's bound to be a fail, but worth the fun.

"You two are adorable and boring." Niall is lying across the couch with his legs on Zayn's lap, his head resting on the armrest.

"Thank you." Louis shakes his head in amusement. "How observant."

"I'm going to get ice cream from the little shop across the street." Niall gets up with new ambition. "You comin', Zaynie?"

Louis giggles when Zayn does indeed get up and check for his wallet in his pocket. Niall uses that time to unfold a quilt he hijacked from Louis' and Harry's couch and throw it at them.

"How'd you know I wanted it?" Louis looks at his best friend in awe, spreading the warm covering out over the hospital's bedding.

"I am all-knowing, Lou." Niall waves off his silent praise. "Now, ice cream?"

"Yes please."

"The usual?"

"No." Louis pouts as he thinks. "Raspberry and chocolate."

"Alright. We'll be back." Niall kisses Louis cheek and darts out of the room after Zayn.

Harry sets his things up on top of the new quilt and wraps an arm around Louis' middle to get his mind focused on him. The boy smiles and leans back into his familiar touch, crossing his legs under the covers and playing with one of Harry's HB pencils.

"Have you drawn before?" Harry asks him, after covering the spot where Niall kissed with his own pecks.

Louis demonstrates his lack of ability or creativity by drawing a very disproportioned stick figure on Harry's blank page. The man chuckles at how endearing it is.
"Not all of us are fine artists, Harold." Louis grumbles, dropping the pencil back into the case.

"No, no." Harry puts everything down to encase Louis' waist in his arms. "It's lovely that you want to learn from me. Your unfortunate stick man is more endearing to me than anything I've seen."

"You weren't laughing at me?"

"I would never laugh at you, princess."

Hearing the loving term slip from Harry's cautious lips again brings a bright smile to Louis' face, and he plants a chaste kiss of gratitude on the man's lips from whence the word came. Harry smirks devilishly and takes advantage of the angle Louis' neck is bent at, sinking his teeth into the soft skin below his Adam's Apple. Louis moaned and gasped at the pleasant pain.

"My love." Harry kisses the mark he left behind. "Shall we?"

Louis nods, a little dazed but coherent enough to know what he's agreeing to. Harry takes his dominant right hand in his own and holds the pencil for Louis, though making it seem like he was doing it all on his own.

"What do you want to draw?" Harry asks in a hushed voice.

"Something for Bean's nursery." Louis blushes an enchanting soft pink. "Something about us."

"I'm almost entirely certain that most things about us cannot be shown to our baby girl."

Louis swats Harry's arm. "Not those things."

Harry presses his light chuckle into Louis' shoulder. "Something about Middleton, where we met."

"Pasta."

"What?"

"You made me drop pasta in the supermarket the day we first spoke."

Harry remembers that day. Remembers the brand of pasta it was too. "What about that silly cartoon you still watch?"

"Courage?" Louis refers to the purple dog.

"Yes." Harry sets the pencil down and laces their fingers together. "You threw a pillow at me for disliking it."

"Then I went to get it back."

"Oh I remember, darling."

"We can draw our pets." Louis frowns right after he says it. "You can draw 'em actually. That would be a bit hectic. Do you remember when I took Bolg to the laundromat?"

Harry frowns deeply as well. "You ignored me that day."

"You deserved it." Louis giggles and kisses where Harry's dimple would be if he was smiling.
"Grouchy."

"I'm not grouchy." Harry defends. "You confused me back then. I was torn between tying you to my bed and never seeing you again."

"Look where that got us." Louis caresses Harry's stubbly jaw with his free fingertips. "Would you go back?"

Harry looks down into the beautiful blue oceanic orbs peering up at him through feminine lashes. "Just to do it all again. I'd change a few things too."

"Like?"

"I'd actually tie you to my bed this time."

* * * * *

Monday came around fast enough, but Harry was still adamant on being absent for Zayn and Niall's dinner.

It started when Niall first called them to remind Louis about the dinner party. Louis does not call it making out, and Harry doesn't know what to term the fact that Louis is in his lap allowing him to grope his behind without further intentions.

Harry was trying to constructively finish the drawing of their petting zoo creatures when Louis waltzes in and slips underneath his arm casually. He pecks Harry's lips in greeting and it somehow derailed from there.

Not having sex for this many days put Harry on a strange edge. He took Louis' chaste little peck as a welcome and crowded him against the wall with their lips connected. He rested his palms flat on the wall and pressed his body as close as can be to Louis', kissing down his neck and back up again.

"Niall called." Louis managed to get out between Harry's savage kisses that numbed his lips.

"And?" Harry sat back on their couch and Louis straddled him routinely.

"The dinner?"

"What about it? We're not going."

"Haz." Louis pouted. Harry hated it because he could never say no.

"No, Louis. I won't feel comfortable."

"You don't know that." Louis squirmed on his lap, falling closer to Harry. "Please?"

"No."

"I'll be really grateful." Louis batted his eyelashes.

"I know." Harry cupped both of his cheeks and hauled him closer, momentarily connecting their lips. "Still no, princess."

Louis couldn't resist leaning all the way forward and kissing Harry. It escalated and led to a heated session that never moved beyond kissing. Louis parted his lips and Harry nibbled incessantly on his soft lips, groaning when his tongue got a taste of Louis' mouth. He squeezed Louis bum wrapped
his arms all the way around, leaving red marks down the boy's neck as claim.

"I'll go alone."

And that sealed the deal. Harry growled and sucked a harsh bruise into Louis' throat that could not be covered up. "Over my dead body, princess."

Immediately Louis got up and took Harry's hand, leading him upstairs to their bedroom closet. Lego followed them and found himself joined by Thomas as they sat on the small loveseat in the closet watching their owners get ready.

"I'm not wearing formal wear." Harry crossed his arms right in front of Louis.

"Zayn said you have to." Louis shrugs, handing him the suit.

"I don't care about Zayn."

"Do you care about me?"

"Clearly more than you care about me."

Louis paused in his hunt to find a suitable sweater. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"I don't want to go out tonight and neither do you. Yet, you force us both to go."

"So I'm overlooking your needs here?" Louis chews his bottom lip that tastes like banana.

Harry thinks he looks like a vision with tossed hair and ankle socks. His bright eyes and such red lips - red from harsh kissing. "Yes."

"Ugh." Louis takes the suit back and throws it into the closet without a care for neatness. "Go back to your drawing."

"What are you doing?" Harry follows Louis out of the closet to where the boy gets his phone and dials a number.

"Hey, Niall." Louis steps around Harry when the man tries to take the device from him. "Can you pick me up?"

Some mumbling on the other end that Harry can't hear but he can guess it's about him. "Louis."

"No he's not coming." Louis sounds different, less angry and more upset. "Thanks, Ni."

Louis tosses the phone on the bed as soon as he's done and twists his wrist out of Harry's grip when he tries holding him. "Lou-"

"Niall's gonna be here in an hour. I need to shower." Louis refused to look at him, even when Harry had him caged in a steel grip. "Let me go, Harry."

"I've done it again, haven't I?"

Louis studies his expression with misunderstanding for a few seconds. "I knew there was a reason I fell in love with you. It's unfortunate how it doesn't seem to be enough."

Harry shakes his head and kisses Louis' throat slowly, carefully. "I'll come."
"Oh don't let me be the one to change your mind. You're free to stay here."

Harry let the guilt eat him up until he spoke again. "I'm sorry I said what I did. It was cruel, baby."

Sighing, Louis frames both sides of Harry's face and brings him closer to his level while he stretches up. "Don't ever say that again. I love you with all I've got."

"And I won't ever make me feel like that's not enough." Harry shares in one last kiss with the boy.

"You're not getting your gratitude present anymore." Louis smiles, back to his regular self as he saunters off towards the bathroom.

"Understood." Harry clears his throat and locks the bathroom door behind him. "Out of curiosity, what would that have been?"

Louis giggles as he tests the water of their shower with his hand. "You don't want to know now."

Harry steps up behind him and secures his hands on the boy's hips. "Tell me, princess."

Turning around to look Harry in the eye, Louis waits until they're both stripped of all clothing layers before telling him. "I know you like to make love when there's a chance of people hearing us."

Harry groans and steps under the warm spray of water with Louis, letting the water run through his hair and down his back. He did enjoy the exhibitionism part of himself - however small - and knowing that Louis would voluntarily initiate such an escapade has him in mourning over his idiocy.

"Niall still has some of my things." Louis continues mercilessly. "I'd have to go up to their guest bedroom at some time to-"

Fervent lips cut him off, smashing against his an urgent union. Harry backs him up against the wall and closes his perfect body to the world with his own, careful about how he arranges them around the baby bump between them. Louis curls his fingers into Harry's hair, holding the man close and letting his tongue fight a losing battle as always.

Harry's hands run up and down his body, grazing and gliding over supple skin as he squeezes and praises. He tucks his head into Louis' neck and sucks lightly on the skin there to pull breathless noises from the boy.

"You're too tall." Louis' bottom lip sticks out as he complains about not being able to reach Harry's hair to shampoo properly.

Harry gets down on his knees and holds his lips against Louis' baby bump that's six months along and looking healthy. He relaxes against his when Louis' small hands start to work in his hair.

"Talk to her." Louis says when he notices Harry hesitating with his words. "She knows your voice. She'll kick if she hears it."

Feeling well motivated even if he is a tad out of his comfort zone, Harry palpates the baby bump delicately before opening his mouth. "Hello, Olivia."

He waits but there are no kicks and he fears the worst. Louis tilts his head up to look at him. "It takes a while, Haz. She could be asleep."

That's understandable. Harry clears his throat and prepares himself for the toughest conversation of
"Babies know when you're nervous." Louis interrupts him with a gentle smile. "Don't let her know you are. Just talk to her. You're her daddy and she'll listen anyway."

Feeling braver and less uncomfortable, Harry opens his mouth before he knows what he's going to say. "I'm your daddy, Olivia."

Louis listens in, careful not to giggle against his urges.

"I can imagine how comfortable you are in there. In Mommy's womb." Harry has his mouth pressed up against Louis' skin so that half his words are mumbled. "I'd want to be in there too. Don't get too comfortable, baby girl. You have to come out."

Louis feels the need to cry more than giggle at Harry communicating with their daughter. He hopes his sharp intake of breath in covered by the shower.

"We are excited to see you, darling Liv." Harry confesses. "The world is not as nice as where you are now but that's why you have Mommy and I. We're going to keep you very safe."

A small kick is felt under Harry's palm that was moving in small circles. The man stops breathing for a moment to just grin in such a carefree way and look up at Louis with pride swelling in his chest. Louis' heart crumbles at the boyish charm presented by the man on his knees, innocent dimples and all.

"She heard you." Louis smiles without dry eyes.

Harry kisses the place where he felt the kick. "Don't get too excited in there, lovely. Don't want to make Mommy uncomfortable."

One more kick has broken Louis' dam and he can't swallow his tears anymore. He pulls Harry in for a passionate kiss once the man stood to his full height, pouring his thanks into the connection. "You're going to be the absolute best father." Louis tells him, leaving no room for argument. "She already loves you so much."

"She loves you too. You're carrying her and taking care of her while I can't." Harry slides his hands down to Louis' thighs and picks him up in one swift act, hoisting the boy's thighs over his hips. "I love you, princess."

Louis smiles against Harry's lips, tasting the water that falls from their shower head. "The feeling is definitely mutual."

* * * * *

They finally got dressed after Harry valiantly called Niall and cancelled any plans to pick Louis up. Niall informs him that he knew Harry would cave and never planned to get in his car.

Louis sat in the middle of their bed taping lactation pads over his sore nipples that Harry treated with no less delicacy when nursing from it greedily minutes prior. Lego pawed at his legs until Louis tickled his tummy and played with him.

"We're going to be late." Harry walks out of the closet with his dress shirt unbuttoned and carrying Louis' clothes.

"I thought you weren't so eager to go." Louis made grabby hands at the man until Harry bent over
the edge of the bed and gave him a lasting languid kiss. He looked like sex on legs and Louis feels like he deserved that kiss very much.

"I thought you were nothing but eager to go." Harry smirks at the way Louis eyes his bare chest.

"Maybe we can delay by fifteen minutes." Louis suggests, not at all innocently. "Maybe twenty." "Is that all the time you think it'll take for this?"

"This being.......?"

Harry shakes his head and kisses Louis' forehead. "You're very tempting, princess. I know for a fact you don't want to offend your blond friend by being late."

Louis huffed and climbed off the bed with Harry's help, seeing as he was getting nowhere with his amateur seduction. He chose a maroon jumper and black jeans that stretched below the bump to accommodate the baby rather than squash her.

"Let's go." Louis pulled on his plain black Vans and waited for Harry to arrive at the foyer with his things.

"Alright, my impatient love." Harry tucked his wallet, keys and phone into his pockets before handing Louis his own phone and water bottle. He always carried one regardless of where they were going.

"We're late and we don't even have a sexy excuse." Louis felt Lego circle his ankles before stepping outside too.

Harry chuckled at the boy's complaint and switched off the lights inside. "We're taking him?"

"Might as well." Louis watched Harry lock the door after Thomas sprinted outside as well, unwilling to let Lego go anywhere without him.

Their garage was toasty and Louis escaped the chill of outside by rubbing his hands together and standing impatiently by his door as Harry opened the electronic main gate of their drive way.

"I am tempted to drive below thirty miles an hour." Harry opened Louis' door for him and maybe squeezed his bum unnecessarily whilst helping him into his seat.

"Don't you dare, Harold Styles." Louis watches their dogs climb eagerly into the back seat without scratching Harry's Jeep leather seats. "I will divorce you."

"We're not married." Harry makes his way around the back to get in the driver's seat.

"If we were, I would."

"We're not going to get married, Lou." Harry reverses out of the garage.

"Why not?" Louis felt a little embarrassed and offended.

"Simply because-" Once they're on the street, Harry puts his seat belt on. "-marriage is antiquated. We don't need the government or some holy idiot to tell me that I love you, or you me."

Louis smiles to himself and leans over the centre console where Harry's phone is charging to kiss the man's cheek. "Someone's gotten sappy."
Scoffing, Harry turns onto the third road that would take them to Niall and Zayn's apartment complex. "Far from it, love."

"I like sappy." Louis unlocks his phone to play with some of the apps. "Sappy is cute."

"You didn't fall in love with me because I was cute, darling."

"I fell in love with you because you followed me from Middleton to Chicago. Insane as it was."

"It was not insane. I was dedicated."

Louis giggles as he looks up to see them passing the activity of a loud, vibrant bar. "Harry!"

The man is very controlled to not swerve off the road at Louis' alarmed tone. "What? Lou?"

"We can't go empty handed!"

Harry breathes a sigh of relief and pulls off next to a deserted curb. "Don't ever scare me like that again, princess."

"I'm sorry." Louis folded his legs in his seat. "We really can't go empty handed though."

"No, we can't." Harry ran his hand through his hair.

"We can take some wine?"

"You can't drink wine, darling."

"That's okay. We should still take some wine."

So Harry makes a U-turn and stops outside a bottle store for the elite. Louis insists this isn't necessary - paying so much for a bottle of red wine - but Harry just shakes his head and does it anyway.

"Did you ever get drunk?" Louis walked through the isles with Harry holding his hand.

"You asked me this before." Harry points out, stopping them in front of an attractive display.

"I don't remember. What did you say?"

"Never." Harry takes a bottle from the front and examines it. "Have you ever gotten drunk, darling?"

"You're mocking me."

"It's an honest question." Harry's lips twitch into a smile as he puts the bottle back.

"Nope."

Harry asks an attendant for one of their best and gets it brought to him promptly, along with two other choices. He pays for the most aged one and carries the small box outside.

Louis texts Niall for the rest of the car ride to the apartment, waiting patiently for it to be over.

Harry parks in the underground visitor's parking and opens Louis' door for him when the engine's purr is shut off. The elevator has mirror walls and Louis avoids touching anything even if the entire construction looked spotless.
An elderly couple steps in after them and Louis gets a side eye from Harry before he's pulled under his arm. He notices how the top three buttons are undone on Harry's white shirt and blushes at the sight of the black ink littering the man's chest.

The floor of Niall's apartment was the sixteenth and was at the far end of the carpeted hallway next to a grand window. Louis knocked and Harry gave him a quick kiss before the door opened and their contact had to lowered to PG.

"Hey." Niall wore navy blue button-up and black jeggings, welcoming Louis with a hug.

"Hi." Louis let their dogs walk in ahead of them. "We brought wild life and alcohol."

"That's why you're my favourite person in the whole wide world." Niall laughed and closed the door behind them. "I'm taking you on a tour. Zayn!"

Said man walked out of the kitchen wearing black suit pants with a designer dress shirt, and tie that was undone. He smiled at Louis and shook Harry's hand.

"I can't believe you brought your own water." Niall takes the bottle from Louis and leads him away from Harry, whose arm slips from his waist.

"The apartment looks great." Louis compliments, looking around at the fireplace and panoramic windows, the cozy sofas and thick carpeting. It was modern and elegant.

"Thanks." Niall hands him a cup containing half the contents of a Vitamin Water bottle, him having the other half. "Wanna see everything?"

"I get a choice?"

Niall rolls his eyes and swipes his cup off the counter. "Come on."

Louis gets to see the balcony - that's freezing cold - and all the bedrooms, Zayn's art studio and the attic, the living room, den and dining room. Niall is very proud of his new home and Louis loves that his friend is visibly glowing at it.

"You did well, Nialler." Louis sits at the dining room table.

"We both did." Niall swirls his glass. "I remember sharing a dorm room with your messy self."

"That was you, Ni. I was the one picking up after you."

"Well let me tell you, you did an awful job of it."

They both laugh until something else crosses Louis' mind. "You said Zayn's boss was coming. I never asked....what job he had?"

"Software. He designs video games."

"That's amazing." Louis' eyebrows touch his hairline. "And you're still on campus, yeah?"

"Yeah. I'd get too bored lounging around this place all day."

"Oye! Don't ridicule me."

"You know I love you, LouBear."
"Yeah I know. Love you too."

"I went to Zayn's office the other day. It's wicked. You should come with me one day."

"That would be nice." Louis nods, smiling.

"Speaking of which, remind me to give you something before you leave tonight."

Three consecutive knocks on the front door where Harry and Zayn still stood in hushed conversation, stops them all in their communications. Zayn gets the door while Louis gets Thomas and Lego off the couch and Niall pretends rinsing two glasses is a task fit for an army veteran.

The newest arrivals spark conversation in Zayn while Harry approaches Louis to encircle his waist with his arm and kiss his forehead. Zayn's boss is a well past middle-aged with a slim and age appropriate woman on his arm. He smiled a thousand watt smile with perfect teeth at Niall and Louis made a small gasp at the slightly painful tightening of Harry's arm around him.

"Sir, this is Harry and Louis." Zayn introduces cordially. "Our very close friends."

Harry's eyes meet the stranger's and he becomes so stiff that Louis feels him vibrate with tension. He doesn't understand.

"Archer." The CEO extended his arm. "Dylan Archer."
You're the moon of my life. That's all I know, and all I need to know. And if this is a dream, I will kill the man who tries to wake me.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Harry's eyes meet the stranger's and he becomes so stiff that Louis feels him vibrate with tension. He doesn't understand.

"Archer." The CEO extended his arm. "Dylan Archer."

Louis hears the stranger's name but it still doesn't click for him that this is the man Harry swore to claim the life of, after he had to lose what little innocence he had to him in earliest years.

It's not like Dylan didn't recognise Harry, those perfect emeralds for eyes with the darkest secrets. The man had aged well, just as Harry had. It's been twenty plus years and neither had grey hair or a pot belly.

When Dylan's smirk evidently switched to a polite, warm smile as he extended his well tanned right arm Harry drew Louis out of his reach. Zayn looked deeply offended, and Niall was confused but struggled to piece together an explanation.

"Excuse us." Louis gave Dylan a small apologetic smile that made Harry frown and band his arms together around the boy's waist.

Harry had to dragged away lest he make a scene with the look of murder bleeding into his eyes as they blackened. Louis held his arm and led him upstairs to one of the two empty guest bedrooms. The man allowed himself to be taken away, focusing very hard on the smaller hand fitting inside his rather than the smug bastard individual by the door.

"Haz?"

Louis hoped he could help Harry with whatever was bothering him enough to make him so tense. He backed the man up against the closed door and cupped both his cheeks to concentrate his gaze.

"What's wrong, Haz? Why did you do that downstairs?" He searched Harry's eyes for any sign of an answer suitable enough.

"Him." Harry settled his hands on Louis' lower back and massaged the soft, supple skin where the boy's muscles sometimes ached. "Do you.....he's Dylan, Louis!"

"I-I know that." Louis lowered one hand to Harry's neck. "Help me out here, Haz."

Harry stopped staring at the walls and floor for a moment to meet Louis' concerned eye. He bent and gave in to his burning desire to just kiss the boy so he would forget some of his horrors. Louis' a bit surprised at how urgently Harry's lips fall on his, but he relaxes as he always does against the man with his eyes closed and fingers gripping his jacket lapels.

His bottom lip is encased by both of Harry's far more demanding ones, the man's brows are knitted together in a frown that creates worry lines on his forehead as he suffers in distracting himself. He licks into Louis' mouth indiscreetly once before pulling back to catch his breath.
"He's the guy from my childhood." Harry whispers, voice low like that of a shadow. "He raped me."

Louis' eyes threaten to pop right out of their sockets. "Your father's business associate."

Harry nods curtly, his eyes cold and detached.

"We can go." Louis remembers Harry's promise now that the connection is made clear to him. Harry swore to kill the man waiting downstairs. "I'll tell Niall and apologise to Zayn."

"No." Harry tightens his grip like a vice on the dip of Louis' back. "No, I will not let him win."

"Harry it's not a win or lose for either of you." Louis feels the strain in his legs and back as he continues to crane his neck so he can look Harry in the eye. "He didn't know you were going to be here."

"Bastard." Harry mutters cruelly as he hoists Louis up off the ground to be wrapped around him. "I don't want him to think he won something if I leave. I'm going to stay and try not to murder him. For you."

Louis felt his share of guilt wash over him. Harry had to go through something horrific and here he was, going against the only natural instinct he has intact, to make Louis happy. He tried to toss away that guilt while he rested their foreheads together with a small sigh, because he couldn't allow Harry to jeopardize what they worked so hard to achieve.

"Thank you." Louis put his flat palm on Harry's heart. "I love you, Harry."

It made Harry smile - however briefly - and Louis was rest assured that this would be enough for them. "I love you as well, darling."

"Are you sure you want to stay?" Louis cards his hands through Harry's slightly damp ringlets. "You don't have to."

"It's hard not going out there and telling Zayn to quit. It would be impossible, had I not had you in my arms like I do, to not go out there and beat the only childhood enemy I have until he bled out in front of his wife."

Harry was going to be strong for his family. He was going clench his fists and grit his teeth but he'd fight whatever monster that lurk behind the mask he wore over his eyes. He couldn't risk losing Louis no matter how much he felt the man deserved to die by his hand. The legal system had a stature of limitations on rape cases, and their one has long since dried out.

"I know." Louis nuzzled Harry's cheek and allowed the man to tuck his face into his neck. "I know, Haz. I'm so sorry."

"Don't apologise." Harry's wide blown black eyes wee reflecting the faint moonlight entering the room. "You're Bean's mommy and you do everything for her."

Louis is exceptionally grateful that Harry understands his motives above all else. His intentions to protect his lovely little daughter will always be first priority.

"I can go out there and fuckin' handle myself." Harry states pointedly, determined to prove that he can do this in fact.

"You don't have to, Haz." Louis reminds him.
"Daddy." Harry corrects, squeezing Louis' firm thighs and the wicked glint in his eye replacing the hesitant shine from before.

"My Daddy." Louis set his feet on the ground by insistence. "We can just go home."

"I have a point to prove. We're staying."

"What if he thinks something else?" Louis hated Dylan with a fire burning in the darkest pits of his own soul.

"It doesn't matter anymore. I don't care."

Except it did. Harry knew everything matters about Dylan Archer, the CEO that took the sliver of hopeful innocence he had as a child. The older individual had broken a part of Harry that broke the same thing for other people in a ripple effect. Harry wasn't a murderer because of Dylan, but he didn't stop at one person because of Dylan.

Now he had to pretend that the air Dylan breathed shouldn't be poisoned by him, his wife shouldn't be taken from him and his throat shouldn't be slit all by him. Louis expected him to be the bigger man but that's not who Harry was with Dylan. Harry is still the child who saw a man walking into his bedroom once empty-handed, then leaving with his virginity and a hundred-something dollar suit jacket.

He also had to pretend for the public eye that he was fine with all the pretending, that he genuinely didn't want to rip Dylan's throat out.

"I'll hold your hand." Louis giggles, lips and laugh pressed against Harry's jaw.

And Harry knew that these small moments should help him get through the war in his heart.

"I'd appreciate that, darling." Harry kissed the hickie he left bright red and noticeable on Louis' collarbone. "I'm drinking tonight."

"You said you don't drink."

"I said I don't get drunk. I plan to drink to a step below that tonight."

Louis was reluctant to condone this impulsive idea. What would drinking to almost get drunk mean? He's never seen Harry tipsy and something alerts him that it won't be pretty either way.

"Be careful." Louis manages to say with concern laden eyes. "I...I don't like drunk people."

Truth is they scared the absolute shit out of him. They were loud and incoherent and brash. He would cower away from them and lock himself up in a safe it came to that.

"Don't worry, princess."

Harry delivered on that promise the second they left the guest bedroom hand-in-hand. He grabbed a Scotch glass from the kitchen - knowing exactly where everything was from observation - before pouring a neat golden alcohol into it with ice.

"What happened?" Niall asked Louis when they were once again at the dining room table.

Louis played with the hem of his sweater and Niall tore a tissue into small pieces. Zayn took his boss and his wife out on a tour through the apartment while Harry cooled off.
"Not now." Louis doesn't know how much he can divulge to his best friend so he will clarify that once Harry is not refilling his glass.

Niall's crystal blue eyes squint as he frowns in confusion, but he nods anyway because he trusts Louis enough to wait. Lego and Thomas were lounging like the massive territorial pups they were on the living room rub, Lego rubbing himself against the bigger pup.

"Princess?" Harry walks in already looking like he can't take a swing at a lamp post, another - just his second - glass of something foul smelling in his large hand.

Louis looked up with a small frown that lightened immediately at the sight of his other half looking so unlike-Harry. He wanted to cuddle him but here was Harry trying to prove a bloody point. Niall watched in piqued interest as Louis moved so Harry was sitting first before curling on his lap. No words were said between them; they just knew what suited each other best at some moments.

"Where is he?" Harry is asking Niall directly, green easily terminating the cool cover of Niall's blue eyes.

"Who-"

"Archer." Harry looked annoyed, until Louis thumbed at his neck and kissed below his earlobe. "Zayn's bastard boss."

Niall looked scandalised but Louis just sighed and settled into the warm hard cushion that was Harry Styles.

"Um....I-I don't know? Somewhere in the apartment." Niall never sputtered so Harry's composure - or lack thereof - must have really thrown him off.

"Good." Harry was finally done with his second glass as he tipped the tumbler back and let it burn his throat. Niall was looking at Louis as if he was worried greatly about the boy's safety with a man so seemingly unstable. Louis gave him a small smile shrug. He's fine for now.

Harry tried to kiss Louis but the boy covered his mouth and shook his head, smiling just to mean it light-heartedly. "No alcohol, Haz."

It was true. If Harry kissed him there would be alcohol traces on his lips, lips that Louis would soon lick and ingest the alcohol right off. He couldn't afford that because of his pregnancy paranoia. Everything he has gets fed to Bean so he'd rather eat broccoli for the rest of his term than have alcohol on his lips.

"Oh." Harry frowned, realising that he forgot such a crucial fact. He looked at the Scotch glass and hated himself but didn't show it.

"Hey, it's okay." Maybe Niall didn't see his self-hatred but Louis did. Louis saw through almost everything. "You know I'm just paranoid, Haz. Not your fault."

Harry knew so he nods. He also dips his head to whisper in Louis' ear not so softly. "My very pregnant, very paranoid baby momma."

This is the side of Harry that only Louis got to see when they were in private. Now, with alcohol in his system, the lines between private and public were a little blurred for Harry so if he wasn't reminded he forgot others were present. He was an awful drunk. The first glass usually always had
an effect on him immediately, ironically.

"I'm going to check on dinner." Niall woke up and moved away before he was even glanced at by his friends. "Louis, can you help me?"

Harry growled deep in his chest. "No."

"Haz." Louis put a hand on the man's chest. "I'll be there in a bit, Nialler."

Niall nods and smiles at Harry a little quizzically before removing himself from that environment. Harry starts pressing kisses to Louis' skin especially at the back of his neck.

"And what are you up to?" Louis giggled, shifting himself to be able to look at Harry.

"You said you like neck kisses." Harry deadpans and it's almost utterly hilarious.

"I do."

Harry seemed pleased. "I'll give you more if you stay."

Louis shook his head as he laughed, locking his arms around Harry's neck and bringing their faces together. "My very tipsy love."

"I'm not drunk." Harry insists, using a firm tone as he does when stable.

"But you're leaning towards it."

"No."

"Harry." Louis heard voices approaching from further in the apartment. "Harry, look at me."

The man tried. He swallowed hard and looked into Louis' familiar eyes. He tried not to feel like a complete wreck inside but he was and what was he going to do besides loathe himself? Everytime he saw Dylan it was a reason to drink and break things just to ease some of the burn.

"You know me. You come to me as soon as you feel like you're losing yourself." Louis kisses his forehead and the corner of his mouth. "He won't hurt you."

"It's not about me." Harry rubbed both sides of Louis' baby bump.

"He won't get near Bean, I swear. You won't let him."

Harry nods, confident and truthfully. He won't ever let such a monster get close to his baby and Bean. He deflates a little on the inside when he realises he's a monster too.

"My hero." Maybe Louis didn't know that he'd contradict Harry's inner thoughts but he did and it worked a little. "I love you."

"I love you, princess."

* * * * *

When Dylan and his wife returned from their expedition around the apartment, Harry was seated alone at the dining room table. Zayn looked wary as he took a seat beside him, undoing the tie Niall had perfected for him.

"Where is he?" Harry didn't even look up.
"Taking a call on the balcony." Zayn was so desperate to hear what Harry's issue with his boss was, but he knew he wasn't getting anything from him.

Harry hopes he falls over the guard rails and lands in front of a garbage truck after a green light at a stop street. He wants to kill Dylan himself but that's not an option so he hopes chance and luck are on his side tonight.

"Where's his whore?"

"Harry!" Zayn's eyes grew wide in horror. "Don't fucking say shit like that. She's his wife."

"Same thing."

"I know you're a bastard under normal conditions but what the fuck turned you into this tonight?"

Harry finally lifted his gaze from the small chip on his glass. "I want him dead."

"My boss? Why?"

"I have a reason. A solid fucking reason."

"Well, if you kill him I won't be out of a job so what's the problem?"

"I promised Louis I wouldn't hurt another person."

Zayn sat back in disbelief, arms crossed over his chest. "You'll never make it."

By later that night - precisely twenty minutes after nine - Harry has consumed two glasses of Whiskey and two bottles of beer. He was not drunk but he was slowly, surely getting there. Dylan has not said a word to Harry, and the same went for vice versa. They'd look at each other from across the open-plan living room and Harry would find a small smirk curling Dylan's lip before it was gone. He would glare and grip his bottle a little tighter but never responded. It was like having a wound reopened and salt rubbed over it. The sour, bitter taste existed on Harry's tongue and burned his nerves. He hated that he made himself go through this when he could be at home with Louis and Bean.

At dinner he got to sit directly opposite Dylan and beside Louis. The boy held his hand between both of his own, knowing that Harry needed the anchoring. He saw the visual pain flash across Harry's eyes every time he heard or saw Dylan, like the flashbacks were coming back and the only thing keeping Harry together was his amazing self preservation.

"Haz?" Everyone was chatting around the table so Louis deemed it fit to check on Harry.

"Princess?" Harry looked away from a candle flame to take in Louis' beautiful appearance.

"You okay?"

"Fine."

"You sure-"

"I'm fine."

Well then. Louis simply moved on because he too would get snippy if someone uninvited and from an unpleasant segment of his past came barging into his new life. He sat back in his chair and made no move to talk to Harry again for lack of need to get barked at. Yes, he didn't appreciate the tone one tiny bit but this is also not the place to handle it.
"I'm sorry, Lou." Harry said in a hushed voice over both their arm rests and the gap between them, after a minute of silence.

"Don't do it again please." Louis was peachy sweet about it, and he even gave Harry a small kiss on the cheek.

The food was an excellent distraction. Niall could cook way better than Louis but not Harry - there was no favouritism - and everyone cooked better than Zayn.

"I'm sure Zayn can make a decent meal." Dylan's wife who nobody seemed to remember the name of, smiled her proud dentist smile.

It made Louis sick and Harry grind his teeth until his gums felt pressured enough to hurt, though he did not feel it so he would just turn to biting the inside of his cheek

"He hasn't ever tried." Niall sat at one head of the table.

"How do you imagine I survived without you for twenty some odd years, Ni?" Zayn set his fork down and his eyes glimmered with humour.

Harry took a sip of whatever alcohol choice he possessed now, avoiding looking at the opposite end of the table at all costs.

"God only knows." Niall shook his head, taking actual pity on Zayn.

"And so who met who here?" Of course Dylan spoke. He poisoned Harry's mind and now he polluted the air. Harry didn't even want to eat anymore.

"Louis and I go to uni together." Niall said politely, regarding Harry's stiff stance calmly. "We both do English Lit and a bunch of minors."

"Really? And do you still go to campus, Louis?" Mrs. Archer asked, oblivious as she is to the tension at the table.

Harry is going to have to cut himself physically to remove the steam that's building inside him. His hand reached out under the table to Louis' bump. It was the left hand with a finger short but Louis still took it and held it with their fingers laced and placed it on his bump.

"No. I do correspondence." Louis didn't like the Archers but his vendetta fell truly pale in comparison to Harry's so he remained polite.

"And how did you two meet?" Thankfully, the question was for Niall and Zayn so Harry could stop squeezing the glass in his hand like he meant to shatter it.

Their story was told and it inevitably fell onto Louis and Harry's relationship. Niall tried derailing the topic with dessert but Dylan was now showcasing a full on smirk directed at Harry. Louis was unnerved by it, worriedly glancing at his stoic boyfriend who just stared back at Dylan over a small candelabra.

"And you two?"

Harry took a breath, lips parted and at a last moment when Louis thought he was going to erupt he smirked.
It was naturally more attractive than Dylan's but did not fail to make the latter male's arrogant composure falter just slightly. Harry smirking would mean what? Dylan fretted but it did not show.

"We don't tell people our story." Harry sets his glass down on the table, seemingly taking control of the situation before it overrules his sanity. He will not lose his composure publicly. "It's nobody's business."

"I agree." Dylan fought for the title of control Harry now had. "I-"

"Then why did you ask?"

Dylan was unimpressed while Louis was perfectly impressed with profession heart eyes in his gaze. Niall ran to the kitchen faster than if he were being chased, and Zayn could be going into cardiac arrest.

"It's simply a conversation starter. We didn't mean to offend you, Harry." Mrs. Archer spoke up to diffuse the tension.

"What's your last name, Harry?" Dylan wasn't ready to let this ease up.

"Love, please." Mrs. Archer was now uncomfortable.

"It's another conversation starter, love. He can't be offended by both."

Harry gripped Louis' bent knee and squeezed just enough to convey the conflicting emotions rushing through his body and mind.

"Louis, would you mind helping me?" Niall popped his head out around the corner of the kitchen's open doorway.

Louis looks at Harry first, not for permission but to warn him that he is going to join Niall and does not want to return to a bloodbath. Harry has to remember his promise, he can't afford not to. Judging by the man's faint squeeze of Louis' hand connected with his, he's got himself under control with the assistance of alcohol.

"What is happening out there?" Niall asks while he pretends to be busy spooning chocolate mousse out of a tub.

Sighing, Louis uses his own spoon to dump all chocolate mousse leftovers into one plastic tub with fresh cream. It's a nauseating combination to Niall.

"Harry knows Dylan." Louis confesses, scooping up some of his dessert.

Niall's sapphire eyes grow as wide as the actual stone. "What?"

"I wish I could tell you everything, Ni, but it's not my place."

"No, I understand. So they're not on good terms, I'm guessing?"

"Indeed."

"What does that mean for Dylan?"

Another sigh, softer this time. "One of two things, neither being the better option."

* * * * *
Needless to say, dinner was a disaster and eventful.

Louis wanted to remain at the dining room table after everyone had gone into the living room. Niall fell into a chair lazily beside him, the two best friends sharing a look of concern and doubt. Zayn was not very good at softening Harry's blows when he was drunk, it made matters worse always that Zayn didn't seem to understand any of what was being said. It's like they spoke a different language of subliminal messaging.

"Dylan-" Mrs. Archer was on her third glass of champagne and as much as Harry was tipsy - not drunk - he had his eye on her whenever she looked at Louis as well. "-we're not here for this."

"It's not everyday that you meet a meaningful person from your past, darling." Dylan debated, smug bastard was leaning against the back of the couch like an emperor.

Harry had murder accompanied by other formidable, sadistic things lurking in the cloaks of his dark eyes. He concealed them for Louis. Zayn was wary of it and Harry both. Harry looked at Zayn and gave him a firm look that questioned his ability to shut up and let him do this.

"I'm getting fired tonight." Zayn muttered when he strolled into the kitchen to find Niall and Louis sitting on stools behind the stove sharing a new container of organic yogurt.

"I could have told you that." Niall rolled his eyes when Zayn stood behind him with his arms on his waist. "Yogurt?"

"Anything to keep me from going back in there." Zayn opens his mouth and Niall feeds him a large spoonful of strawberry yogurt. "Lou-"

"Louis won't tell."

"Yup." Louis raised his spoon like a sword. "It's not my story to tell, Zayn. I'm sorry."

"Is the unknown story why my friend and boss are going at each other like politicians?"

Louis wished his smirk hadn't grown so quickly. "We're lucky if it stops there."

So from there the trio watched all that was happening in the living room by the toasty fire place. Louis watched intently as Harry sat with an aura of respect commanded to be about him, and Dylan matched that by naturally conquering a good bit of the commerce world. He wanted to be by Harry's side but he also knows that he'll never get up if he does.

Once Harry did realise that any of the people he was friends with were not present and looked back at the kitchen. He frowned at Zayn looking at the oven timer, Niall the nutritional information label on the plastic tub of yogurt Louis ate from.

He gave his better half a look to spend time deciphering the emotive meaning behind, before looking away slowly.

"We're going to get your things together, Lou." Niall said after Zayn whispered in his opposite ear.

"Aha." Louis knew all the tricks. Living with Harry has broadened his knowledge inexplicably. "Of course you are."

"We'll be back. I promise." Niall kisses Louis' cheek.

"Three to ten minutes, I know."
Louis giggled when Niall gasped and very lightly swatted his arm. He's lucky he's very pregnant. Instead of his friends' company, his two loyal pet dogs come sliding in clean and well groomed. Lego curls around Louis' legs as he washes the spoons and throws away the plastic tub. Thomas watches his apprentice with admiration, he did the same thing whenever Harry did the dishes.

"Come on." Louis let the creature unfurl slowly and look up at him with precious brown eyes. "Let's go save Daddy."

Mrs. Archer was just about to excuse herself from the brooding gathering she's a part of here in the living room, when she sees Louis scratch one of the two dogs behind their ear. She watches him bend carefully and giggle whenever the dog tickled his hand. His baby bump left a prominent display through the warm sweater he wore and she watched him be so gentle whenever he moved because of it.

She looked back at their own conversation and found Harry glaring at her. It was not a daring dare. He silently warned her that acting upon her intentions would get her in an ugly mess.

"May I."

"Don't move." Harry gritted out coldly at her.

"Excuse me but why not?"

Harry looked at her like she was beneath him. Dylan chuckled. "Go, love. Louis will help you."

Harry hated hearing his love's name being said that way, by such a monster. He stood when Mrs. Archer stood to go ahead and get Louis but he relaxed when he noticed the boy already walking towards him. His frown became etched onto his expression when he paused to speak with Mrs. Archer momentarily before shuffling forward again.

"What did she say?" Harry held Louis' waist and spoke into his ear. He was still in control of his senses and wanted to shield as much of Louis from these two strangers as possible.

"She asked how far along I was." Louis let Harry be seated but he wasn't ready to get comfortable yet.

"How far along is that?" Dylan tried.

Louis looked at Harry. He didn't answer. Dylan failed.

"We never had children." Dylan tried again. "Patricia can't have 'em so we adopted."

He'll admit that under regular circumstances and with ordinary people, a situation such as this would be handled differently. However Harry was known for combating things in unorthodox ways and he didn't even appear affected on the outside although he was being eaten alive inside.

Harry looked at Louis when the boy didn't sit, just leaned against the armrest of the couch and supported his baby bump discreetly.

"Give me a second." Louis told him as an answer to his unspoken question.

"You work so well together." Dylan observed carelessly. "That's good to see, Harry."

Maybe Dylan really regretted hurting a boy so young who would grow up to fall in love and father currently his first child. He expected Harry to grow up alone and die alone. He scarred a functioning member of society who was a little strange, and now that evil has festered.
Louis didn't smile and rubbed his thumb over Harry's callous knuckles when the man didn't even squeeze his hand for restraint. Progress was brilliant.

Mrs. Patricia Archer wasn't back yet and Harry grew suspicious. He was proven incorrect in his wayward, foul predictions when the woman returned as harmless as she went. Louis finally brought himself to sit beside Harry under the protection of his arm.

"I can say I have never been more curious about anything, as I am about you two."

Harry does not look up at the man immediately. He links Louis' fingers between his own and pulls the boy's warmth closer to his side. "I hope the curiosity kills you, as it did the cat."

Dylan laughs in a cackle. "You're as vile as you think I am for holding a grudge this long."

Harry's hand does tighten in Louis'. Maybe progress has not been made after all.

Louis decides he's sick of this. "Mr. Archer, you're a respected business man. Whether you're trying to shade your fear of your crime coming to light or you're genuinely proud of what you did, you're not the bigger man here despite what you think. Harry could have easily walked out, or stayed and done worse."

Dylan thinks it over for a bit while Harry briefly squeezes Louis' thigh. "You're bright, Louis. I'll give you that. Maybe we've let the elephant in the room idle for too long."

"The elephant in the room has been idle for over two and a half decades." Harry snaps, curt and cold. "I don't intend to bring it back."

"Then why would you spend the entire evening plotting my murder in your head?"

"A man can dream."

"Yes, he can." Dylan tried to hide it but his exhale of relief at knowing Harry wasn't going to take a stab at claiming his life came out loud and clear. "I take it then that you and Louis have no secrets?"

"We're leaving." Harry gets up, putting an impromptu end to this conversation.

Harry never justifies himself when asked in public so Louis asks no questions and gets up as well. He sways a bit at first but Harry braces an arm around his back so he is steadied. Niall and Zayn promptly walk in from the archway guarding their screwdriver staircase.

Louis gave a short whistle. Thomas and Lego raced out of the den to join their owners by the door, eagerly and dutifully standing by Louis' feet.

"You're going?" Niall looks at Harry putting a jacket on Louis' shoulders, having had overhead just that bit.

"Yes." Louis shrugs apologetically as his friend hugs him. "I'll text you."

"Alright. Zayn's bringing your stuff."

The man himself appears with a black bag - his trademark - containing all Louis' belongings and a gift for Bean tucked away between two pairs of yoga pants.

"Thank you." Louis' waist is held tightly and slightly twisted when Harry keeps pulling on his middle.
"Get home safe." Niall gets in before the door closes on them, an automatic lock clicking in place.

"What now?"

Zayn sighs and kisses Niall's cheek before turning around to return to the living room where their other guests remained. He looks at Dylan. "I quit."

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Louis was crowded into his car seat and buckled in by Harry's urgent, hurried hands. The boy let him do it, moving his own hands out of the way so Harry's colder ones could work. Their dogs were locked in the back seat soon after Harry was satisfied.

They were on the road just after, Harry taking a different route that Louis didn't recognise and driving a lot faster than he ordinarily does.

"Haz?" Louis reached over the console to graze Harry's hand with his fingertips. "You okay, Haz?"

Harry's expression and sidewards glance tells him to just wait a bit longer. Louis can see the alcohol being burnt out of his system, leaving him in his sober state of mind.

They drive off the main highway and formal streets onto an off-ramp that eventually turns into a sandy path. Louis' never been to this part of Chicago before so he looks around him in curiosity, trying to map out where they might be. The sand becomes damp and the Jeep's tyres handle the change of road like a champ, crunching sand rocks and shifting pebbles from the path of motion. It becomes clear where they are when Louis' open window allows a gust of salty air to breeze by and make his eyes water. He bites his lip when the ocean comes into view and Harry puts the vehicle in park in the small isolated section for idle cars. The Jeep takes two parking spaces and has the ideal view of the crashing waves, feeding pelicans and a bright moon high up in the sky.

"Hop over, Lou." Harry pushes his seat back as far as it can go and lifts the center console.

"Carefully."

Louis does so carefully, hopping over the gears to straddle Harry's lap comfortably. He puts his palms flat on Harry's chest, situating himself correctly with his shoeless but socked feet tucked under the man's thighs. If they're going to be here for a good portion of the night, he's going to need to be warm.

"Are you okay?" Louis' short fingernails scratched Harry's stubble slowly, taking the man's attention away from the external rear-view mirror.

Harry was going to be honest about this so he dropped all sails and facades, sighing as his body began to shudder then gasp and tighten up. "I wanted to kill him. I still want to."

"I know." Louis tucked himself under Harry's chin, turned just the slightest to the side so his bump was not pressured. "Anything I can do?"

"Stay here with me." Harry wound his arms all the way around Louis' back. "Let me hold you both."

"Always, Haz. Always." Louis nuzzled Harry's neck for warmth shortly before sighing into a stiff but not so uncomfortable silence.

"I wanted to kill him, Louis, but I didn't-"
Louis didn't like where this was going. "And we're so proud of you-"

"-and now I feel so unfulfilled." Harry groaned and fell back against the seat, the space between him and Louis widening. "You can't possibly comprehend what it felt like, how hard it was to look at him tonight. To remember him from so many years ago, what he did. Lou, it's impossible-"

"Stop, Haz stop." Louis lifted himself up slightly on his knees to be taller than Harry and slow him down. "I know it was hard. I saw you tonight and it hurt me too, watching you hold yourself back. I'm sorry, Haz. But you can also do anything to put your mind to-"

Harry started shaking his head. "Lou, please-"

"No, Harry." Louis felt him slipping through the cracks in his promise. "Haz, don't do that to yourself."

Harry gripped him tightly, breathing shakily into Louis' tummy as he struggled to regain composure. He almost started to wheeze at one point when he had to shut his eyes and burn the memories clogging his mind.

"Let me go-"

"No." Louis shook his head, knotting his fingers in Harry's hair and kissing his forehead. "You're not going anywhere. You're fine right here."

Harry was shaking and it tore Louis' heart from his chest through the cracked ribs protecting it. He couldn't cry when he had to be strong for Harry. He combed through Harry's hair with his fingers, caressing his cheek with the other hand and kissing an odd spot of skin. Harry held onto him like a rope to an anchor, hugging the boy tightly and with all the strength he had in him.

"Where would I be without you, princess?" Harry buried his face in the softness that was Louis, breathing hard and slow against his body.

Louis didn't want to say it but he does. "With one more life taken."

Harry snorted, which was a good sign. Louis breathes a quick sigh of relief at knowing he hadn't offended the man.

Strong arms like steel around his hips and firm hands on his behind pulling him down to sit on a hard but familiar lap, has Louis leaning forward to press their foreheads together and take in all that those ferocious green eyes are giving him.

"Better now?" Louis bumps their noses together. Maybe Harry always raised an eyebrow at the boy when he did that but Louis knew Harry lived for moments like that, because so did he.

"Yes." Harry sits back and drags Louis with him.

"If it's any consolation-" Louis sets his head on Harry's shoulder, words getting mouthed against Harry's angry prominent vein in his neck. "-I still love you."

He gets a small chuckle from Harry and the hot vein disappears a little more under his skin. Louis can still feel where the reddened skin pulsates beneath his sensitive skin, beating against the underside of Harry's skin. He parts his lips just enough and gives the spot he's pressed against a
"I know me loving you can't be much of a great thing to the world." Harry turns his head and kisses Louis on the mouth.

"Too bad then." Louis giggles, fingers losing their place in Harry's hair.

Harry deepens their kiss as the only source of light officially becomes the moonlight. He closes his eyes and concentrates on his favourite scent and taste entering his system, over ruling his nerves. Louis' little tongue slips past his and Harry groans, closing his teeth over Louis' lip and sucking on it until it's numb.

"What do you say, princess-" Harry pulls back and looks as flushed as Louis does. "-to a midnight walk on the beach?"

"I say I'd like another jacket please."

Despite Louis' inner thoughts about this being utterly ridiculous, he gets out of the Jeep when Harry tells him to. It's actually a warm evening with the sounds of the city surrounding them but too far off to affect them, so another jacket isn't necessary.

"We're not leaving my lovelies here." Louis went to the back seat door and unlocked it while Harry watched, minutely amused and smirking.

The two St Bernards rushed out from the insanely high seats - the only feat of the monstrous vehicle that Louis disliked slightly. Lego had to be helped down and Louis scratched behind his ear before setting him free.

Chicago's beach nearest to them was absolutely deserted and void of life in the tiniest degree. Midnight meant sleep for many people, and for others the day was beginning. Here, Louis held his shoes with one hand and Harry's fingers with the other as they strolled close to the water but far enough away to stay dry.

Lego tried dipping his paw in the foamy waves that slowly hugged the shore, but ran away to the dry sand when the water was too cold. Thomas stuck by the pup's side so that they didn't lose sight of their owners.

"Can we stop for a little while? Bean's tired." Louis sat down carefully on a smooth rock close to the water.

"Do you want to go home?" Harry set his shoes down next to Louis' on a rock and stood next to it. "Not yet." Louis stood up and Harry felt his heart leap up into his throat.

"What are you doing?" Harry pushed off the rock he was leaning against and let his worry carry his feet forward, following Louis as the boy walked cautiously on the flat rock onto another's higher surface. "Get down, Louis."

"I'll be careful." Louis smiled reassuringly, stepping between sharp edges and dark dips until he was standing in the middle of a giant shoreline rock that formed part of a tidal pool.

"I don't like you being up there, princess."

"Come up here with me then."

The rock Louis stood on was surrounded by jagged rocks from the beach and pure ocean around the
other three sides, the tidal pool taking up a third of that space. Harry couldn't get up there unless he was willing to wade through water or climb up the rocks.

Air at the beach was always clean, away from the toxicity of city air. Louis breathed it in deep andiggled his toes in the little puddle of seawater he stood in. There was a mini reef to his left that was too dark to look down into and he framed his baby bump protectively as he moved slowly.

"Sit down at least." Harry told him from the sand behind him.

"Come here please," Louis was lonely when he was trying to distract Harry's awful thoughts about his past.

The boy sat down at the edge of the rock, feet planted against the gentle slope and waited. Harry had no choice but to unbutton his jacket and leave it on the sand where their dogs roamed, before walking into the water in an expensive suit. It soaked the clothing and chilled his bones until he got to where Louis was, and he felt warm again.

"You're the single most stubborn person I've ever met." Harry stood between Louis' parted knees and cupped one side of his face. "Also the most extraordinary."

Louis' eyes had changed from bright blue to dark navy in the night light, and his smile was twice as mesmerising. Harry leaned forward and kissed the boy's salty lip, a hand braced on Louis' hip as he pulled him down slowly. Thighs wrapped around his waist and arms around his neck, Louis' lips moving languidly against his while they stood there in the water.

"Have you ever had sex on a beach?" Louis asked it because he hadn't had sex at all before Harry, and looked at how the water nearly knocked them over repeatedly. "Don't drop me please."

Harry chuckled and cupped Louis' bum with a more secure grip, holding him up away from the waves hitting his knees. "I never cared about a partner enough to bring them here. Why?"

Louis shrugged, completely innocent. "Just wondering."

"If that was your way of asking me to have sex with you on the beach-" Harry walked them back to the beach and sat Louis down on his jacket before joining him. "-I don't think we can."

"Why not?" Louis pouted and it was visible even with minimal light.

"Because of this." Harry rubbed a warm hand over Louis' baby bump. "Maybe after you've had her."

"Promise?"

"You have my promise."

Louis accepted that response and laid back with his head on Harry's bicep. "Harry?"

"Yes?" The man had his eyes open unlike Louis, watching his princess in every breath he took and every movement he made.

"You're not....." Louis struggled to formulate his sentence correctly. "You're not mad at me, are you?"

Harry frowned at this, turning on his side and roping an arm over Louis' form. "Why-"

"Because I um...Because I made you promise to, you know-"
"Never go back to what I was? No, I'm not mad at you." Harry spoke truthfully, bending to kiss where his necklace sat on Louis' chest. "If I'm not willing to change, how can I keep you?"

"I just feel guilty." Louis admits sadly. "I feel like it wasn't my business but it was because of Bean and now-"

"Princess, you're having my baby and I love you. That gives you so much power over me." Harry sucks in a sharp breath and connects their eyes. "-it scares me too sometimes."

"Power? Haz, I don't want that for us. I just want us to be a family, maybe it would have been different if I couldn't have Bean but I can and she's going to turn our worlds upside down."

"You both have the power to make me do absolutely anything for you." Harry left a party of kisses below Louis' ear. "You don't want me to kill anyone, I won't. You told me to be the bigger man tonight, I listened."

"I didn't, Haz. That was all you." Louis repaid him with a kiss below his jaw. "And I'm very proud that you got through tonight."

Harry let Louis curl up under his arm. "I've never wanted to harm someone more than I wanted to have Dylan's blood on my hands tonight."

"I know." Louis didn't understand Harry but he's known him so long and he learned to respect certain irrevocable things about the man. "Do you still want to?"

"I'll still want to tomorrow and the years to follow-" Harry counted three stars before carrying on. "-but I'll have you to help me forget."

Louis looked at Harry's statuesque form and had the dire urge to cuddle the man right here. They were safest together, happiest with one another. That much has been established.

"Do you know if I could change anything about my life, it wouldn't be what he did to me or me letting you slip through my fingers when you left to come here." Harry connected his left hand with Louis' right. "It would be that I didn't wait for you outside your tuition building when you were fifteen. One of my biggest regrets is not going in there and telling you that you were the most beautiful person I ever saw."
Chapter Forty-Five

No matter how fast the light travels, it finds that the darkness was already there.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Harry's been working on the sixty plus art pieces he has to have ready by mid-November. It's a surprise for Louis as it centres around the boy and their unborn baby girl. The gallery Harry's opening is elegant and elite but open to the public as of November eleventh.

He's locked himself up in his art studio with his phone right beside him on loud, should Louis need him. The sounds of Hans Zimmer's Pandora fill the studio and muffled traces of it travel throughout the house now at nearly nine at night.

In the middle of mapping out the contours of a perfected image with blackened fingertips and an abused pencil, Harry's phone starts to vibrate on the surface he has it on. Hans stops playing and Harry rushes to answer the call.

"Louis?" He leaves his shiny white phone case to get black fingerprints on it while he grasps the device tightly.

"Harry, it hurts." Louis is breathing heavily and it sometimes rustles the phone connection. "I think I think it's.....oh Harry, I don't know!"
"I'm coming, darling. Give me two seconds."

They went to hospital and found out it was just a false alarm and that Louis had mere indigestion from supper. Harry locked his studio and followed the boy upstairs for a good night's sleep instead.

* * * * *

"Darling?" Harry had Louis' legs on his lap, massaging the boy's swollen feet through his socks as they watched TV.

Louis hummed, not diverting his gaze. He had a jar of peanut butter balancing on his baby bump and a plate of pickles beside that. "Hmm?"

"Is that appetising at all?"

"Want some?"

"No."

"Then why'd you ask?"

"It looks nauseating."

Louis giggled and rubbed his bump affectionately. "It's what little Bean wants."

The old television show ended and Louis had fallen asleep with all his eating utensils on the coffee table beside him. Harry sighed as he stood up and kissed Louis' forehead, then spared a loving kiss to Bean's bump.

* * * * *
"What do you think about spaghetti and meat balls for dinner? With home-baked bread?" Louis was examining two choices for the addition of tomato in the spaghetti sauce.

Harry leaned forward against the cart's handle with his phone in hand. "I don't want you on your feet more than necessary."

Being extremely close to his due date in September meant Louis got grumpy really fast if he was on his feet too much. Harry didn't even want to bring him out shopping for groceries but there's no saying no to a pregnant Louis.

"I know, Daddy." Louis kissed Harry's cheek. He spoke freely with such endearments nowadays, no matter where they were.

"Cook whatever you want, darling." Harry pulled Louis in between his body and the cart, a sneaky hand gliding down to Louis' bum that's gotten sinfully perkier. "But I don't want you whining when you're tired."

"But what if I am tired?" Louis kissed Harry's lips.

"Don't whine."

"But-

"You're whining now, princess." Harry leaned closer to the boy and tugged on his bottom lip with his teeth, not kissing him but lightly warning him.

"Will you help me?" Louis put the organic tomatoes in their cart on top of the pepper spice. "If you need me to."

Harry pushed the cart around after Louis, sometimes regarding the boy with caution and other times blatantly ogling the boy's very pregnant, very appealing body form. Louis' hips were wider and the skin was so much softer, his thighs got thicker and every aspect of himself was so sensitive now.

"Remember that onesie for Bean I showed you online yesterday?" Louis asked after an attendant had taken their bags away and they walked into a baby store.

"The pumpkin one?" Harry put an arm around Louis' waist, settling his palm on protruding Louis' baby bump.

"Yeah." Louis coughed into a tissue in his fist. "It's supposed to be here."

"Love." Harry knew when the coughing started, Bean was straining Louis' lungs or bladder. "Sit down."

"I'm fine. I promise." Louis leaning into Harry almost all the way told a different story.

"Sit." Harry set him down in a comfortable sofa chair in the middle of the store. "Eat your biltong."

Evertime they went out Harry had to purchase the biggest packet of spicy beef biltong, and there was always a jar filled at home because Louis could have a craving for it at any time. It's his most frequent craving.

"Don't leave me here. I'm pregnant."

Louis held Harry's wrist, doe eyes blinking up at the man until he knelt down and kissed the boy's lips over the obstruction of a large bump.
"I'll call an attendant." Harry took out his phone and brought up an image of the desired onesie before calling a store worker to go search for it.

Harry kept kneeling just because Louis wanted him there, in close contact with their baby and him. There has been two false alarms thus far and Harry knows with Braxton Hicks running amok, Bean is ready to pop out any time now.

"What hurts?" Harry tapped Louis' knee to get the boy's attention.

"My feet." Louis pouted.

"Well you knew that would happen, princess." Harry examined Louis' swollen ankles and felt very uneasy with the puffy skin. "We'll take care of them when we get home."

"It's okay." Louis waves off his concern with a smile. He feels guilty now for not listening when he knew his ankles would swell under the pressure of walking. "They'll go away."

"I wasn't offering, darling." Harry stood up after kissing Louis' temple. "You're stubborn but you're my stubborn boy and I take care of what's mine."

The store had two onesies left and thanks to Louis calling ahead, they had kept one aside for them or they wouldn't have gotten any. Louis didn't want anything else because Bean's nursery was wellstocked with every essential, and their kitchen had a section for all her baby food.

"It's adorable." Louis laid the small item of clothing out over his bump. "Cutest pumpkin in the patch."

"Very befitting." Harry chuckled and helped Louis stand.

The drive home was short and Louis managed to fall asleep against the strap of his seat belt. Harry waited in their garage for as long as he could delay, brushing Louis' hair back or walking as slow as possible while he took the bags into the house. Eventually, he had to wake Louis up and the boy was irritable when he did.

"I'll put you to bed, princess." Harry couldn't carry Louis anymore so he supported him as they ascended the staircase.

Louis was stripped and made comfortable under the warm covers on Harry's side of the bed.

"Sleep with me." He made grabby hands at the man who was closing the curtains and switching off the lights.

Harry smirked, striding over to Louis' bedside and pressing his fists into the mattress as he bent closer. Louis craned his neck and connected their lips, smiling when Harry groaned and bent at a further angle.

"I think I'll stay." Harry rid himself of all his extra clothing layers and got between Louis' legs. "Has she kicked recently?"

"No." Louis pulls his shirt above his bump and Harry kisses the spot of skin he's closest to. "She's a good baby."

"She certainly is."

"Can you sing to her?"
Louis convinced Harry that he does not sound like a disabled dolphin when he sings and gets the man to sing every night to Bean when he's going to sleep. He knows Harry enjoys it because sometimes he wakes up to the man pressing rhythmical lyrics to the side of Louis' bump.

"What do I sing?" Harry's not asking Louis, but rather the bump. His cold fingertips graze the warm taut skin as he draws uneven shapes on it.

That night Louis falls asleep to Harry's low and raspy voice singing something that's not English, but smooth French to the baby in his tummy. He feels a jostle inside him and smiles at knowing that Bean recognises her parents.

The morning means two things for Louis: an hour long bubble bath with biltong and Niall visiting for their yoga session. Louis never saw himself doing yoga but some online professionals say it will be good for both him and Bean, so he does it regularly since the six month mark with his best friend.

Harry just walked out of the shower looking a God with black tattoos and a contrasting white towel around his hips. Louis felt like he was spying on someone's naughty dream up until Harry actually kisses him when he asks, a prolonged kiss that made Louis' heart stop functioning and for the man's teeth to capture his lip.

"You're not doing that." Harry heard Louis' complaint and suggested solution, and snapped his response sternly from the closet.

"But I'm uncomfortable, Haz." Louis whines, laying back down against the crown of pillows with a pout. "Bean's uncomfortable."

"Naked yoga is out of the question. How dare you think it would be okay?" Harry crossed his arms and frowned.

Louis shrugged and turned onto his side with a curved pillow under his bump. "I don't want to do it then."

Harry chewed his upper lip to keep his amused smirk from growing on his face, and sat behind Louis with a large hand on the boy's hip. "Oh my dramatic little princess."

"I'm not dramatic."

"You certainly are." Harry laid down on his side and curled around Louis' C-form. He felt Louis relax and lean back against him. "Do your nipples hurt?"

Louis sniffs and nods, rolling onto his back to ease the pressure there. "And my tummy."

"Yeah?" Harry rubs the swell of Louis' mid region, meeting the boy's eyes the magical blue orbs peek up at him through thick lashes. "How about I get your bubble bath ready early and you can tell me how you feel about yoga then?"

"Okay." Louis leaned in and kissed Harry tentatively like it's his first ever kiss. "I love you."

Harry's lips curled into a small smile as he held his mouth against Louis', an arm spanning across the boy's hips. "I love you too, princess."

Louis' bubble bath was ready for him when he got out of bed. The bathroom smelt of vanilla and the bubbles were the perfect layer of white foam over the scented water. He stripped away from the mirror with his back to the door where Harry stood.
"You're beautiful." Harry pressed himself up against Louis' back. "Why do you always hide yourself?"

"Feel this." Louis guided Harry's hand to his naked hip. The man gripped the flesh and squeezed it gently.

He pressed his lips to Louis' neck and below his ear. "Your point?"

"I'm fat."

Harry frowned and made a displeased sound at the back of his throat. "If you say that again you'll be disobeying me for the second time today, and once you've had Bean I will find a way to punish you."

Louis knew Harry meant it as Harry had no sense of humour when it came to breaking his rules. "Sorry."

Harry pinches Louis' hip before rubbing over the red skin with soothing hands. "What, princess?"

"Sorry, Daddy." Louis nuzzled Harry's warm neck. He smelt of musk and strong cologne.

"Now, darling." Harry curled his fingers around Louis' throat to keep Louis' eyes on him. "You are pregnant and naturally extra fat will come along with carrying our baby. It's nothing to be insecure about."

"Love you." Louis sticks his wet bottom lip out just a little and Harry kisses it.

"I love you too, princess."

Louis reads a Robert Louis Stevenson novel while he rests in his bubble bath, and munches on spicy biltong. He hears Harry shuffling about in their bedroom and the odd tapping away on a laptop. The towel supporting his neck against the porcelain tub aids him in relaxing as he sets the book down and plays with the bubbles on his tummy.

He feels the need to use the loo and huffs when he's unable to get up from the tub himself. "Hazza?"

The clicking of buttons on a keyboard stop and the heavy weight of a person built like Harry lifts from their bed. Harry appears in the bathroom doorway in a pair of boxer briefs.

"Lou?" Harry raises his eyebrow at the boy, curious to know why he was called so early.

"I need to pee."

Harry's shoulders shake in his soft chuckle as he makes his way over to the boy in their tub and leans over the lip of the tub. "Want me to help?"

"Yes please." Louis rests his head against Harry's flexing bicep.

The urge is getting greater and now his tummy is starting to hurt in small beats, faint and hardly there. He thinks about everything he could have eaten that would cause the cramps.

"What's wrong?" Harry wraps a towel around Louis while he unplugs the drain and Louis exhales loudly. "Lou?"

"Cramps." Louis holds both sides of his frame, another one knocking the air out of him. "Ow."
Harry wraps an arm around the boy and Louis all but falls against him. "What kind of cramps?"

Louis' wet arms and hands circle Harry's middle. He clenches his eyes shut when the pain hits him centre with a cruel burst then slowly dims again.

"You can't stand there, Haz." Louis glares at the man refusing to leave while he uses the toilet.

"What if you fall?"

"I won't fall."

"It's not creepy when I've seen you naked before."

"Yes it is. Please wait outside."

Harry stands by the door nonetheless and disregards Louis' argument. A few minutes later after Louis clean and brushing his teeth, he feels the cramp again and drops his toothbrush with a clatter at the searing throb.

"Bean." He gasps, clutching his middle. "Is that you?"

He's caught between being ecstatic and screaming in pain. He's never been good with pain. He shouts for Harry and wipes his mouth when the man enters not two seconds later.

"Is it-"

"It's not a damn false alarm." Louis pants in broken breaths. "Your daughter's on her way."

Harry may allow himself a short second to smile brilliantly before Louis grabs his arm and dares him to move any slower. The man let's the sudden thrill settle in his chest before realising that he isn't going to get his daughter by the flip of a switch, and rushes to help Louis get into clean clothes.

"Breathe, love." Harry secured the sides of Louis' face and wiped the worry off the boy's face. "Look at me, Lou. Breathe."

While Louis does that, Harry grabs the duffel bag - it's truly a gene that both Zayn and he possess - before helping the boy down the stairs. They get to the car but not without Lego yapping at Louis' hurried pace, and his owners not playing with him seems to add to the puppy's behaviour.

"Lego!" Harry hates having reprimand their party of animals but he does it now especially because the creature's getting in the way of Louis.

The puppy whimpers and runs off, leaving Louis feeling guilty and physically miserable. "Up now, love. Careful." Harry grips both of Louis' upper arms as he hoists the boy up into the Jeep's high front passenger seat.

Harry drives to their hospital while on speaker phone with Louis' doctor and holding the boy's hand as another - the fourth - contraction hits him full blast.

"Have a room ready." Harry barks at the doctor. "We'll be there in ten minutes."

"I want doughnuts!" Louis cries out urgently when the phone call is cut and the touch screen between them goes back to an old play list.

"What? You can't have doughnuts, Louis." Harry turns off the highway, hand still getting crushed by Louis.
"Please?" Louis has slight tears on his cheeks. "I really want- Bean really wants 'em."

"Is that so?" Harry was told that immersing Louis in conversation could help him manage the contractions.

"Yes!" Louis throws his head back and groans. "Can you get us doughnuts when we're at the hospital?"

"Yes, darling."

"Are you lying?"

Harry sighs and skids to a stop outside the private hospital's emergency entrance. He presses the button securing his seatbelt and then Louis' before jumping off to grab the duffel bag in the back. "I'll get you doughnuts, sweetheart." Harry opens Louis' door and helps him down while the electronic doors slid open and a wheelchair came out with two nurses.

"You're a horrible liar." Louis could be crushing Harry's hand as he was taken into the warm hospital interior. "I hate you."

Harry tried not to be too amused or endeared when he could have seriously fractured his wrist with the way Louis gripped it. "I'm sorry, baby. Bean first and doughnuts later?"

"Yeah." Louis held his baby bump and hoped with every ounce of himself that he wasn't dying.

"Yeah, okay."

"Hi, Louis." Their doctor, armed with her professional and calming smile jogged over to them from the nurses' station. "Wanna give me an update on how little Bean is doing?"

Louis took a deep breath as the most recent contraction passed and left sweat on his brow. "Started maybe ten minutes ago? Twenty? I don't know."

"Can you tell me how far apart they are?"

They had brought Louis up to the private room where he will wait out the hours of labour he has ahead of him before actually having Bean. He is lifted onto the soft mattress and Harry perches himself on the edge of the bed, his grasp firm on Louis' hand.

"Um....eight maybe seven minutes apart?"

"That's healthy. That's fine." She nods and steps out of the way so Louis can have various straps attached to his arms and he can be changed into a hospital gown. "Now, we will monitor these contractions as you dilate and I will come in to check on you every hour, alright?"

Louis nods and lays back against the pillows. The nurses and doctor leave the room with the door open. He turns his head towards Harry when the man starts wiping his neck and forehead with a flannel of their own.

"I'm already tired." Louis smiled wryly.

This was bound to be - as they were informed by their doctor - a long and difficult labour. Louis' dilation will take longer than a female's and he will lose so much blood.

"You can nap, darling." Harry didn't know how to offer solace or comfort so he struggled.
"I'm scared." Louis bit his lip and spread his legs with bent knees, lessening the tension between his legs.

"No, love. Don't be afraid." Harry kisses Louis' forehead and cheek then his lips.

"Haz?" Louis pressed his nose to Harry's chest. "Can you promise me something?"

"That depends, love. What promise?"

"If...-" Louis felt the building of another contraction pulling him under. "-it comes down to me or her-"

"No, Louis. It won't come to that."

"If it does." Louis' fiery blue eyes mean no fake truth as they bore into Harry's eyes. "Promise me you'll choose her. Promise me."

Harry shakes his head and rests their foreheads together, letting Louis muffle his screaming through another wave. "It won't come to that. You're strong, princess. We'll have our daughter and she'll have you."

Louis took this as motivation enough and he kissed Harry's parched lips. "Can I sleep?"

"Yes." Harry brushed his hair out of his eyes. "You can sleep, beautiful."

While the boy rested, Harry called Zayn and informed them of recent events. He heard Niall scream in the background and it definitely sounded happy.

"Can you get doughnuts?" Harry questioned, glancing over at Louis' sleeping form on the hospital bed.

"Yeah, 'course." Zayn was being hurried out the door by Niall.

Zayn hangs up in time for Louis to go through another contraction in his sleep. Harry gets to his side in time for the boy's dream to turn into an ugly nightmare from the pain and he jolts awake.

"Shh." Harry kisses Louis' temple, his wet lips remaining there until Louis let's go of his hand again. "Getting easier?"

Louis groans and buries his face in his pillow. "What do you think?"

"Your blond friend is bringing doughnuts." Harry hopes to lighten Louis' mood with the sugary treat.

Rather, he gets widened eyes and a frown, then a whine. "Haz!"

"Lou?"

"You know I can't eat solid food in labour!"

Harry had forgotten. Harry never forgets. "Sorry, princess."

After spending twelve minutes trying to get Niall on the phone but deciding the blond is probably pointedly ignoring him as revenge for every bad word between them, Harry grumbles when he sees their friends exit the elevator. Before Niall can enter the room, Harry grabs Niall's shoulder and takes the bakery box out of his hand to be tossed in a trashcan.
"But-

"He can't have solid food now." Harry cuts Niall off, pushing his unruly hair out of his vision line. Niall's frown grew into a smug smile. "You forgot, didn't you?"

Harry glares at him. "I am very capable of killing you."

"Love you too, Psycho." Niall walks into the private room ahead of Harry and bursts into laughter when he finds Zayn having his hand crushed.

"Jesus Harry. How do you handle this?" Zayn flexes his whole hand after Louis releases him with an apologetic smile.

"He's got a condition that rhymes with genitals and-"

"Oh yeah." Zayn chuckles at Niall's explanation, and sits on the available couch beside the giant duffel bag.

"Haz?" Louis whimpers from the bed, tired and needy.

"Yes, love?"

Harry could hear him just fine but leaned down anyway, and that led to Louis holding him close by his arms around his neck. The boy's grip is very weak but Harry kisses him to distract them both.

"We're having a baby." Louis bumps their noses together. "Your baby. My baby."

Harry's a proud father, above everything else that he can have under his name, so he smiles and Louis giggles softly at the sight of dimples. "Yes we are, princess. I am so proud of you."

Thirty minutes later their doctor returns to check Louis' dilation. Niall stays seated on the very edge of Louis' bed and Zayn looks like he's not breathing. She informs them that he's just between two and three centimetres so she'll come back again soon.

"Will you stop being so creeped out by everything?" Niall throws a cushion not needed by Louis at his lover, when the doctor is gone.

"Leave him alone, Ni." Louis has an ice cube in his mouth though it does bugger all for the burn in his body.

"I'm not creeped out by everything." Zayn defends himself after moving the pillow from his face.

"You are." Both best friends say at the same time.

Harry feeds Louis ice cubes because that's approved by their doctor for him to eat, and sometimes rubs one on the underside of Louis' wrist. Louis experiences frequent contractions that are getting closer together every hour and worse as time droned on. After three centimetres, his body slowed down.

His labour totalled ten hours of waiting before their doctor finally got back to them and said it's time. Niall was the first to jump up from Zayn's lap when he heard this and Harry had to whisper sweet words to Louis when the boy started to panic.

"Love? Lou, come on. Breathe." Harry had to get changed into scrubs but he stayed to tell his princess these soft nothings. "You're going to be fine, baby. I know you and Bean will be okay."
"I'm scared." Louis breathed brokenly. "Haz, I'm not ready. I-

"Shh. Don't tell yourself that. You've been ready for months." Harry reminds him. "You're her mom and I know you'll make sure she's safe. You're going to come back to me too. I don't negotiate."

Louis laughs wetly and nods, getting one last hard kiss from Harry before he's rolled off to the delivery room and Harry changes into the blue scrubs handed to him. Niall gets a photo of him in when the unsuspecting man is leaving.

"Oye!" Niall shouts to Harry so he turns around with an annoyed frown. "Good luck, Psycho. Bring me back a baby."

Harry gives Niall the first smile they shared and it's hardly there but they both knew it was.
Chapter Forty-Six

Silence is the most powerful scream.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

There's never been a need for Harry to be in a hospital besides for reasons involving a certain boy he named Blue Eyes in his diversified mind. It was therefore inevitable that he would feel out of place now that he was in a hospital, but between Louis' hoarse screams and trying to keep himself intact there was no time to let himself feel such a thing.

Becoming a parent starts nine months before a child enters the world but Harry never really felt the weight of such a responsibility until the doctor in navy scrubs started counting down and Louis' nails dug into Harry's palm.

"You're doing well, princess." Harry's sure he's been saying the same thing to Louis for the past hour.

"God damn it, Harry!" Louis shrieked in a higher pitch than any before, his ears blocking out the voice of the doctor momentarily.

"Louis, I need your cooperation down here!" The doctor reminded him in a blaring tone.

Louis' body was going under with his exhaustion but he was just a little closer to having his baby girl with him so he pushed on. He bore down thrice more, his body feeling like it was emptying of his innards and he cried out in a final shout of agony before relaxing.

"There we go." Harry wiped his forehead and kissed his warm temple. "You did so well, darling. You're so amazing."

"Whe-Where is she?" Louis heard a soft muffled crying and he sat up immediately despite the pain in his lower regions.

"You need to relax, Louis." A nurse told him a cold cloth on his neck and forehead. "She's coming."

Harry got to hold her after he cut the umbilical chord. He was positively lost for words or sound thoughts as the squirming little life in his arms messed his clothing with liquid gunk. He held her cradled to his chest and dared to kiss her forehead with a foreign emotion welling up in his chest.

"Lou?" Harry brought her to Louis and handed her over to the boy, carefully ensuring that the towel she was wrapped up stayed that way.

Her body was frail and small, her little fists writhing as they wriggled in the air. She cried and cried with a powerful set of lungs, her precious eyes closed and the wisps of hair on her head pushed backwards. Louis had tears in his eyes and he leaned in to kiss her head, pressing her ear to his chest so she relaxed against his heartbeat.

"Sorry mommy, but we have to take her away for a bit." The friendly nurse with a warm smile who smelt like pineapple took the bundle away from her parents. "I'll bring her right back. I promise."

Harry had his face pressed to Louis' neck, inhaling and slowing his heartbeat as it has never raced like this before. He feels Louis turn his head and lifts his eyes to partake in a warm kiss with the boy.
"We did it." Louis' eyes were drooping after he gave a final push to deliver the placenta.

"You did it." Harry gave him a fervent kiss that conveyed only a fraction of the emotions he had within him. "You gave me a daughter."

The nurse and staff on duty got Louis cleaned up as fast as they could before wheeling him back to the private room where he could rest in peace. He was exhausted by the time he got back to Niall and Zayn.

"Mr. Styles?" The pineapple nurse stopped Harry in the hallway when he was on his way back to the room.

He paused in his return to the private wing where their room was, and turned around to address the woman who was in the delivery room with them. He had a glow about him that not every first-time fathers had but he just couldn't seem to shake off.

"We need to print the birth certificate." She informs him. "We'd like the baby's full name please."

Harry ran his tongue along the inside of his molars. "I have to wait for Louis to wake up."

"Understood. Did you bring any clothes for us to dress the little one in?"

Of course they did, because Louis' been arguing with himself over what baby clothing to bundle their baby up in as soon as she came out for weeks now and Harry knew his final decision was packed in their duffel bag. He nods and walks into the room quietly to Louis dozing and Niall seated beside him.

"Where is she?" Niall stood up from the couch the second Harry walked in.

"We just came to get clothes for her. She'll be here soon." The nurse answered for Harry when it became evident the man wasn't going to reply.

Harry extracted the soft white onesie that just made it to be half of his forearm and the beanie set atop it. The nurse took it with a soft thanks and left.

"So-" Niall waited for Harry to be out of the bathroom wearing fresh clothing to pounce. "-how does it feel, Psycho?"

Harry flashes Niall a glare and sits on a hard orange plastic chair by Louis' head. He takes the sleeping boy's hand and kisses his slow pulse. Louis was clean and smelt of talcum powder, sleeping on his side with a pillow between his legs. He looked exhausted but so peaceful. His tummy was flat for the first time in a long time and Harry felt himself thumbing at the soft blanket over that spot of the boy.

"Mr. Styles?" Their doctor walked in with a a clipboard and manila folder. She lowered her voice and smiled when Louis shuffled in his sleep. "May I speak with you outside?"

Harry got up and stepped out with her into the pale hallway. "Yes?"

"Your baby was born perfectly healthy." She read him the stats of Olivia's birth weight, height and other details. "Her eyes will open soon so we're going to bring her in once she's cleaned up."

Harry nods once. "Okay."

The wait is no more than fifteen minutes before a quaint bassinet is rolled into the room where
Louis slept and Harry almost fell asleep. The nurse who Harry trusted his daughter's clothing to walks in second with the miracle bundle in her arms.

"Hi there." She beamed as Harry rushed to his feet, nearly toppling the chair he was seated on over. "I have someone who would like to see you."

Little baby Olivia was warm and well taken care of in the mass of soft blankets she was bundled up in, protected from the cold. She yawns and her eyes remain closed as she's past from the medical trainee to her father. Niall peeks over Harry's shoulder and Zayn stands beside Harry, all eyes on her sleeping form.

"She's precious." Niall folds a loose flap of fabric over Olivia's baby hand. "I bet she'll have Lou's eyes."

"Nah." Zayn shakes his head in disagreement. "Her hair is Louis', definitely."

Harry steps around their friends to take her to Louis' side, sitting on the edge of the bed and holding the baby girl to his chest. She was so small in his arms, so defenceless and full of innocence. Harry bent to kiss her forehead and banish his exhaustion so he could stay awake while she made a soft tired noise before the wailing started.

"Oh here she goes." Niall laughs, closing the room door. "She's got Louis' lungs."

Louis seems to know on some other level that he's needed by his baby and wakes up from his slumber to her restless cries. His face falls at the sad, uncomfortable noise and he wipes the sleepiness from his eyes before taking her from Harry.

"Oh no." He adjusts his bed so he's seated upright. "What's wrong, little girl?"

"You need to feed her." Harry leans close to Louis' side, kissing the boy's cheek.

"We'll be outside." Niall takes Zayn's hand and leads him outside, shutting the door softly behind them.

Louis breathes a sigh and caresses his crying baby's cheek with his finger. He gets her to be quieter before lifting his shirt and letting her latch on after a minute of rooting around for her food. She grabs Harry's finger when her hand gets freed from under all the blankets, and her pink skin slowly settles into a pale complexion.

"She's beautiful, princess." Harry wraps an arm around Louis. "You gave me the most beautiful daughter."

Looking up at the man, Louis grins tiredly and shares in a sweet kiss. He was tired and all his efforts were proven absolutely worthy as he held his baby girl away from all the dangers in the world.

She held Harry's hand like she knew right off the block that he was going to be her overprotective father, sometimes wiggling that arm when his long finger got in the way of her suckling. Harry kissed her forehead a total of three times, unable to get enough of the fresh baby smell that stuck to their little Bean.

A full nine months of unease because of worrying that they'd never get to see their little Bean is now at rest. Louis holds their baby and Harry held him close, pressing the odd kiss here and there.

"Darling?" Harry sat back against the pillows and Louis rested against his chest, warm and
comfortable.

"Hmm?" Louis felt Olivia go slack as she fell asleep, releasing her father's hand. Louis dropped his lips to her cheek. "Sweet dreams, my love."

"I was asked for her full name." Harry kept his arms wound tightly around Louis' middle, keeping in contact with his baby. "The hospital needs to-

"Styles." Louis nudged Harry's strong jaw with his nose. "I want her to be a Styles."

Harry's never had anything to his family name that he was proud of, and his daughter was the biggest exception. He was thrilled to have her under his birth name, and gave Louis a too passionate kiss for just after giving birth.

"Careful." Louis warns, supporting Olivia's head as he held her.

"Are you sure, princess?" Harry tilts Louis' head up.

"Yes." Louis replies, handing over their sleeping daughter to Harry. "She should be a Styles. Olivia Jane Styles."

Harry's smile just extends as he kisses Louis' lips three times in urgent presses. "I love you, darling. You've made me the happiest man alive."

"I believe she did that."

Before getting comfortable in his bed, Louis covered Olivia in a soft warm baby blanket even while Harry held her to him. He slept on his side while Harry made a small space between them to set her down. She was fast asleep, her head lolled to the side and closed fist holding her blanket. Her plump, little lips were slightly parted as she breathed slowly.

"How will I ever put her down?" Louis thumbed at her soft hands. "She's amazing."

Harry agreed wholeheartedly. He also saw himself experiencing the struggle of deciding whether or not to leave his baby alone when all he wanted to was cuddle her close.

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it."

* * * * *

Olivia's eyes belonged to her father.

Harry was the first to see them when he woke up from a poorly conditioned nap and found his daughter looking at him silently. She didn't move save for her narrow chest breathing slowly and she was on her back, gazing up at him as if realising that they were related.

"Hello, baby girl." He kept his voice extra soft for Louis to stay asleep. "How are you?"

She didn't respond, just blinked with those bright and feral green eyes. They were bleak and murderous on him, but positively charming and beguiling on her. He gave her rosy little cheek a kiss and she made a grab for his cheek, wanting to know why this individual gave her so much of affection.

"I'm your father, Liv." Harry rubbed his thumb over her soft tummy. "I am the most licenced to give you affection."
Liv did not understand what her father said but she listened anyway, sometimes yawning or holding Harry's thumb when she saw it move. Her little fingers hardly made it around the appendage.

"My beauty." Harry kisses her little fist. "Are you hungry again?"

She blinked and let Harry pick her up, restraining from kicking her legs as she felt a very steady heartbeat settle against her ear. Her fingers gripped the fabric of Harry's shirt as he spoke to her, as she recognised his voice.

"Your mommy's going to hang me from a tree if she thinks I woke you up." Harry speaks the truth, nuzzling his baby's neck. "Do you think you can keep a secret?"

Olivia looked at him curiously. Her skin was like Harry's and their eyes matched, but she also knew that a lot of herself came from her blue-eyed beautiful mommy. She thought of Louis' soothing voice and started to cry, wanting him to hold her.

"Shh, Liv." Harry stood up on wobbly feet and rocked her gently. "Mommy's sleeping."

"Haz?" Louis awoke to the shrill cry of a baby - his baby - and his heart broke a little. "Give her to me please."

Harry brought her to Louis, lowering the girl into Louis' arms. He sat and watched at Louis got her to be quiet, marvelling at how they bonded.

Louis gasped at the beautiful pair of emerald eyes peering up at him. "So you have Daddy's eyes, huh?"

Olivia closed her eyes, feeling nothing but safe with her mommy. She let him rub her back and kiss her tummy so that her small world got a little warmer.

As the baby shut her eyes and her lazy head fell against Louis' arm again, the boy took a moment to check himself. His lower regions burned like Hell fire and he was sitting on an extra plush mattress that treated his bottom with kindness. He was starving and thirsty but he'll go dry before letting his baby girl sleep unheld.

"Can I eat now?" Louis pouts, laying back on the upright cushions and supporting Olivia as he sniffled and slept.

"Of course." Harry gave him a quick kiss that melted into something lasting a little longer. "I will tell our friends to go pick up something. What do you want?"

"Pizza." Louis says immediately, biting his lip at the thought of meaty pizza. "Doughnuts too."

"Don't go overboard now, princess." Harry cautions as he straightens up. "Do you want me to put her in her bassinet?"

"No." Louis shielded his daughter in his arms. "I want to hold my little baby forever."

"As do I but it's not good to hold her all the time." Harry chuckles, opening their door to let Niall and Zayn know about Louis' request.

"Lies." Louis rolled his eyes. "Babies need mommy-baby contact."

Harry let Louis hold her for a few more minutes before insisting that she be put down to rest. A newborn will sleep for odd hours and for long or short periods of time. Olivia is bound to wake up
screeching from hunger soon enough.

"Thank you." Louis nibbled on the thin crust of his pineapple chicken pizza slice.

"Anything for you." Harry kissed his neck.

Niall and Zayn had to leave - it was a very mysterious and suspicious exit - to tend to something so they dropped off Louis' food and left with a promise to visit tomorrow. Louis lay in bed beside Harry with his head resting on the man's shoulder.

"Haz?" Louis picked little bits of dough from his chocolate doughnut and fed himself. "Do you think we're ready?"

Harry set down the slice of pizza he had in his hand, on the open box between them. "That's a strange question to ask, love."

"Not that I doubt us, you know. I'm just....-" Louis chewed his greasy lip. "-nervous? It's not exactly like I've done this before."

"Darling." Harry cages Louis' waist between his arms. "We have to start somewhere. Bean couldn't wait any longer and now we have her out here with us."

"Yeah." Louis' fingers dance across Harry's arm. "I wish I could keep her safe like when I was carrying her."

"She was safest there, wasn't she?" Harry lays a path of kisses down Louis' exposed neck, shifting the hospital gown to get more soft skin. "How much does it hurt, love?"

"Not really painful. Just very sore." Louis explains honestly, pushing the food boxes away and settling back on Harry's chest. "You're a real daddy now, Hazza."

Harry's chuckle fills Louis' ears as he gets comfortable with the pillows, roping his broad arms around Louis' thin frame and turning his head towards the bassinet that enclosed his daughter.

* * * * *

As predicted, Bean found time to alert her parents that she was hungry the second her short nap was over. Her cries were heard all through their floor for just a few moments, before Harry carried her and she got softer.

"Someone's fussy." Louis yawned and sat up gingerly, wincing when his very tender bum was pressured too much. "Hand her over."

Harry loved holding his daughter but he couldn't exactly breastfeed her so he had to let go every once in a while. Louis kept her dependant frame safe in his arms while she nursed from him.

"She's got a big tummy for such an itty-bitty baby." Louis caught her eyes on him so he felt the need to talk to her in hushed whispers. "You're definitely your daddy's girl."

"Was there ever any doubt?" Harry supplies from beside him.

Olivia seems to realise there is a conversation about her going on - Louis believes his baby girl is the smartest little monster to ever live. Her untrained eyes stay on Harry for a bit then wander back to her softer parent.

"Mommy has to have a bath now, cutie pie." Louis said to his understanding daughter after she
didn't fall asleep.

"I'll hold her, love." Harry offers. "Want me to go get your bath ready?"

"Please?" Louis lifts his head to kiss Harry for a dragged out moment on the lips, humming when the man licks the seam of his lips.

Harry fills the hospital bathtub with warm water and covers the base of the tub in rough salt. The salt will help Louis heal faster, as their doctor instructed them to use it when he had a bath.

"Louis?" Harry walks back into their room and finds Louis still holding Olivia, but her arm is slack and she's asleep. "Your bath is ready, love."

"Okay. Can you take her?"

Harry carefully lifts Olivia from Louis' arms and puts her into her bassinet. He locks their room door from the inside because he's going to be in the bathroom with Louis and doesn't want to risk anything with Olivia alone in the first room.

"Need help, princess?" Harry stood uselessly at the doorway, a midpoint between the two most important facets of his life.

"Please?" Louis made grabby hands for him.

Harry shook his hair out of his face where it was scratching his nose, and hoisted Louis from the hospital bed to the bathtub. He set the boy on his feet momentarily to undress him. Louis' body was not going to simply bounce back after now having had Olivia. He had wider hips, thicker thighs and a much softer tummy. He planned to work it off but not immediately because his little baby angel deserved all his attention.

"I love your body." Harry said at random with Louis between the V of his legs and them both naked in a bathtub of salt.

"I knew you would." Louis giggles, catching Harry's hand when it squeezed his thigh. "Maybe I won't try to lose it."

"You may do whatever makes you happiest, darling."

Harry peppered wet kisses from Louis' collarbone to his ear, tasting salt and sweet skin. He held Louis extra close, reminding himself that this exquisite person is all his and had his baby.

"I love you." Harry told Louis in his ear. "You drive me insane with how much control you have over my heart."

"Right back at you, Haz. You're the king of my heart."

After a while, Louis parted his knees and sat on Harry's lap but it didn't help with the ache in his nether regions.

"Harry?" Louis rested his head on the man's shoulder. "Can you get my doughnut cushion please?"

* * * * *

Louis was discharged week later when Olivia Jane Styles was grown enough to go out into the world with her parents right by her.
Niall and Zayn brought over any extra clothes they'd need and all Olivia's necessities for the stay at the hospital. Her car seat was one that Harry chose and she seemed to like it when he placed her in it.

"She likes it." Harry declares, buckling her in with two straps. Her wide green eyes follow his apt fingers as they do the job, curious about what he's doing.

"Of course she does." Louis exercises his legs after a three day inactivity period. "Her daddy always knows what's best."

While Harry fetched their belongings from the bathroom and the second duffel bag from their small closet, Louis told his daughter random facts. Bean didn't seem to mind considering she loved her mommy's voice.

"Did you know Daddy has so many tattoos?" Louis whispers, almost like mischievous kids are plotting a revenge act on a poor neighbour.

Olivia is still too young to grab and hold his nose, but she tries. Louis giggles and kisses her little fist.

"I don't have any tattoos, sorry." He confessed. "Neither do you and I sure hope it stays that way, missy."

Bean kicked her feet and sneezed. Louis cooed and dug through her napkin bag for an insulating fleece blanket before tucking it in around her. He adjusts her beanie and bops her button nose.

"Better now, cutie?"

She blinked at him, her baby nose getting a little red from her sneeze. Louis holds her hand, counting and recounting the fingers and kissing each delicate appendage.

"Who's that?" Louis asked when Harry walks into the room carrying their bags.

Olivia recognises her father and kicks her feet out under the blanket when she's asked to identify him. She can't smile but she would if she could.

"Haz!" Louis calls the man over to them. "She knows you."

"Of course she does, Lou." Harry briefly connects their lips. "I'm her father."

"No, watch." Louis waves off Harry's nonchalance and asks his daughter the same question, pointing to Harry. She kicks her feet again and Louis beams like he's the sun. "Such a clever little bunny."

They get their discharge papers that Harry signs and the medical aid bill that is way too high for Louis to care to read. He carries Olivia in her car seat with a blanket over her entire body to keep her safe from the snow falling outside.

Harry dumps their bags in the bag but brings Olivia's nappy bag to the back seat where Louis is strapping her in. She was asleep already under her blanket, not waking up when jostled by her mother.

"All warm and snug, little Bean." Louis kisses her forehead and jumps down with Harry's help.

"I remember." Harry crowds Louis against the closed car door the second the boy turns around with
a surprised gasp. "-a year ago when you were the most confusing creature in my life."

Louis raised both his eyebrows and stretched up just a small amount, bringing Harry down to his level. "Was I amongst others a year ago?"

"Of course not." Harry slid his hands down to grip Louis' body where the backs of his thighs met his voluptuous behind.

"What's your point then?" Louis giggles, bright eyes lifted of any burdens in the past or future.

"My point is, darling, that it's been a year." Harry secures the side of Louis' face in his large hand. "A whole year of you and I."

Louis smiles with a faint blush at the memory of how they started. "Feels like forever ago."

With a huff of laughter, Harry shook his head and swooped down to capture Louis' lips with his. He breathes through his nose so they don't have to separate and snakes both arms around Louis' body, feeling their body charges warm up together.

"Still got it." Louis fleetingly rocks upwards to kiss Harry's red lips after they've pulled away.

*I * * * *

"I wanna cuddle." Louis told Harry when he found the man in the kitchen behind a blender.

He fed Olivia and winced as he walked around the nursery with her so she'd fall asleep. It's been a week of having an adorable mini them around the house and Louis' been doing really well with healing from the labour.

"Cuddle?" Harry played ignorant.

Louis glared at him and made his way around the kitchen counter to wrap his arms around Harry from behind. "Cuddle."

Harry got a time limit to prepare his smoothie, and right after he found himself curled around Louis' sleeping form on the couch in their living room. Louis has hardly gotten sleep with Olivia having him up regularly at two every morning and every odd hour after that. The boy was exhausted but happy and the latter mattered to Harry a lot.

After an hour of sleeping perfectly still, Louis' eyes opened and he frowned.

"What's wrong, princess?" Harry brushed his hair back, framing Louis' body with his own.

Louis puts a finger to his lips and bites his own lower one. Two seconds later, a muffled cry from the nursery above reaches them and Louis made to get up.

"How did you know?" Harry asked after Louis pecked his lips.

"Mommy's know, Haz." Louis spoke as if it were the most logical answer on earth.

"Stay." Harry kept Louis seated by his shoulders. "I'll get her."

"What if she's hungry?"

"You've got bottles pumped."
Louis pouted and shrugged. He caught Harry's arm and gave the man a sweet kiss. "Thank you."

"She's my daughter." Harry said with an obvious voice. "This is what I live for."

Harry took two steps at a time when he got to the stairs. He quietly opened Bean's nursery and found her wriggling around in her baby crib, messing up the cushions as she cried and complained.

"Hello, little bean." He lifted her up from the pillows with both hands, cradling her head and behind with his hands. "Why are you upset now?"

She got softer because of her daddy's presence but her thick lashes had become damp with tears rolling down her cheeks. Her baby fists caught the first thing she could hold of her father to keep him here, and it turned out to be his hair.

"Alright, love." He tried to release her hand. "Do you want a change?"

Her nappy was not soiled so that's not what she needed, and she didn't start rooting around Harry's chest so she wasn't hungry. He opted to walk around with her telling her odd facts until she felt secure enough to fall asleep again.

"You're just like Lou." Harry tells Olivia, memorising her every feature.

She blinked up at him, neatly tucked between his arms as she yawned a perfect 'o' shape. Her pastel yellow onesie covered all of her body, keeping her warm and adding to her entire cosy image. Harry rubbed the underside of her foot with his hand, kissing her balled up fist when she released his hair.

"Why thank you, sweetheart." He gave her a smirk.

She opened and clenched her hand again, wanting to hold something else of him.

"You're more possessive than me." He chuckles at her mannerisms, letting her hand his free finger. "So much mischief behind such a perfect face."

Olivia fell asleep while Harry stood with her by the window. Snow was coating the grounds and frosting up their windows. Bean slept in their room at night for this very reason, and Louis' paranoia. It was too cold for his precious angel baby to be alone.

"Sleep well, my sweetheart." Harry kissed her ultra soft skin and left her in the nursery to sleep. He also managed to fall asleep with a baby monitor next to him on the couch. His track record of being able to function with minimal sleep is being destroyed by his baby girl.

Louis woke up under the weight of Harry's arms first, restless and hungry. He sighed and stayed nestled against Harry's broad chest for a minute longer, inhaling a scent of mixed cologne and baby powder.

The baby monitor picked up the disheartening squeals of their daughter five minutes into Louis' secret cuddling session. He crawled out from under Harry and crept upstairs to her nursery.

"Hi there, Liv. Is it bath time already?" Louis tickled her tummy and got a kick of her feet in response. "Such a punctual baby."

Louis got her undressed and disposed of the disposables. He ran a shallow bath and got the floating sponge that would fit her shape and keep her secure. She loved the attention she was getting from
her mommy and sometimes tried to grab his hand when she thought he was going to leave.

"I'm not going anywhere, baby Bean." Louis assured her, fetching a towel to lift her up with after her bath. "I'm all yours."

He carried her into her nursery from the bathroom she had attached to it, drying her head and under her arms with the baby towel. She made little spit bubbles with her small lips that he promptly wiped up. Harry made an appearance when Louis was picking clothes for her.

"Hi." Louis set the sleeping onesie out and a woollen hat. When Harry came to stand behind him with hands on his hips, Olivia looked between them curiously. "Say hello, Liv."

The baby girl wiggled her big toe where it peeked out from under the towel. She sneezed and Louis had a heart attack, worried that he left her to get cold too soon.

"What do you want for dinner, love?" Harry asked while Louis dressed their daughter in a layer of clothing, then draped her in a blanket that kept her comfy.

"Anything." Louis followed him downstairs with Liv's eyes taking in every new sight and sound.

"Indian food?"

"I'll order it." Harry kissed Louis' forehead, then Liv's before going to make the phone call.

Louis sat on the couch in front of a muted television with Olivia peering out at everything new. She held Louis' finger one second and released it the next, just to recapture it moments later. Lego found his way onto the sofa as well, and wanted to see the new addition to their household. Although there's a studio room where the animals stay when they choose to, Lego sleeps in either the nursery or Louis and Harry's room depending on where Bean is. He's a protective puppy.

"Hey, Lego." Louis tilted Olivia's position in his arms. "Meet Liv."

Lego didn't get too close but he sniffed the end of her blanket and laid down on his front next to Louis' thigh. Harry's voice speaking to the person at the expensive Indian restaurant so many streets away could be heard from where Louis sat. He hung up once the order was confirmed and came to join Louis.

"Is she asleep yet?" Harry asked from beside Louis when he sat down, covering all of his baby's forehead with her hat.

"No." Louis revealed more of her to him. "She's a curious baby."

"Soon enough she's going to be walking and learning new things all by herself."

"Oh no. She's going to stay my little baby bean forever." Louis says with conviction.

"Yes, darling." Warm lips reach Louis' temple. They go lower to Louis' cheek before eventually pulling away.

* * * *

Olivia visits the doctor multiple times in her first month of being in this world, to get most of her vaccines and shots done at the hospital she was born in. Harry has been making frequent visits to the studio gallery he planned to visit in the central business district, and Louis has discovered that their neighbours love babies.
"Why don't you tell them to go away?" Harry asks plainly after listening to Louis' complaint.

"Because-" Louis accepts the tall glass of some fancy beverage Harry tried making. "-we don't want to create bad blood between us."

Before Louis can take a sip of the red cool drink, he tucks in some pillows on either side of Olivia. She was on her front, playing with her absolute favourite grey teddy bear.

"I'll talk to them." Harry proposes.

"No you won't." Louis hurries to argue. "Then we'll have more than bad blood."

Harry laughs and Louis steals a sip from his glass of redness. The boy's face screws up and he shivers.

"Ew." Louis tries to rid his tongue of the awful bitter taste.

"What's wrong with it?"

"It's awful, that's what. What did you put in there?"

"Alcohol."

"Haz! It's only noon and you're drinking."

"Yours doesn't have alcohol."

"That's not the point."

"Want me to throw it away?"

"Yes please."

Harry gets up to pour his cup's contents down the drain while Louis catches Olivia watching him. He smiles down at her and holds a flat palm out close to her. The baby studies it before raising her own flat palm to match. Between Harry and Louis, the size difference is enough to make Louis blush but between his baby and him the size different was spectacular.

"Haz!" Louis gets an idea. "C'mere please."

The man appears from the kitchen doorway with his phone in hand and a concentrated frown. He crosses the distance between them and puts his phone in his back pocket.

"Give me your hand." Louis takes it before he's finished with the request.

He makes Harry kneel and Liv's eyes transfer to her father's in piqued interest. Why was he here when she had all of Louis' attention on her moments ago? She finds it odd but let's Louis replace his hand with Harry's. Bean's tiny, tiny hand goes nowhere near the edge of Harry's palm and stays centralised while she wonders what this is.

Louis digs in Harry's back pocket until he finds Harry's phone to take a photograph of this adorable moment.

* * * * *

The snow has begun to melt and that meant Olivia was back in her nursery, sleeping soundly under
the protection of Lego who lay at her crib's feet. Louis as caught up in a tangle of limbs that involved Harry and he giggled whenever the man tightened his hold on his bum upon his attempts to escape.

"Where do you think you're going?" Harry's gruff, low voice was spoken into Louis' neck.

"You're squashing me." Louis freed his arms and locked them around Harry's neck.

Harry grunted and mouthed at Louis' collarbone so he could work his way lower discreetly. "You promised to be mine for the entire night."

"Except when Bean needs me."

"And she doesn't need you yet."

After a visit to the mall today, Harry had picked out a few ideal outfits that he'd like Louis to wear. He knew the boy's size and taste so the choice was limited to everything soft and short. Tonight, Harry had locked their closet door and left a very special choice of night garments on their bed. Louis had covered his face with both hands when he saw the white lace and blushed behind his palms. Harry uncovered his visage from behind his small hands and kissed his lips in a way that spoke better of his intent than any words can.

"It's not uncomfortable, is it?" Harry dragged his hand up and down the curved length of Louis' back.

"No." Louis yawned and rested his cheek on Harry's chest. "It's comfy actually."

Harry pulls Louis onto his chest entirely, covering them both in a warm comforter that feels heavy on Louis' shoulders. He pulls the boy down for a kiss, smirking when Louis nips at his lip.

"Princess?" Harry caught Louis' hand when the boy drew circles on his torso. "I need advice."

Louis circled his lips and made a curious sound. "Do you now?"

"Oh yes." Harry started massaging the loose muscles at the base of Louis' spine. "Zayn has a business venture and-"

"The nightclub idea?"

"How did you know?"

"Niall told me when they came over last Friday which reminds me, we still haven't gone on that double date."

"Well we won't be going on it in the near future, and yes the nightclub idea. I was not entirely sure it's a safe investment."

Louis lies with his head on Harry's beating heart and a leg on either side of Harry's hips. The white soft fabric clinging to his body rides up but creates a delicate brush on his heated skin.

"Nightclubs always do very well financially." Louis shrugs. "You can make it really hard to get in so that more people want to do just that. It's weird I know, but Niall made it make sense."

"What do you think I should do?"
"Did he ask for your partnership?"

"Yes."

"Go for it." Louis smiles encouragingly. "At most, you'll lose a small percentage of the property value when you sell it."

"Along with the expenditure of a pre financial period."

"Well yeah." Louis giggles then pecks Harry's lips. "Go for it. Why did you ask?"

"It's quite a big deal, and I believe social protocol needs me to consult with you first."

The baby monitor picks up as lights start to flicker in the order of the colour spectrum. Louis rolls his eyes and separates their bodies to get up. "Oh the flattery."

Harry holds him firmly by his waist and demands a hungry kiss from the boy that almost has them toppled over. Louis pushes him away by a tangled hold on his neck, squeaking when Harry swats his behind as a departure memory.
Chapter Forty-Seven

Storms. They may come but I'm here to stay.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

"No, Livvy baby." Louis removed the baby's fingers from his bowl of cereal. "You can't eat cheerios like Mommy."

Livvy started to cry when Louis' own bowl of honey Cheerios moved away from her. The curious little girl had stuck a finger into Louis' bowl when he was preparing Harry's breakfast.

"Oh no." Louis set down the fork he was using to turn the bacon but Harry got there first.

"I've got her, Lou." Harry sent Louis back to the stove with a soft kiss on the boy's pouted lips.

"Sorry, Livvy." Louis gave his sniffling baby girl a kiss on her red cheek.

Harry held her against his shoulder, supporting her back and head with his hands. She calms down after Harry rocks her for two minutes, his thumbs rubbing her back and chubby arms.

"What did she want?" Harry presses his nose gently to Bean's cheek. She grabs a hold of it and let's go when Louis comes to hand Harry his food.

"She was going to eat my Cheerios." Louis sighed in explanation, taking the squirming baby from Harry. He tapped her nose and then kissed it. "So where are you taking us tonight?"

Harry has spent the last two weeks keeping two secrets from Louis, only one of which managed to remain a secret. His business idea with Zayn was doing splendidly well and the revenue is expected to be exceedingly high when they open on Sunday. Today however, is Friday and Harry finally got his sixty plus art pieces ready for display at the gallery he owns.

"Darling, you know not to ask me that." Harry chuckles, picking up his fork to start eating.

"Fine." Louis sits with Livvy in his lap, resting her head on his shoulder and her chubby arm gripping his neck. "We're going for lunch with Niall today. Aren't we, Beanie baby?"

Olivia looks at Louis with wide eyes and hides in his neck when the question is posed to her. She's eaten her breakfast already and watches Louis eat his Cheerios.

"She's watching you." Harry smirks while he chews, eyes darting from his baby's face to Louis'.

"Aw." Louis sets his spoon down and pays attention to her. "I promise you can eat all the Cheerios you want later but now I need you to be a cute little baby."

"Lou." Harry groans in complaint when Louis leaves the table again. "You haven't eaten, princess."

"I will eat later. Lunch with Niall, remember?"

Harry gets up and hoists Olivia from Louis' protective arms to his own, before bending to plant a chaste kiss on Louis' lips. "Go eat. I will take her up with me."

"Where are you going?"
"To get us ready." Harry lifted Olivia into the air and she made an effort to grab onto him, trying to stay close to her father when she was being hoisted. "Are we ready, Miss Livvy?"

Bean starts to sniffl and flails her limbs until Harry lowers her to his chest where she can stay safe and cradled. She stops fussing and Louis cooes, pressing a kiss on her forehead.

"Alright." Louis nods with an appreciative smile. "Thank you."

"You need to tell me when you need a break."

"I know-" Louis holds Olivia's little hand, rubbing her tiny palm with his thumb. "-but she's my baby."

"She's my baby too." Harry indicates the truth by gesturing to where Olivia drooled on his shoulder. "You cannot handle the duty of taking her yourself, darling. Now eat a big breakfast and come upstairs to take your shower."

"Okay." Louis pouts and Harry kisses him, bending at an angle for too long when his free arm wraps around Louis.

Harry hums, licking his lips when he pulls back. "Still the best taste."

"Of course I am."

While Harry took Olivia upstairs to tend to getting ready for their busy day ahead, Louis went back to the kitchen and got himself a decent plate of food. He sat at the counter with his phone, setting reminders for all the things they had to get done today.

Louis' gynaecologist appointment was today to clear him for his healing process and tell him whether he's good to go. The lunch date with Niall was after that, then he and Livvy will be following Harry to a surprise location.

He was tired thinking about it. Bean got him up every two hours and he rarely got to sleep himself unless they were in the same room, knocked out with exhaustion. Louis suspected Bean was colic but the baby girl as just a little stubborn, a trait she eagerly took from himself. She was ill a few days back after her final vaccine and spent the entire day on his chest where his heartbeat soothed her.

Louis took his plate to the living room and sat in front of the television, hoping to entertain himself while he ate. He found that The Shining was on and decided to watch it.

Harry laid Bean out on her front on their bed with a baby blanket beneath her tummy and pillows all around her. Lego has grown to a decent size now and he stands guard at the foot of the bed, watching the baby.

"Would you like to know something, baby Bean?" Harry set his clothes out beside her. The baby looked up at him, filled with childish wonder and vague intrigue present in her eyes. She let go of her grey teddy bear and played with her blanket.

"I have something special planned you and your Mommy." Harry gets on his knees at the foot of the bed, facing his daughter when they're on the same eye-level.

Livvy smiles one her beautiful grins that makes Harry lean forward and kiss her cheek. His daughter's smile made him feel like his heart was soaring through the most glorious scenery. He loved her so much.
"Let's get you changed because we have to leave in an hour." Harry picked her up in one swooping and motion that secured all of her dependant body parts.

She was still smiling and made a loud gurgling noise that she did when she was happy about something. Harry carried her to her nursery and set her down on the dressing table while he got clean clothes for her, Lego stationed at the door.

"You having my eyes means little when I feel like your stare is your mother's." Harry chuckles while he unbuttons the onesie his daughter is currently wearing. "What are you thinking, little Bean?"

Olivia is an obedient baby girl. She waits for her father to finish cleaning her with fancy smelling wipes before starting to dress her.

"Would you like to know how I met your mommy?" Harry asked her in a low voice, pulling a pastel purple one-piece on for her. "It's not a very fascinating story."

Bean's full lips form an unintentional pout. She doesn't know what he's saying but would like for him to keep talking.

"Maybe another time."

Harry buttons the last tab on the clothing and pulls a soft hat over her ears. He kisses her little baby fingers when they fidget with the hat, and she grabs fistfuls of his hair when the dark locks get close to her.

Thirty minutes later, Harry has Olivia's things ready and is dressed himself. His better half is the only component of their trio completely unprepared.

"Louis!"

The boy downstairs hears his name being called and answers in a soft mumble, frowning at the disturbance.

Harry jogs downstairs after leaving Olivia in her crib with her collection of stuffies. He enters the living room and crosses his arms, surprised at what he finds.

"We're going to be late, princess." Harry puts the TV off. "I want you upstairs and in the shower by the time I get there."

Louis pouts and Harry makes the connection between him and Bean. They look alike when they do that, their button noses both scrunch up.

"I don't care." Harry helps Louis onto his feet, pulling Louis into the solid cage when the boy tries moving away.

"Haz?" Louis raises his eyebrow at Harry. He's tired and let time get away from him but the look in Harry's eye does not match the one he gets when he's angry.

Harry's answer is to dip lower and crash his lips into Louis', his hand snaking down to Louis' bottom and slowly moving backwards until Louis fell back onto the couch. The boy made a very discontent sound in the back of his throat that Harry swallowed and made up for by kissing his way down his neck.

"What- What are you doing?" Louis gripped Harry's shoulders and stared up into the
pools of emerald green.

"You gave me a daughter."

"You're a father, yes. Is this just hitting you now?"

Harry growls when he bites Louis' lip, slipping his tongue between the swollen cushions and stretching out their bodies to be aligned.

"She smiled at me." Harry breathed raggedly, a wild look in his eye that tapered off.

"Yeah?" Louis bent his knees in the air and caressed the sides of Harry's neck with his fingertips.

"What did you do?"

"I picked her up in that way she likes."

"Ah." Louis giggles, getting one more kiss. "She's so clever. Six weeks and we got a smile."

Harry smiled, exposing his charming dimples. "All credit to you."

"Madness." Louis rolls his eyes. "You're the one who played all that boring classical music when I was pregnant."

"You're the one who let me."

Louis grabs Harry by his ears and stretches up for a slow connection between their lips. Harry doesn't respond immediately but when he does he's smirking against Louis' smiling lips and deepening the kiss with a groan. Their bodies are pressed so extremely close that Harry's dress shirt brushes Louis' bare tummy when the boy's shirt rides up.

"Haven't had my milk in a while." Harry's thumb grazes Louis' nipple under his grey sleep shirt.

Hissing from the spark of sensitivity shooting from his chest to his spine, Louis bats Harry's hand away. Olivia has been nursing from him way too many times a day for his nipples to not be in a sensitive state. Harry pins Louis' wrists above his head the way he would when he was warning the boy.

"Haz, no please." Louis wiggles for a short while before relenting. He goes for a different tactic when Harry draws his shirt up under his chin to circle the puffy nipples with his index. "Your daughter feeds from those."

Harry's laugh is soft and he presses a chaste kiss to Louis' left pinkened nipple. "Yes she does."

The reminder does not hinder Harry's intentions, and he presses a kiss to the other nipple as well. Louis hates the press of discomfort but deals with it because he appreciates Harry not being insistent about not taking milk all this time.

"Not now." Harry clears his throat and hazy vision. "Let's get you showered and dressed, princess."

"I'm not our daughter." Louis tells him with Harry gets off him and takes his hand to stand as well. "I can handle myself."
Harry almost buckles under the weight of Louis jumping on his back, but rights himself with a shake of his head and grips the underside of Louis' thighs to keep him hoisted.

"I remember long before Olivia when you needed me, princess." Harry carries him up the stairs in this odd fashion. "I can't say I fancy your new-found independence."

Louis cooes and kisses Harry's neck. "I'll always need you, Daddy."

"That better be so, darling."

After taking his shower Louis smells like the chocolate body wash Niall had gotten for him just because he thought it looked fancy. He dresses in black jeggings that surprisingly fit him without being uncomfortable and a navy jumper that covers his behind.

"Hey Ni." Louis answers his phone from where it's charging on Harry's side of the bed.

"Hey Lou. We still on for lunch?" Niall has some hectic shuffling going on in his background.

"Yeah we are." Louis watches Harry walk past the bedroom with Olivia on his way downstairs.

"What time is that?"

"One. Zayn doesn't want to come but he is so one o'clock is all he manage for his boyfriend and friends."

Louis guesses Zayn is standing right there. "We'll be there, Ni. Don't worry, Harry's also fussing about going."

"How's my god-daughter?"

Slipping his Tomy's on, Louis laughs at Niall's question. He has not been announced at god parent to Olivia but he doesn't object to his friend's wish. "She's a very happy baby. Smiled at Harry today and everything."

"Really? What'd he do?"

"She likes it when he picks her up like he's swinging her." Louis says fondly, tying his white cotton lace.

"I thought she hated being in the air."

"Just when she's held up away from you. She's a cuddly baby."

Niall's end of the line rustles when Zayn collapses on the sofa he's seated on, his head on Niall's lap. "We'll see you three at one?"

"Yup. Text me the restaurant name."

"Deal. Laters."

"Bye."

Louis tosses his phone aside and finishes with slipping his other shoe on before standing and grabbing the device again. He makes it down the stairs after getting Olivia's favourite blanket and teddy from her room. That baby was not too young to have favourites.
"How late are we?" Louis asked as he strapped Olivia in her car seat.

"We're not late." Harry starts the engine and Louis climbs into his seat, buckling his seat belt on.

Olivia hardly likes car rides unless music she recognised was playing so she was easily distracted. Louis puts on a Hans Zimmer CD when he hears her start to snuffle, the warning signs before a piercing cry of hers. Louis hated to hear his angel crying.

"Better now, Livvy?" He looks over his shoulder at her playing with her teddy bear, sometimes crushing it and other times flailing it about. She smiles at her mommy with a high-pitched sound and Louis' heart melts. Harry drove by glancing at the rear-view mirror occasionally to check on his daughter, other times holding Louis' hand over the console as they waited in traffic.

"Zayn told me there's an investor waiting to meet us on Monday." Harry says, sitting back and cracking his knuckles.

"And?" Louis folds one leg under the other.

"We don't need investors."

"So tell them that."

"I plan to." Harry sighs, raking a hand through his hair. "I don't know why the Hell Zayn didn't tell him that yesterday. We've already got things to do on Monday."

Harry hears Olivia sniffling again and looks back briefly to find her fidgeting but not red in the face. Louis opens his mouth to continue speaking. "Well let them down easy. Don't be mean."

"Do you know me, darling?" Harry accelerates when the light turns green, unsettled by the shuffling in the back seat.

"I do and that's why I'm telling you to be nice." Louis checks on Olivia and frowns at her reddening cheeks. "Haz, pull over."

"What? Why?"

"Liv looks sick."

Louis worried himself until Harry found the space to pull over and he hopped out just as Olivia began to wail. The baby looked and felt uncomfortable, needing her mommy to hold her where she knew his heartbeat was.

"Oh no, my poor baby." Louis unbuckled her quickly and hauled her onto his lap as he sat next to the car seat. "What's wrong, Livvy?"

Olivia cried until she was red in the face and her weak arms held Louis' around his neck, her tears dampening his sweater. He felt his heart wrench as he listened to these shattering cries, whispering soft things to her and kissing her soft skin.

"Alright, baby. Shh." Louis brushes her fine hair and felt her cuddle close to his neck. "I'm here now, Liv."

Bean makes her way to Louis' chest, resting her ear on the spot where he always held her when she was upset. She couldn't hear his heartbeat through the sweater and that made her cry harder,
gripping the fabric and throwing her teddy bear away.

Louis was so troubled by this. He removed the large sweater and shifted the collar of his white shirt inside away so she could have skin-on-skin contact.

It immediately got her to quieten down and she held his hand in a fierce grip, not wanting to let go. Her little bum was raised in the air but Louis was just happy to have her relax again. He kissed her cheek and chubby hand, listening to her breathe heavily and supported her frame.

"Is she okay?" Harry looked worried to his core, hating that he was unable to do much.

Louis nods, his lips pressed to Olivia's shoulder. "She does this when she feels upset."

"Physically?"

"Either way. She feels safe hearing my heartbeat because it's all she could hear when I was carrying her."

Harry nods, reaching all the way back at an angle that should hurt to rub Olivia's back comfortingly. She sneezes thrice and a short whimper passes her lips, making Louis worry from the beginning all over again.

"What's wrong, little girl?" Louis tickles her sides with gentle fingertips. He grabs her blanket and drapes it over her back, fitting her hat more snugly on her head.

"Should we take her home?" Harry checks quickly.

Louis presses the back of his hand to Olivia's forehead and other spots of exposed skin. "She's got a fever. Drive faster."

Harry pulls their Jeep into traffic and takes every short cut he can manage to get them to the hospital they're registered to faster. He stops outside the main entrance and Louis is out the door before Harry can tell him that he's going to park and be back. He could guess that, and entered the hospital emergency room with Olivia tucked between his arms.

"Can I see Dr. Ezra please?" Louis tried to block out the bright lights and sounds by covering Olivia's head with the blanket, leaving space for her to breathe.

"Name?" The paediatric nurse gets up with a clipboard and pages Dr. Ezra through the intercom. "Tomlinson. Louis Tomlinson."

He tells her the symptoms of Olivia's discomfort and fever. The nurse tries to take her and she starts to wail immediately, seeing her mother go farther away from her while this stranger pulled her away. Louis shook his head as his heart broke and held her closer, rocking her worriedly and hushing the scared sounds from his daughter.

"Louis Tomlinson?" Dr. Ezra walked up to them clicking his pen and slotting it into his pocket.

Louis is guided with Olivia settled in his arms and Dr. Ezra leading the way. Harry makes his way there after racing from the parking garage. Olivia gets simple tests done and Louis stays next to her, holding her little hand through it all. Harry bursts through the single door while Dr. Ezra is out running the results from the tests.

"What happened?" Harry has his suit jacket unbuttoned and the first three of his dress shirt undone. His arms reach for Louis first, then he brushes his daughter's cheek with his finger just
to calm his troubles.

"He just went out now to check. Should be back soon." Louis uncovered Olivia's sleeping face and Harry kissed her soft forehead.

"My sweet little angel." Harry sets Olivia's diaper bag down on a free seat and gathers the blanket from Dr. Ezra's table to put it over the bag.

"She's going to be just fine." Louis sits in one of the two chairs in front of Dr. Ezra's desk.

"How's her fever?" Harry kneels by Louis' legs and cares not for damaging the knees of his expensive suit.

"Going down, thankfully." Louis smiles at the way Harry unbuttons two of Olivia's onesie buttons to assist in lowering her internal temperature. "You're the best father to her."

Harry's eyes move from Olivia's sleeping face to Louis' fond eyes, a small smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. "Our daughter was bound to bring out a better nature from within me."

That was indeed true, for after all Louis did try to change about Harry's murderous nature, it was the birth of their baby girl that secured his promise to never shed blood again.

Dr. Ezra returns after thirty minutes and gives both parents a confident smile that Harry glares hateful daggers at. When the paediatrician takes a seat, he leans forward with Olivia's file open.

"Olivia's just got a little fever, below a hundred and one degrees." He tells them with his fingers laced.

"So she's....she's alright?" Louis asks numbly.

He nods. "She's perfectly alright, no medication needed. Just take her home and wipe her down with tepid water. You said she was calmer after hearing your heartbeat?"

"Yes."

"So try to find time to sleep with her. If she hears something that comforts her, it will get her to feel better faster."

After any necessary forms are filled by Harry and fees paid by him as well, Louis takes his hand and they go towards the elevators where they had to travel up to the floor where his own doctor's appointment was.

"I was so worried." Louis traced a finger down the side of Olivia's cheek. She sensed him in her sleep and grabbed the appendage.

"I know, darling." Harry encircled Louis' soft, full waist with his arm and allowed himself the privilege of inhaling the scent at Louis' neck. "You're such a good mommy to her. She really loves you."

"She loves her daddy too. Her big, strong daddy."

Louis' appointment informs him and Harry that his healing process after giving birth has been timely and very quickly concluded. Although neither Louis or Harry planned to conceive more children at this moment in time, they were free to conduct sexual activities.

Harry was careful not to jostle a sleeping Olivia in his arms when he smirked at Louis, who
blushed and turned away first.

"We have two hours give or take to meet your blond friend." Harry spoke to Louis who sat in the back seat with his precious angel baby nestled against his chest. "Do you want to cancel?"

"I'm going to take a nap with Liv. I'll see what happens when I wake up." Louis replies with his informed decision. "If Bean is still upset then we're not going anywhere."

"Understood, princess."

Harry turned back to the road and presses down on the gas a little harder to speed up. They manage to beat the traffic that usually builds up around lunch time and Louis' already yawning by the time Harry inserts their pass code into their intercom.

"Want my help, love?" Harry opens Louis' door for him and fetches Bean's diaper bag with the blanket strewn over the handles.

Louis shakes his head and shifts Olivia from his chest to his shoulder. The drowsy baby roped her short arms around Louis' neck and sometimes her limb would slip but Louis kissed it and held it up again. She had a strong hold on him - for a baby she certainly knew when to be possessive - and Louis couldn't get her off to change into comfortable clothing.

"I'll help." Harry volunteers, stepping closer and dropping down to undo Louis' pants.

"She gets this from you." Louis tries not to focus on Harry so close to his nether regions and listens to Olivia's sleepy noises.

"What would that be?" Harry presses a cold kiss to Louis' tummy and the boy sucks in a sharp breath.

"Your lips are cold." Louis tells the man when he stands again. "And I meant her possessiveness."

Harry chuckles at that and gives Louis a quick kiss, followed by two more. "She is my daughter and we both realise that someone as rare as you should be held very close."

Louis stands on his tip toes and kisses Harry's cheek then settles back flat on the ground. "Say goodbye."

Harry frowns momentarily but that melts away when he looks at his baby. "I think I'll join you two."

"Really?" Louis lights up at that.

"Of course. It's too tempting to resist."

It was a task to get Olivia's clothes off while Harry got a soft cloth damp with water. Louis hated to hear his baby screech and watch her kick around while he undressed her, more than he hated Hell fire. The heartbreaking sounds almost made him cry.

"Shh, lovely. I'm right here." He bit his lip and held her close to his chest again, supporting the back of her head and her legs. "I love you so much, baby girl. Don't cry."

She softened and whimpered with the ugly sick feeling that welled in her chest. Harry was gentle when he wiped her down and gave her lots of kisses to calm her down.
After Harry's in lesser formal wear he joins Louis under the covers, an arm draped across his delicate hips. Olivia's tiny red lips - that she inherited from Harry - were parted and her baby fists clenched around the fabric of Louis' shirt. She held on and listened to Louis' heartbeat while she slept, her head turned to face Harry.

"She's feisty like you." Harry spoke, thumbing the soft skin of his baby's back. "Loud and beautiful."

"She looks like you when she sleeps." Louis provided, wincing when Olivia's shifts across his sore chest.

"How so?" Harry sweeps his hair aside and frowns lightly.

"She looks like she's frowning-" Louis brushes the skin between Bean's eyebrows. "-and she opens her mouth a little. You both look most innocent when you're asleep."

Harry smiles at the comparison. "She has your stare."

"Really?" Louis giggles softly. "I'm flattered."

* * * * *

"Don't ever scare me like that, Liv." Louis lifts Bean up and cuddles her to him.

He'd woken up from their nap and Olivia was already awake, watching her parents quietly as if she wasn't a month and a half old baby girl with needs. She got that from Harry. Louis picked her up and gave her a careful snuggle so that she made the happiest sound of her life and smiled more radiantly than the sun.

"Mommy was scared." Louis tells her with a nod.

Olivia's green eyes flicker to her other parent, searching for her father as he slept.

"Daddy was scared too." Louis crosses his legs, Harry's arm landing on his thighs. "Why don't you wake him up like how you woke me up, huh?"

Olivia's small hands clap together once and she beams toothlessly down at Harry. Louis gives her a kiss and sets her down on Harry's bare chest on her front. She makes a soft sound and her teeny fingers reached out for Harry's mouth since she liked when her father gave her kisses. When her small hand grabbed his lip, Harry wakes up in a flurry and holds Olivia when he sits up all of a sudden. Louis hides his amusement but Olivia quite likes her father's reaction and touches his cheek with her flat palm, patting the artful jaw bone and fish mouthing.

"Naughty baby girl." Harry released the breath he didn't know he was holding and welcomed Louis onto his lap beside his daughter. "Did you put her up to this?"

"I woke up and she was watching me." Louis rests his head on Harry's shoulder. "She wanted to wake you up as well."

"Mission accomplished then, huh Bean?" Harry kisses Olivia's tummy and she grabs his hair, gums exposed in her cheeky smile. "What time is it, love?"

"Just after one." Louis replies, sticking his tongue out at Olivia. "We can make it to meet Niall if we leave now."
"Let's cancel. We'll go for dinner tomorrow before we see the club instead."

"Sounds good. I'll text Niall." Louis grabs Harry's phone from the night stand and types a text to Niall.

Somewhere between 'Sorry' and 'tomorrow' Olivia got curious again and touched the iPhone, effectively erasing the whole message. Louis wasn't even angry. He angled the device to show their daughter how the message looked and let her press the send button. It brought such a smile to her face that Louis' heart suffered a small influx.

Harry's phone starts to ring with the caller identification of 'Ring' and the man takes it from Louis.

"I'll be back." Harry kisses Louis and slides off the bed to go into the bathroom.

The confusion gets to Louis. What or who is this 'Ring' person calling Harry? He frowns but doesn't let it get to him because Olivia is tapping their bed sheets and wanting attention.

"Alright, Bean. Let's go get some food." Louis picks her up and carries her downstairs with him to the kitchen.

He spends time feeding her, walking around the living room while she nursed from him with wide eyes. When her lips went slack, he wiped her mouth and burped her over his shoulder with a rag. She fell asleep right after spitting across the cloth.

"Dream sweet, my love." He set her on the single couch with cushions all around her as a 3D barrier.

Louis busied himself with making lunch whilst watching a muted television while it played a show about Four. Apparently they were coming to Chicago in a few months and Louis felt his stomach dip with the news. He's paranoid and perfectly fine staying at home.

He took out a frozen pizza base from the freezer and set it on the sink to defrost while he got some toppings chopped and sliced. Chicken, lots of cheese, chilli peppers and a bunch of other hot stuff that he really wants to gobble.

The pizza smells divine when it's in the oven and Louis has a hard time focusing on making his cup of tea rather than salivating.

"That smells really good, baby." Harry is suddenly there, holding Louis' waist and squeezing the ultra soft flesh.

"Thanks." Louis smiles when Harry kisses his neck. "It's pizza."

Harry hums and nods, keeping Louis secured and firm with bands of arms around the boy's middle. "You're especially soft today."

"Are you calling me fat?"

"No! Lou-"

"I'm kidding, Haz. Whether you thought that or not I wouldn't care."

Harry gave him a heated kiss against the counter top, hands lingering over his thighs and fingers twitching with the need to touch more of him. "Your wit is far more alluring than any amount of seduction."
"I'm complimented and offended." Louis giggles, eyes bright and arms locking around Harry's neck.

Hands grip his bum and lips crash into his in desperation that burns through his gut. Louis moans and his fingers tighten in Harry's soft hair, stretching up on his toes to deepen the kiss magically. Harry holds him inexplicably close, pressing their fronts flush against one another to grind their hips and groan from the restraint he's been suffering through.

Dishes clatter and rattle when Harry sweeps an arm over the counter and he hoists Louis up onto it. The boy's thighs wrap around him constrictingly, their mouths never parting and tongues seemingly dancing to the rhythm that thrummed in their chests. Harry tugged on Louis' cotton underwear until his hips jerked forward and he mewled, slipping from the counter.

The heat of their charged atmosphere left Louis a moaning mess and Harry growling into his sweet neck to get some contact. He pulled them off the counter and pressed Louis' back against a solid pillar, hiking those delicious thighs up to his hips and grinding their growing erections together.

"I missed you, darling." Harry whispered against Louis' numb lips. "I missed being inside you."

Louis tossed his head back when Harry started sucking and biting his neck, exposing more of the tan column to man's sharp teeth. He tasted Harry on his tongue and lips, scratching Harry's muscular shoulders while pleasure shot up his spine.

Harry hiked Louis' shirt up over his chest, forcefully pushing the boy further up the wall to suck on his sore nipples until milk entered his mouth. Louis hissed and pushed weakly to get Harry off him but nothing worked. Harry felt Louis' resistance and slapped the boy's bare thigh as punishment. The sting got Louis to moan and gasp, fuelled by the energy.

"L-Love you, Daddy." Louis was pulled into another kiss. "Take me apart."

They missed each other and they had until the pizza burned or Olivia woke up to prove it. Harry made quick work of undoing his joggers and dropping them to the ground. Louis' eyes grew dark with lust as Harry's has been for a while now.

"Almost forgot about this." Louis' small hand gripped Harry's erection, his thumb rubbing over the metal at the head. "Gonna feel so good inside me."

"That's going to be real fucking soon, darling." Harry left bruises on Louis' hips when he tightened his grip. "Turn around."

Louis did as told and arched his back just because he could. Harry gripped each cheek in one hand and spread them to expose Louis' pink hole to the cold air. He stepped forward so Louis was flush against the wall, lips ghosting over the boy's red ear and his stiff length in the crevice of Louis' perfect behind.

He buried his face in Louis' neck and grinded smoothly, pulling sounds of exquisite pleasure from them both. Louis' body jerked and rolled forward with each thrust, his mind shutting down and nails dragging down the wall. His thighs trembled and his words were slurred, but Harry kept it up until he felt the teasing was cruel to them both.

Harry had to give Louis prep because he couldn't risk hurting the boy. He took his time doing so, inserting two fingers at once with saliva as lube and jabbed Louis' insides while he kissed the boy with too much tongue and clashing teeth. The third finger made Louis shudder but push back
against him, demanding more of this gratification.

"Up, darling." Harry lifted Louis by the backs of his thighs, creating a glorious stretch by keeping those quivering thighs on his shoulders.

Louis was effectively folded in half and very vulnerable where Harry would ruin him. He glued their mouths together and bit down on Harry's top lip when he felt the cold metal ring slip past his fluttering muscle. His body clenched around the cold intrusion but he drew pleasure from it, giving all the love he could to Harry and not screaming when the man bottomed out.

"I know you can feel it." Harry swivelled his hips, the metal piercing brushing Louis' prostrate. "Yes." Louis hissed, clinging to Harry fiercely. "Move please."

He's been without sex for so long and he appreciates the hard, brutal pace Harry sets for them. He feels himself lose his control and bite his knuckles to avoid crying out. Harry fucks up into his tight body with frequent groans at how *perfect* it feels.

"Harder."

Harry would never let Louis go unsatisfied so he picks up the pace, his hips beating against Louis' pelvic bone. It's sweet but it burns and Louis' never felt euphoria like this before. He feels Harry moving between his thighs, hard muscle on soft skin and his own length being met with timeless friction in between. He pants and swallows his cries of satisfaction, allowing his body to be abused.

"Clo-Close?" He stuttered, feeling his own end approaching like wild fire.

"Yes. Fuck." Harry held the wall and Louis' calf.

"Pull out."

"Fuck *no.*" Harry vengefully delivers a hard thrust that slams into Louis' swollen sweet spot.

Louis chokes and his climax falls a little closer. The cold metal inside him is a sharp contrast to the heat of their moment. "Ha-Have to, Haz."

"No." Harry barks, cradling Louis' head and pivoting his hips. "Mine."

"I'm yours, Haz. I'm all yours." Louis closed his eyes and allowed himself a moment of raw emotion. "Remember Bean, Daddy. Have to pay attention to her."

Harry pauses but the lust in his eyes is still clouding over all his reason. He pins Louis to the wall and angles his length to be pressed right up against Louis' prostrate, applying pressure with the metal piercing at the head. Louis starts to claw at his shoulder blades and back, mouth agape and unable to contain the pleasure.

"Come for me, darling boy. Make a mess." Harry's bare chest held him up, crowding Louis' senses.

Louis comes with a scream muffled by Harry's lips. He paints their chests white and sags with sated exertion. Harry continues to thrust shallowly until he's sure he's close enough, then pulls out. Louis feels bad for this but he had good reason. Harry doesn't let him drop to his knees as planned, and works his length over Louis' tummy until his come adds to the mess already there.
"Haven't done that in a while." Louis slows his heart first and relies solely on Harry for support.

Harry chuckles and presses a kiss to Louis' nape. "I've missed your body so much, love."

"We still have that bet you know."

"Indeed we do." Harry sets Louis down after wiping them up on his feet and meets his lips. "We might have to start buying condoms."

"Foul play." Louis giggles as he mocks the man, biting his lip at the burn in his thighs and soreness of his bum. "That piercing is the best idea we've ever had."

Harry's smirk is infectious and when Louis goes back to tend to their fallen clothes, ropes the boy in with his heavy arms and picks him up to spin him around. Louis giggles and locks his ankles behind Harry's back. He frames the taller, scarier man's face in both his hands and connects their lips.

This kiss is slow and kind. Louis' hands fall over Harry's shoulders and his head tilts at an angle to get more intimate. Harry's palms land on his thighs. Their tastes and scents invade each other's minds and focus, their highs are yet to be settled.

"I love you, princess." Harry had a shirt on and Louis didn't notice. It was his white dress shirt with no buttons done and minus a tie.

"I love you too, Hazza." Louis swings his legs slightly. "Can I have your shirt?"

"Why, darling?"

"I want to smell like you."

Harry kisses him thrice before obliging. He strips himself of his shirt and puts Louis on the ground, then covers the boy's shoulders with the white threaded fabric. He buttons it all the way to the bottom and pulls Louis' underwear on for him.

"The pizza!" Louis realises when Harry leans in to kiss him silly again.

"Let it burn, darling." Harry holds him back, back-to-chest and his left arm caging Louis'. "We'll go down in flame in glory."

"You can go down in flame and glory." Louis huffs. "I really want that pizza."

Laughing in a hoarse voice, Harry presses his palm against Louis' tummy to subdue the boy. "Let's go wash up properly."

Before Louis can argue and protest stubbornly, he's hauled off his feet and over Harry's shoulder. He beats weakly on Harry's back with small fists but gets his bum swatted everytime he does so. They wash up in the guest bathroom and Louis gets to drown in Harry's large fancy white shirt again.

"My pizza is ruined." Louis declares mournfully when he removes the tray from the oven.

"Is it?" Harry strolled up behind him with sweat pants hanging from his hips and all his tattoos on full display.

When he tries to grab Louis rather than investigate the pizza, the boy squeaks and backs away. "Oh no, Styles. You owe me a pizza."
"I owe you a pizza amongst other things, princess." Harry stood on the other side of the kitchen island, hosting that proud predator look he gets sometimes. "I intend to get them all done before this afternoon."

* * * * *

"But social media, as I understand it, is-"

"You can not get Instagram, Harry." Louis said with finality as he dressed Bean up for their final expedition of the day: Harry's surprise.

Harry frowned. "As much as you can't tell me what to do, why do you say I can't?"

"Because what are you going to post about?"

"I don't know yet because I don't have the profile." Harry follows Louis into Olivia's closet.

"Account."

"What?"

"You don't have the account."

While Louis packs things in Olivia's diaper bag and Olivia herself plays with Grey - her favourite teddy bear has a name now - Harry tries to puzzle over other reasons to get social networking.

"Do you have social media?" Harry finally asks.

"I had them but life got in the way of me using any of it." Louis passes Harry a raised eyebrow to which the man winks. "Why the sudden interest?"

"Just sounds domestic."

"Domestic is a very peculiar way of describing social networking."

"Irrelevant."

Louis sighs and takes a seat on Harry's lap, hands on the man's shoulders and bodies close together. "You can get Instagram if you agree to a vacation."

Harry licks his lips and glances at their daughter who is fidgeting with Grey's foot. "I've been wanting a vacation for centuries, Lou."

"Great!" Louis beams and gives Harry a long kiss. "You're the best. I love you."

"I love you too, darling. Very much."

Harry's nerves pick up when they're in the car but it doesn't show at all. He's a pro at hiding any deep thoughts he's having. Olivia is asleep for the car ride but wakes up when Louis' hushed voice whispers in her ear. She loves her mommy that much.

The building Harry brought them to is almost bland on the outside but the neat and well trimmed concrete walls encasing a set of tinted black double glass doors. The handles are silver and the name written above on the grey wall is painted on, looking sleek and very professional.
"Zviera?" Louis reads in an almost fluent accent but he doesn't understand what it means.

"Animal." Harry answers for him, grabbing Olivia's bag from the back.

"Is this the surprise?"

"What's inside is the surprise." Harry catches Olivia's eye and winks. The baby's smile extends and she ducks into Louis' neck. It was involuntary but still endearing. "I need you to close your eyes, princess."

Louis pouts instead. "Really?"

"Yes."

"What if I trip?"

"I'll hold your hand."

Louis shuts his eyes and Harry does take his hand, leading him inside. Louis feels the atmosphere get warmer and toastier, it smells like fine wood and papyrus in a way. Scents hover and most are pleasant. He chews his lip and let's Harry take Olivia from him once the glass door is closed.

"Open."

Slowly Louis' eyes flutter then adjust to the bright lighting hanging above them. The room is meant to be dark but the dim lighting above them keeps it neutral. He covers his gasp with his hand when he sees everything, all the photographs, drawings, sketches and paintings. They're all of him.

"Oh Harry." His eyes don't know where to look first but he starts at his left. "What did you do?" The left is apparently the right place to start. Harry holds his waist and Louis gives him a full kiss of gratitude.

It starts with a plain white canvas that has black untidy scrawl on it saying: Swearing Is Big And Clever. Louis remembers that from Harry's shirt the first time he saw him. The next is a quick sketch of him, his eyes more specifically.

"It's the first thing I noticed about you." Harry spoke from behind him, kissing Louis' hair.

Louis didn't trust himself to not cry if he spoke so he nodded and moved on. Almost every detail of their lives was in this gallery. Photographs of him were compiled into a beautiful collage. One was a thirty piece hand drawn collage, each one contributed to a feature or spot on his visage. He had blurred photographs of their intimate moments and crystal clear ones of other things. It ended on the right side of the entry way with the photo of Olivia's hand against Harry's.

"You're the most incredible person in the world, Harry Styles." Louis leapt into his arms - Olivia had already been put down to play with Grey - and gave him a wet kiss. "So very crazy but definitely the best."

Harry breathed a sigh of relief and welcomed Louis' kiss with his own. He held onto the boy and gave him many kisses. "I love you, princess. I've been saying it and now I want everyone to know why."
Louis wiped his eyes. "You made me cry, you oaf."

Harry thumbed away his tears and pressed his lips to the wet skin. "As long as they're tears of joy."

"Yes. Yes they are."

"Good, love, because I have one more favour to ask."

"Anything. The answer is yes."

Harry chuckles and brands Louis' neck with kisses. "Wait right here, darling."

The man walks off in the direction of a type of semi-circle reception desk that's lit up with elegant lighting beneath steel plating. He returns with a white bakery box and stands in front of Louis with it, releasing the white twine that held it together. Inside is a rose shaped red velvet cupcake. There were white and red alternate layers that made Louis' eyes pop out with the extremely precise design. That's not all that caught his eye though.

Right smack in the middle was a crown-like gold ring with a repetitive heart design. Louis' own heart failed.

"Marry me."
Chapter Forty-Eight

There's only one Hell, the one we live in now.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

"Marry me."

Louis is crying but he's suffering in his task to restrain the tears. He chokes on a sob through his smile and throws himself into Harry's expectant arms. The cupcake box is extended out to the side so Louis doesn't drop it and Harry's face is buried in Louis' neck when the boy gets close enough. He manages to free the ring before dropping the bakery box and wrapping his arms all the way around Louis, holding him close and inhaling deeply now that his nerves are calm. Louis hoists himself up and settles his thighs on Harry's love handles.

"You haven't answered me." Harry chuckles and braces his arms around Louis' squirming form. He pulled the ring to the forefront of their attention, and Louis' daintier hand folded over Harry's palm to conceal the item of personal jewellery. "No."

And well, Harry sputters for the first time in his life. "Wha- Lou?"

"You said we'd never get married." Louis took the ring anyway with a swollen heart and examines the carved gold. "I'm sticking by that."

"That's... That's ridiculous, baby. I-"

"Haz." Louis slipped the ring into Harry's jacket breast pocket and secured both sides of his face.

"We really don't need a court and ceremony to tell us anything. I'll wear your ring. We'll share a home and a baby, but I won't 'walk down the isle', so to speak."

Harry deflates. He can be honest to himself and say he did not have an alternate plan should the evening go this way. "Is it because of me?"

"You?" Louis blinks, genuinely confused.

He gets a shrugging response that makes Louis pout and lean forward to kiss Harry's cheek. "If you're talking about your hand-" Louis pointedly starts. "-you should know that I'm offended you'd think I'm that shallow."

Harry's frown evolves smoothly into a smirk that tilts to the side and creates a small crater in his cheek.

"I'd love you if you didn't have the whole hand, Haz." Louis jumps down to his own swaying feet. "I'm offended because you said no to my intricately planned marriage proposal."

"While you are the finest suitor-" Louis goes to pick up Bean from where she's playing with Grey. "-this young lady is my top priority and other love of my life."

Harry extracts the ring from his pocket and Livvy's eyes catch it as it reflects some light from what is above them. "So you're really telling me no?"

Louis chews his lip and positions Bean to rest on his shoulder, her heavy head on it and her arms around his neck. "What made you change your mind from when you said you didn't want us to get
married?"

"I'd like for both you and Olivia to be mine." Harry rubs his baby's back with a firm, reassuring hand. "In your hearts. In a court of law. In society."

"We are yours." Louis promises. "Any time of any day, we belong to each other. As much as you want me to have your name, I can't give up mine."

"We can be married and you'll stay Tomlinson, or at least hyphenate our names."

"Marriage is an ancient system, Haz. Nobody needs it anymore."

"Maybe I'm a little traditional then."

"Since the last time we've spoken about this, you changed your entire perspective?"

"Yes."

"You know you can never lie to me, Haz."

"I can."

Louis raises his eyebrow. "Can you?"

"No."

Giggling, Louis catches the back of Harry's neck with one free hand and kisses him carefully. "I can never lie to you either, Sweeney."

"Sweeney?" Harry licks his lips - he always does. He's his daughter's heaviest influence when it comes to possessiveness.

"I know you got it so don't look at me like that." Louis waves off Harry's deepening smirk and feels sharp teeth sink into a pressure point in his neck junction.

"You made a joke about my-"

"My baby girl will not hear this."

"Marry me."

"No, Harold."

Harry groans and his hands clasp Louis' hips firmly, kissing the spot where his teeth left indelicate marks. "Let me fuck you."

"Will you stop being vulgar in front of Livvy?"

"She's going to learn 'em sooner or later."

"Later's just fine so be quiet."

Louis removes Bean's hand from her mouth and Harry gives her a kiss on the cheek. She smiles, toothless and adorable.

"Do you want to see the rest of Daddy's drawings?" Louis asks the very young individual with a smile he reserves for his baby girl only.
Olivia becomes fascinated by the art pieces just because she gets to see them at home and now they're here, so big and fancy. Harry sometimes took her with him to the studio to watch him work but never when he worked with liquid or spray paint.

"Do you remember this, Liv?" Harry was holding her while Louis picked up the cupcake box at the entrance, tossing it in a bin mournfully and fetching Bean's hat from her bag.

The painting was baby blue and green with delicate pink hand prints all over the canvas. Olivia's hands. She seemed to remember and made a happy noise, Harry going to kiss her cheek and she wanting to touch the painting.

"I thought you'd like it." Harry held his daughter's very small hand and walked to other art works with her gazing curiously at everything. "What are you searching for, Bean?"

"What's wrong?" Louis' disembodied voice questions from the reception area at the front.

"Nothing." Harry reassures him.

Louis laughs under his breath and snatches Bean's blanket with the hat. He knows his baby's habits very well and when she got curious, she got tired quicker. About to leave the front section, he finds himself distracted for a short moment by the rattle of the front door and his vision going dark briefly as a hand covered his mouth.

"Be quiet." The voice was male and very familiar. "I won't hurt you, I promise."

Louis did not kick and scream, not because he isn't afraid enough to feel his heart gallop in his throat but because he had to protect his baby who was with Harry. If he called attention to himself, Harry would bring Olivia into this danger.

"You won't scream?" The strikingly familiar voice asks.

Louis nods to say he won't. The hand loosens and the warm body pressed against his back moves away. He takes a deep breath to rid himself of the salty skin smell before turning around slowly. His eyes pop out for the umpteenth time this year. "Liam?"

Liam puts a finger to his own lips. "Take this."

He hands Louis a slip of paper and is gone again like the wind of a breeze that never came. Louis is thoroughly confused and shove the paper into his pants pocket when he hears Harry's footsteps. He couldn't lie to Harry but he'd try to omit some things.

"She's getting tired." Harry's boots hit the hard wood floor loudly and Olivia's yawn was muffled by his shirt.

Louis doesn't waste a second recovering. "Of course she is."

Harry hands Olivia over to Louis carefully in a short exchange. She cuddles up against Louis' chest where she can put her ear to his heartbeat and Harry covers her in her soft baby blanket. Louis would put her in her car seat but he wants to hold his baby, which would help him forget what happened moments ago.

His heart still rabbits in his chest cavity when he responds again. "Can we go?"

It sounds abrupt to Harry but he nods anyway and picks up their stuff. "Are you tired?"
Louis nods then realises those aren't actual words. "Um- yeah. Yes."

"What happened?"

"What?" Louis gets to sound offended once before he goes down in flames for omitting things.

"Don't bother being coy. Own up now, princess." It's hot when Harry gets angry but not when it's directed at Louis, the only person who finds anything about the man appealing.

"Liam was here." Louis rushes to admit, stuttering only partially. "H-He gave me- He's not still here, I swear!" He adds quickly when Harry pulls the door open in a mad flourish and the entire construction shivers.

"Let's go." Harry wraps an arm around Louis' waist and forces him out the door. "Get in the back."

Harry's paternal nature shines when he gives Olivia's forehead a hastened kiss before yanking the car door open and ushering Louis inside.

"Haz, I-

"Don't. Don't speak to me unless she needs something." Harry closes the door and storms around the front to the driver's seat.

Louis' guilt eats him up but he obeys and keeps Olivia tucked into his arms while Harry starts up the purring engine. The drive is completed in ten minutes and they're back in their own garage before Harry can speak again.

"Put her to sleep." Harry says, gripping the leather steering wheel with white knuckles. "I'll be upstairs in twenty minutes."

Louis opens his mouth but let's his thoughts flow out in a wordless sigh. He goes into the main house with just his baby, switching on lights as he walks from the garage doorway in the living room to the stairs. Thomas has been sleeping in the lounge on their single couch that was never occupied by people, and found that the arrival of his owner is worth waking up for.

He trots beside Louis' silhouette and waits until Louis' set Olivia down in her crib before settling in a protective circle on the carpet. Louis thumbs the hair between Thomas' eyes and smiles at the growing canine before leaving, the baby monitor in hand and the door slightly ajar.

Waiting alone in their bedroom is nerve-wracking. He avoids biting his nails by having a thorough wash and chewing gum from his bedside stand, pacing along the length of the bed. Remembering the note from Liam, he hunts for it in his jeans pocket.

'I won't hurt you. Meet me at the warehouse Harry gutted five pigs.'

The words stun him into sitting back on his heels, confused and frowning. Where is this? Why is Liam acting up? He's clueless and hates to be that way especially because this affects his family, all he has left to cherish in this world. He bites his lip at heavy footsteps echoing as they ascend the staircase, become muted as they cross the hallway to Bean's nursery then return two minutes later with a smooth slide of their bedroom door.

"Louis?" Harry calls out into the empty room.

The boy gets off the floor and tries to examine Harry's tone of voice. He doesn't sounds angry, and
even has a small croak in his voice. Louis emerges from the closet after tucking the note back into his pants.

"Are you-"

Harry cuts him off with a shake of his head. "Come here."

Louis steps into the fold of his arms with his bottom lip stuck between his teeth. He feels Harry’s strong arms crush his middle from a full angle and reaches up to the man's face in the hope that he'll keep his hands from being squashed. That hope is diminished when Harry growls inhumanely and pushes Louis’ hands down under his arms.

He clasps Louis' chin between his thumb and curled forefinger. His gaze is feral, ablaze with something dark but passionate behind the netted curtain of his emerald eyes.

"You will never lie to me again." Harry makes it clear for them both, dragging out the syllables with a bite.

Louis ignores the way Harry's manner makes his spine tingle and nods minutely.

Harry releases his chin only to curl a hand around Louis' neck to keep his focus tilted upwards. His other hand drags across the base of Louis' waist, burning the skin with his intensity. Their fronts are pressed so close together it's nearly claustrophobic, turning their personal spaces into one meshed bubble.

"And to think-" Harry traces the contours of Louis' face with his fingertip. "-we both confessed that lying was out of bounds."

"I'm sorry." Louis stares back into the prisoner's eyes looking at him.

"Shh." Harry taps Louis' sealed lips with his finger. "I'm too angry to argue without hurting you."

"What are you going to do?" Louis' wide, very blue eyes render Harry's smirk all that more sadistic. Harry is rough about picking Louis up by the backs of his thighs and dropping it across the short length of the bed. The mattress squeaks as does Louis, and the boy bounces once on the sheets that he's descended upon.

"What are you-" Louis tries again but suddenly Harry is on him, smooth silk suit pants fabric rubbing against his bare thigh.

His hands are stretched over his head, hurting at the angle it is bent over the edge of the bed. It's not crippling but enough to make him whine.

"You speak again-" Harry's fire laden eyes burn into Louis'. "-and I will punish you. I'm very mad at you, princess."

So this was for Harry, whatever this was. It was going to reassure something that's worried and overly concerned in Harry's psyche, before releasing Louis sore and sensitive. It's an almost appealing thought to Louis, who used to look forward to intimate moments spent getting loud and messy.

"Sorry, Daddy." Louis kisses all that he can of Harry, and that's the man's chin.

Harry's mossy green eyes burn into coal black with how wide they're blown open with attention.
Louis frees his own slim wrists and locks his hands around Harry's neck, straining both their backs to get them closer. In a record time of twenty seconds Harry has himself stripped and back between Louis' encompassing thighs, massaging the warm flesh with his large hands.

"I'm going to take you apart." Harry holds Louis' face turned to the side while he kisses down the column of his neck, harsh sucks and bites accompanying the gestures. "You're going to feel me for the rest of the month."

Louis swallows a starved whimper and keeps his hips pinned to the springy mattress when Harry kneels between his legs. He drags his hands down Louis' bare body and curls his knuckles over the waistband of his panties, dragging the cotton fabric all the way down his perfect tanned legs.

Harry slides off the bed and beckons Louis forward. The boy uses his bent knees to shuffle forward obediently and quickly, grabbing Harry's hip when he almost topples over.

A tight grip is found in his hair and Louis bites back his groan. He swings his legs over the edge of the bed, encasing Harry's knees and peering up with flinching eyes. Harry senses the hesitancy and gives him a long kiss to reassure him that he'd never go far enough to hurt Louis.

When he speaks again it's softer but just as stern. "You're going to suck until I tell you to stop."

Louis notices then that Harry isn't swelling in his boxer briefs at all. It stings a little bit but he recovers quickly with renewed determination.

"I love you, princess." Harry realises that he's going to have to punctuate their amorous activities with a reminder to them both.

"Love you, Daddy."

Louis hopes for a kiss but he doesn't get it. Instead, Harry reveals his slowly hardening length that still possesses the ability to make Louis drool, and it penetrates the parting between his lips fairly quickly.

It's a lot to handle from the surprise, considering Harry's ten inches is not to be underestimated in the small confines of Louis' mouth. The boy moans readily and tries to get as much of the length as possible, swallowing around the throbbing weight rhythmically. The weight is hot and delicious on his tongue. Louis' pretty sure he's become an addict.

"Deeper."

And Louis obeys because he's trying very hard to be Harry's good boy. He passes the gag reflex and gets a decent amount of the inches down his throat. It chokes his respiration system and he withdraws slowly to sink back down carefully. He tastes salt on the head after a short while and eventually that coats the back of his throat when Harry holds him down, nose pressed to his V-line. It began to hurt and Louis pushed Harry away, feeling his throat struggle to accept this intrusion. His throat is rubbed raw as he draws back and goes back to sucking in a sweet rhythm. He pulls many sounds from Harry's lips, pleasure and extremely aroused. It's musical and magical.

After he's sure he can't speak again, Harry fails in resisting the urge to kiss Louis silly. It gets them both on the bed again, Harry's naked body rubbing against Louis' damper one. They create their own magic wrapped up in each other.

"On your back or front?" Harry asks, a finger already lubricated with Louis' saliva.

"Back." Louis whimpers. The air was too thick and their skin was too hot. They were burning up
with ice contact and Louis felt like all this contact wasn't enough.

Harry slaps Louis' thigh and the sting reverberates loudly. Louis' gasp is swallowed by eager lips, his pharynx is scratchy and it hurts to speak. He likes the hurt.

"B-Back, Daddy." He repeats shakily, opening his eyes and nearly gasping again at the dark onyx staring down at him.

"Good boy."

Harry halted any response by worsening Louis' throat and slipping his tongue into the boy's mouth. It's messy and gets Louis panting without air to breathe but there's no greater passion. Harry's hands curiously roam Louis' body, squeezing his bum and nudging closer to the engraving on his thigh.

"Turn over." Harry pulls away and Louis has to wipe his mouth, enjoying how numb his lips have become.

Louis gets on all fours with a pout Harry can't see. He licks his swollen lips and moans when his shoulders are pushed down to the mattress, though his hips get propped up with more vulnerability.

"You really do have the sweetest arse." Harry's lips are at his ear, making his breathless again with warm air on his cheek and a hand sneaking between his cheeks.

"Daddy-

A loud smack stops his whine in the middle. He arches his back into a perfect curve and his elbows scrape the sheets. He can't say he provoked that but the spank really got him going.

"Don't speak." Harry warns, his hand gripping the cheek he slapped and tightening Hellishly. Louis dares to. "Again."

Harry doesn't do much other than smirk and kiss a trail down Louis' spine, rewarding the boy for no reason with four more spanks. Louis is pink all over after the sequence, and grips the sheets in a fierce grip. The boy's hips fell forward against the comforter right after, his leaking dick rubbing cruelly against the fabric.

"More?" Harry taunts slowly, their bodies aligned and jerking Louis' hips back into the curve of his body.

The boy cries out from painful pleasure and soothes himself with the feeling of Harry's heavy erection in the crevice of his bum. It teases his hole and gets no lube near it but it's perfect and dry. Louis wants to reach back and just get himself on Harry's length but he doesn't want a worse punishment.

"Lube or are you open enough?" Harry's smirk is felt all the way down there and the boy shudders, his body giving out so early from the movement of Harry's lips against his hole.

Louis recovers no longer than before and shivers all over again when Harry's flicks out to lubricate his lips. The act brushes Louis' pink rim and tears apart his mind.

"I-I'm open." Louis goes on the account considering Harry ignored his previous answer.

Harry's chuckle is beautiful and scary. He separates their sweaty skin where they're propped up on their knees, aligns himself and sinks in extra slowly. His hips down stop until he's buried to the hilt inside Louis, deep as can be and groaning from the heat around him. Louis thrashes about for a
short moment before Harry pins his forearms down and starts to thrust.

"Make a sound-" Harry hits his prostrate, lips latched onto Louis' red earlobe. ".and I'll be fucking you until you're split open."

Louis pushes out a moan from between his dry lips and his eyelids flicker at the contact of Harry's chest on his back sliding away. The man kneels between his quivering thighs, stunning the boy when he knocks them off balance and pulls Louis backwards onto his lap in mad speed.

Louis screams and scratches Harry's arm. The position leaves Harry's length nestled perfectly well against his prostrate, the burn of being stretched by a wide girth not going away.

"Bounce for me, darling." Harry presses Louis' tummy, feeling himself creating a small dent.

Initially Louis wants to cry from the burn and sting all jumbled together. He rolls his hips for a small moment before forcing himself up and sliding back down, groaning loudly when his special spot is slammed into. He moves too slow for Harry and gets flipped over onto his back after just three thrusts.

"You're lucky I don't gag you." Harry growls huskily, drowning out all other noises as he rotates his hips and pulls out.

Harry holds him down and thrusts with perfect precision against Louis' prostrate, abusing his body in the best way and fuelling himself with powerful thrusts. Each movement shifts Louis further up the bed, pounding him into the mattress until the boy can't speak without a croak.

"Come, Louis." Harry slips a hand around Louis' front to thumb at the head of the boy's neglected length. He presses down on the slit and Louis spurts come into his hand.

Allowing the smaller of their pairing to shiver through his orgasm, Harry kisses the back of his sweaty neck and sinks his teeth into the skin right after. When Louis' body goes from sensitive to sensitized, he starts moving again. His firm hands hold onto Louis' hips, his pelvis slamming into the boy animalistically.

Louis starts to writhe and squirm. Harry messily clasps the underside of his thighs and stretches them apart so Louis' body shifts to accommodate him. Beneath him, Louis is biting his knuckle and throwing his head back from the throb of sensitivity. It's delicious and a constant reminder of Harry's claim on him, it eats him up and gets him to his ragged state.

"Turn over." Harry pulls out and Louis winces. "Now."

Flipping onto his back, Louis looks up at Harry silently with glossy blue eyes that have become navy. Harry covers him like a blanket of protection and slots their lips together hotly. Skin slaps skin and sweat lubricates the slide. Harry's fingers interlock with Louis', stretching the connection well above their heads.

Louis kicks one leg out and wraps it around Harry's waist on impulse. The man seems to forgive him and even secures the leg on his hip, using his hand to slide back into Louis with some friction. His saliva lubricated himself once and he didn't do it again now.

Harry buries his face in Louis' neck, turning his head to leave marks on the boy's throat as he rocks forward. His thrusts are hard and indelicately jerk Louis with each motion. He circles Louis' waist with his arms and bites down on a patch of untouched skin when Louis comes again, moaning loudly in Harry's ear.
Harry comes after some coaxing because his worry has gotten the best of him again. He has to pull out but he stays deep enough to bruise for as long as he can. His warm seed splatters on Louis' thighs as the man makes no effort to go further than that.

"H-Haz?" Louis knows the storm has passed now, and combs through Harry's hair slowly while he speaks.

"Princess." Harry got up on his arms to hover above Louis' form, his hands digging craters into the pillows at either side of Louis' head and hips lodged between Louis' warm thighs.

"Are you st-still....angry?"

Harry frowns for a short second. "Yes."

"I'm-"

"What did he give you?"
Louis assumes he's talking about Liam. "A note."

"What does the note say, Lou?"

"That he won't hurt me and to meet him at the warehouse where you slaughtered five pigs."

Harry's frown deepens. "What the fuck does that mean?"

Louis chews his lip and shrugs. "I wasn't going to go."

"What else happened?"

"Nothing."

"How did he get into the studio?"

"I didn't see."

"Did he touch you?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, did a part of him so much as brush a part of yours?"
Louis doesn't know what to say. "He gave me the note in my hand a-and had to touch my arm to get my attention."

Harry is blank with his full red lips set in a line. Louis reaches up to touch his cheek, grazing the smooth skin with his fingertips and thumbing Harry's jaw line. Harry let's him for a short while before turning his head and catching Louis' thumb between his lips. He kisses the appendage reverently and nips at the fingertip.

"Fuck." Harry sighs, lowering himself entirely on Louis' body to cloak over him. "I'm never letting you out of my sight."

"What are you going to do?"

"Not handle things the way I used to." Harry finds the time to chuckle. "I will find him and beat the life out of him, but leave enough behind so he feels everything."
Louis sucks in a disparaged sharp breath. "You said you weren't handling things the way you used to."

Harry's eyes connect with his from above, no distance between their bodies from the shoulders down.

"I won't be leaving him splayed open for the world to see." Harry drags a finger down Louis' front, on the line from his chest to his tummy. His finger presses Louis' belly button once he gets there.

"That's generous enough of me."

"Try talking about it please." Louis catches both sides of Harry's face in his hands, sitting up with the man between his legs. "You're both grown men and he's doing this for a reason."

"Don't you dare fucking defend him." Harry warns heatedly. "After where he put us, what having happened to us behind his fault you want to take his part?"

"I take Olivia's part." Louis states objectively. "My baby does not need a life of crime surrounding her. You will not assault people while she's here."

Harry raises his eyebrow at Louis' sudden change of demeanour. He understands that it's for the sake of their daughter and allows Louis a minute nod.

"You won't get someone else to do it either."

"Princess-"

"No, Haz. Please."

After he's gotten Harry's acquiesce, Louis grabs some tissues to clean them both up. With their proximity being so close and Harry's eyes never leaving his like a weight that will never lift, Louis' task is made much harder. However somewhere in the midst of getting clean, their tongues got tied together sloppily. Harry was groaning from Louis' hand working his length back to full hardness, sometimes rolling his hips for more friction.

"There's no one who tests my patience more than you, princess." Harry bumps their noses together and bites Louis' lip when the boy smiles.

One hand still slowly pumping Harry's growing erection, Louis retaliates by pressing his thumb to the bit of skin beneath the head where he knew Harry had a sweet spot. He knows he could do wonders to that spot with his tongue but there was no alternative now. The man clenches his fists to hide his shiver and moans audibly.

"I should make it up to you then, shouldn't I?"

When Harry's situated amongst the pillows, hands wandering the planes of Louis' upright body on his lap, Louis burns through his sensitivity as he sinks down on Harry's stiff length. He'd taken his sweet time lubing Harry up with plain lube beforehand.

"I feel like I should be wearing a crown."

Louis places his palms on Harry's chest and drags his hips back and forth. It's torture but such sweet torture that Harry would love to die this way.

"Why?" Harry spreads Louis' cheeks and bends his knees, effectively displacing his length to be
First there's a breathless sound from Louis that permeates through the air and is memorisised in Harry's head. Harry gets impatient for his response but that melts away when he feels a new urge building. It's an old one actually but it never got this strong before.

"I want to try something, princess." Harry sits up and Louis whines in complaint, both from the twitch of Harry inside him and the fact that he wanted to be in charge this time.

"No." Louis pouts because only he can during sex.

He tries pushing Harry back down by his shoulders but only ends up spread out on his back away from the pillows. He huffs and starts to let out muffled ragged noises when Harry's unforgiving thrusts pound into him mercilessly. His screams are cut off and his insides burn but he let's Harry drive into him with ferocity and desire like a flame.

"I wasn't asking." Harry spreads Louis' knees and slams into his body until his bones rattle. "Fuck you feel good."

Louis' head rolls back and Harry's lips seek his out along the skin of his chest and neck. The man compliments his body, bum and confines multiple times with their mouths pressed together.

"Fucking shit!" Harry held one side of Louis' face secured. He got desperate, erratic in his wavering rhythm.

His thumb slipped around to the front of Louis' neck and dug into the expanse below his Adam's Apple, cutting off his air supply mildly. Louis sputtered but it was mainly from the surprise. He felt his body close off that way, fester with all the pleasure running rampant within him.

He let's Harry do it again, making sure to take a deep breath before. It helps and he feels himself get hotter, his skin flushing and Harry's eyes examining each bit of the change. He didn't think he'd like this but the pain builds his climax and with Harry moving inside him he comes blindly.

His mess is made but Harry is still watching him, still not letting him breathe. Louis bites his lip to keep the air in, feeling Harry's thumb rubbing his throat slowly. He makes a soft noise and Harry comes to a halt inside him, a guttural noise leaving him before he pulls out and comes all over Louis' tummy.

He retracts his hand and the developing black spots leave Louis' vision. They both sag against each other in the sheets, too spent and their bones too mellow to move.

"Your arse will be the death of me." Harry wipes Louis down after a reasonable amount of silence. Louis giggles, turning over onto his front because his bum felt like it was on fire. "It's a good way to go."

Harry hums, curling around Louis with his hand on his tummy. "I was serious when I said I'm never letting you out of my sight."

Louis takes Harry's hand from his tummy and links it with his, bringing it up to his pillow where his head rests. "I look forward to it."

In the middle of the night, Louis wakes up twice to feed Olivia but Harry only let's him go to her once. Harry takes care of her when she just wants attention or can drink from a bottle.

"Is she okay?" Louis asked when Harry returned to their room in the early hours of the morning.
Harry strips off his shirt and gets back into bed with Louis laying on his chest. "She's an angel." Louis beams proudly, his finger drawing circles around Harry's nipple. "Gets it from you, you know."

He feels a kiss being pressed to his hair. "You need to rest. The lack of oxygen is getting to you." Louis gasps, a smile tugging at the corners of his lips, and sits up astride Harry's torso. His knees dig into the bed and Harry's amused expression is directed up at him.

"She does." Louis insists, sheets pooling at his waist so he looks like the holiest thing to exist.

"She's such a well behaved baby."

"Are you describing me as well behaved?"

"Of course not. I mean that-" Louis' shrieking fit of giggles cuts himself off when Harry starts to tickle his soft sides vigorously. "Harry, stop! Haz!"

They keep their voices low enough to not wake Bean up again when she needs her sleep, but Louis doesn't refrain from batting Harry's hands away readily.

"She does behave like you a lot." Louis comments, straightening up his back again. "She has your eyes and for good reason. She even does that little tongue thing that you do."

"Tongue thing?"

"When she's hungry. Normally babies just try to suck on your finger if you're testing if they're hungry but she kind of sticks her tongue out too."

Harry listens to the way Louis speaks so fondly of their baby, watching the boy glow like the moon itself. He has noticed the tiniest of Olivia's habits and for a two month old, that's extraordinarily impressive.

"She's just like you when I change her or play with her." Harry adds with just as much pride. "How so?"

"She can never pay attention to one thing for too long and if she's bored, she makes sure to tell you."

The way Louis lights up is beautiful. "Really?"

"Yes." Harry nods and massages the handles of Louis' hips. "She can't crawl yet but she starts to make these very unhappy noises."

Louis cooes at the thought of his daughter like that. "She likes watching you in your studio though."

"Yeah. She's very quiet with you."

"That's because you only catch us during cuddle time which is essentially, quiet time. Come by when she's cranky, another thing she gets from you."

"I've seen her cranky and darling, she's nothing like me."

* * * * *

Waking up to a dull morning with such expensive curtains blocking out all sight and sound makes Louis think it's still late at night. Or at least Olivia's last feeding.
So instead of yawning, stretching and getting a head start on a new day, Louis sniffs and hugs Harry's sleepy form so they're closer. Sleep doesn't come to him so he hikes his leg over Harry's hip and feels the weight of a comforter cover his back. His eyes close but he feels restless, not enough though to make him shift around.

Slowly and a little selfishly, Louis tucks his head under Harry's chin and nuzzles his neck. The movement is bound to wake Harry up and it does.

"Lou?" Harry's sleep-heavy voice comes into Louis' world. There's also a kiss to his temple and squeeze of his waist.

"Can't sleep." Louis sounds too loud.

Harry hums and is already nodding off himself again. Louis takes to tracing his fingers over designs from Harry's tattoos to occupy himself until he's tired again.

"You're going to guilt me into staying awake with you." Harry cracks an eye open and rubs Louis' back with gentle strokes.

"No." Louis drags out the syllable, pouting for finesse at the end. "You're welcome to though."

"Whatever it is that is keeping your mind awake-" Harry gives Louis a brief kiss. "-does not possess me so try to sleep, princess."

Harry turns over and Louis swats his arm for abandoning him. Harry's back is to him now, exposing some of the tattoo artwork that Louis never got to admire fully. After tracing the contours with his eyes bored him into drowsiness, Louis sidled up behind Harry and bent his knees to fit their bodies together.
Chapter Forty-Nine

Say you'll remember me.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

"You can't do that!" Louis exclaimed, outraged and glaring at Harry across their short coffee table. "And why not?" Harry raises an eyebrow, stealing more from the loot blatantly.

"Because-" Louis took the orange paper back and pulled his black tray onto his lap. ".-I'm the bank and I say you have too much money."

Harry's chuckle fills the quiet living room as he fidgets with the token in his hand. It's early in the afternoon and Olivia was asleep upstairs with a baby monitor stationed at Louis' side. Their pets seemed to find their owners' boardgame interesting and all gathered on the thick carpet to observe.

"I'm so sure you're not allowed to do that." Harry took his fake money back and leaned back against the front of their sofa, one knee bent in the air.

Harry is a Monopoly genius and Louis quite despises himself for asking the man to play with him. He bought half the board and Louis couldn't get anywhere without paying half a million in fake money. It was disgraceful and he was pushed to be sly in order to win.

"Haz." Louis made his way over to Harry and deposited himself on Harry's lap, legs crossed behind the man's back.

"Yes, darling?" Harry, bemused as he was, set everything down and held onto Louis' thighs.

"I'm hungry." Louis sets his arms on Harry's shoulders, elbows bent so his hands can be in Harry's shoulder-length hair. "Your hair's long."

"Too long?"

Louis wraps his fingers around some of the locks and tugs so Harry's neck bends backwards, their faces inches apart. "Nope."

Harry's chuckle is cut short by Louis' lips landing on his, and eventually light giggles come from the boy because of Harry flipping them over. Louis' smile is pressed to Harry's fervent mouth, his back arching over the boardgame and the thin fleece he had being thrown aside.

"We are not doing this on the board." Louis rights himself, or tries to futilely.

Chest rumbling and mouth smirking, Harry buries his face in Louis' soft tummy. He's become quite acquainted with that part of the boy's delicious body.

"How long ago did we order that pizza?" Louis plays with Harry's hair, combing through the soft locks and twirling it between his fingers.

"Six minutes." Harry now understands fully why his daughter likes to hide in Louis' torso when she's upset.

Louis' pout goes unseen. "Can I braid your hair?"

"Will you marry me?"
"No."

"Then no."

"You're unfair."

Harry comes up to Louis' level and overshadows the world around them, slotting their lips together from the moment he gets close enough and slipping his tongue past the parted barrier. He smirks when Louis makes a soft sound and locks his arms around his neck.

The doorbell rings and the first signs of life in Olivia's nursery kick up at the same time. Harry pulls Louis to his feet and sends him off to bring their baby girl downstairs with a pat to his bum.

"Hey, baby Bean." Louis enters her nursery quietly and hears her little noises like sniffles and whimpers. "What's wrong, love?"

Olivia is clenching and unclenching her baby fists with no strength, wriggling on her back in her bassinet. Louis cooes and picks her up carefully, setting her against his chest in a cradle of his arms. He touches her lips with his pointer finger and she sticks her baby pink tongue out just as he retracts it.

She starts to wail.

"Oh no, love." He lifts his shirt and lets her nurse from him, walking around the room and humming to her while her eyes stayed on him. "You're hungry today, aren't you?"

Olivia blinks up at him, awed by her mother's sweetness. She holds his hand for no other reason that she'd like the world to know the best parent is hers.

"My itty bitty love." Louis gives Olivia's baby hand a litter of kisses. "You're just like your father."

She looks at him with puckered lips and squirming limbs, almost as if asking what he meant. He laughs and nuzzles her tummy when she's done, her mouth going slack from his chest. Hoisting her over his shoulder with a rag there, he waits for her to be burped before putting her back in her bassinet.

"Still fussy, huh?" He finds that she doesn't fall asleep as usual and smothers the worry he has.

"Let's change your nappy then."

He spends eight minutes - he tries not to think about how he's becoming aggravatingly accurate like Harry - changing Olivia's diaper and giving her a fresh baby smell. She smiles at him with her pink gums exposed from behind her lips.

"Still not ready to sleep?" Louis kisses his daughter's forehead, holding her against his shoulder and inhaling her small scent.

She holds the collar of his shirt and her cheek rests on his shoulder, lips fish-mouthing and eyes drooping. Louis tries putting her down but she starts crying loudly so he whispers reassurances and takes her downstairs with him.

Harry cleaned up the lounge and had the pizza box on the coffee table, bringing water bottles from the fridge for them. He looks at Louis first frowning then giving Olivia's cheek a kiss.

"What happened?" Harry brushes her cheek with his scarred thumb.
"She doesn't want to let go." Louis says by means of explanation, shrugging and supporting the weight of Olivia's head.

"Let me try."

Slipping his hands between Olivia's front and Louis' chest, Harry delicately moves his baby's form from Louis'. It works for two seconds before she starts to wail, cheeks reddening and tears on her chubby skin. He doesn't pause until she's plastered to his bare chest, holding on with all the baby strength she has.

Louis waits until the crying dies down, chewing his lip guiltily. Bean sniffles and her whines get softer before going down completely. She likes being held by her daddy too.


Harry can't eat because his daughter demands all of his attention, or she starts a crying tirade that breaks his heart. He lies on the sofa with his head on Louis' lap, Bean on his chest with her slow breathing and calm shifting. He keeps tracing lines on her back. It was a method that worked on Louis and Bean.

"Did you know they had a Star Wars channel?" Louis asks in a soft voice. There was no waking Olivia up when she's deep asleep, unless she wanted to.

"I was never a fan." Harry turns his head on Louis' thigh to watch the boy channel surfing. Louis settled on said channel, broke off a piece of his pizza and fed Harry even if the latter protested.

"I'm not incapable."

"I care not." Louis stole the apple with pineapple chunks from one piece and basically only fed Harry the thin base. "I meant to ask you, what happened to our vacation plans?"

"I booked a hotel on the coast." Harry pulls his iPhone off the coffee table for the rest of the details.

"Since it's after New Year's our reservation is for a week from now."

"Please tell me you didn't book any activities."

"Not yet."

"You better not, Styles." Louis gets his finger bitten lightly when he feeds Harry more pizza. "I'm not moving from that hotel room and neither is my baby."

"We can't walk on the beach everyday for seven days."

Louis thinks about it. "We can go see stuff, Haz. It's another continent."

"We're just in one part of that continent."

"Still. We'll see lots of new things." Louis takes Harry's phone and opens up the browser app. "No safaris."

"Why not?"

"South Africa is hot. I'm not prepared to spend an entire day lost in wildlife. We can visit the aquarium and tourist sights."
"Most of the landmarks are further up in the country so-" Harry starts. "-why don't I shorten our reservation at this hotel and book a few days at another one?"

"That's genius." Louis giggles and kisses Harry's lips in a twisted angle way. "Can I go through your phone?"

"Why?"

"I'm bored."

"Where's yours?"

"Upstairs."

"Okay then." Harry chuckles and let's Louis fish through his phone.

"You made sure you got Instagram, didn't you?" Louis opens up the app and scrolls. "I love you but your posts are boring."

"As long as the first part doesn't change, the latter is of little relevance."

Louis makes an 'Oh' sound and plants a kiss on Harry's lips with a shy smile, pink tinting his cheeks. He bends over the man, mindful of the sleeping infant on Harry's chest, and kisses him deeper. The mouth he's pressed his lips against curve into a lascivious smirk before a hand cups the back of his head and keeps them tangled up.

"Excuse me while I get more pizza." Louis extricates himself from their combination and slides more cheesy slices of pizza onto his plate. "Haz?"

"Princess?" Harry is measuring up his finger size to Olivia. She sneezes in her sleep and grips his appendage.

"Can I ask you something without you getting angry?" Louis' voice is fragile.

"Don't bring it up if you think I'll become angry."

"But I need to know."

"Ask me then, Lou."

"It's been two weeks since Liam's letter and-"

Harry's frozen green eyes of peril connect with Louis' soft-natured ones. "I have not sought him out and I intend to give him this period of silence. If he reaches out again to you, and you will tell me, I will find him."

Louis nods wordlessly and chucks this information into a vault for memory storage. He clears his throat and tears a chunk off his pizza slice, pressing it to Harry's lips. The mood lifts slightly and Harry accepts the offering peacefully.

"Since lunch was your choice-" Harry starts, hoping their conversation about unpleasantries is concluded. "-dinner will be my treat to both of you."

Glancing at him curiously with a piqued brow, Louis challenges this proposal. "You're going to cook?"
"You sound like you're doubting my culinary skills."

"You know I would never do that." Louis sits with his back against the arm rest, his legs folded like a pretzel and Harry's head resting on the joint.

* * * * *

Olivia has been awake for an hour now and Louis scooped her up for an interactive session on her baby blanket. He spread the soft material on the seat of their most plush couch and sat where he could guard her, handing her all of her favourite toys. Grey amongst other stuffies were there.

"What's Daddy doing, huh?" He watches her make spit bubbles and cuddle Grey until he lifts her up into his arms. "Let's go see."

Bean's mouth opens and closes, a habit she's formed along with staring at everything new with wide eyes. She watches over Louis' shoulder until they enter the kitchen where Harry is cooking up a delicious storm. The man was at the stove but also paying attention to the chopping board he had on the counter beside it.

"She came to say hi." Louis kissed Bean's cheek and watched her smile spread across her face when Harry looked up.

"Hello, mini princess." Harry kissed her nose when she turned to look at him.

Louis' whole hand can encircle Olivia's forearm, putting the light weight on his shoulder and using the other arm to keep her propped up. "What are you cooking?"

"It's still a surprise, darling." Harry puts his knife down and wipes his hands before taking Olivia. She leans towards him until her narrow baby chest is pressed up against Harry's bare muscular torso.

"At least tell me it has meat." Louis hoists himself up onto the kitchen island where nothing is laid out. "A vegetarian dinner is a crime."

"It has meat." Harry holds their daughter with her side against him so she's turned away enough to look at what he shows her. "What have you been up to, sweetheart?"

What he gets is an exchange of fish-mouthing and curious peeks at the pot on the stove from his daughter. She wants to know what he's doing with all the copping and steaming but doesn't want to get close enough to get hurt.

"Unfortunately that's not for you yet." Harry looks at his daughter watching everything in action, and rests his forehead against hers brimming with fondness.

Louis snaps a well-lit photograph of the scene using Harry's idle phone on the counter top. He leaves it in the man's camera roll so that Harry can decide whether or not to post it on his latest acquired social network.

"Zayn wants us to come to the club tonight." Harry catches Louis stealing chocolate chips from a bowl he set aside for dessert-preparation.

The establishment is not the first nightclub to exist in Chicago, but it's certainly making a profit like it was. Louis' been there once and cooed at the name Hybrid for a club, it was perfect and Niall thought so too. There were no strippers, unlike what Zayn wanted - before Niall yelled at him - but the bar and booth designs were flawless.
Harry's office was soundproof - Louis does not think that was a coincidence - and Olivia already claimed the single sofa by the fireplace as hers.

"I don't mind." Louis swung his legs until Harry stepped between them, halting the oscillation and keeping Olivia on his hip. "You haven't gone there in a while."

Harry sighs but doesn't sound angry. He nuzzles Louis' neck and brings the boy closer to the edge of the surface he's perched on. "You can't possibly expect me to choose a loud night at a nightclub over you two."

"It's an expensive nightclub." Louis giggles, having been brought closer to his baby so he thumbs her chubby cheek carefully.

"Too bad, princess." Harry raises his head and presses his lips to Louis' unsuspecting set.

Their smiles click into place and Louis throws an arm around Harry's neck away from Olivia, tangling his fingers into the most desirable head of hair. He gets a taste of the mild vegetable Harry chewed on earlier, and adds his chocolate traces to the party.

A small hand pats Louis' cheek and the boy laughs breathily, pulling away from Harry to pay attention to Bean.

"Do you want kisses too, young lady?" Louis lifts Olivia out of Harry's arms and noses at her soft, delicate neck.

Olivia puts her hands on Louis' face and tries tugging on his features. Of course nothing happens except Louis' musical giggles making her smile brightly. She's always appreciative when both parents pay attention to her. Harry returns to his cooking in the minimal clothing he's had on since his shower this morning.

"I'm putting her to bed." Louis hops down carefully when he hears the first signs of crabby behaviour from Bean. He hates for his baby to be uncomfortable.

Harry nods and gives them both a kiss on varying spots before letting them go. Olivia's cheeks are becoming a deeper pink as she fusses around in Louis' embrace. He takes her upstairs and walks aimlessly while she settles.

"You're a fussy sleeper too, huh?" Louis made her look out the window. "I used to be one too."

Olivia nods off after ten minutes of Louis' voice filling her sensitive baby ears. He kisses her forehead and lays her down in her bassinet after checking that she didn't need changing. Lego comes to be stationed by her side and Louis nearly trips on his sudden presence.

"Keep her safe, okay?" Louis scratches behind the pup's ear and gets a slow whine in return.

He makes a turn for the master bedroom and washes up in their bathroom, staring at his reflection over the basin for a little while. Yeah he was a little tired but the bags under his eyes were probably there since birth, and he gained baby weight that he's in no hurry to burn off.

Louis leaves the bathroom and makes a bee line for the library in Harry's office. He had a bookshelf in his study too but Harry's books were always more outrageous so he often sat there curled up with the baby monitor and a good novel. Since Harry was cooking downstairs he didn't think being an interruption would end well.

He's almost through the first few entries of a book that's based on a diary of a boy named Spud,
when he also falls asleep on Harry's desk. His arms form an uncomfortable pillow but he's not going to get up and find something more suitable.

Harry finds him like that thirty minutes later and shakes his head in amusement but also makes a note to remind Louis about sleeping regularly. He picks up Louis' sleeping form into his arms and the baby monitor, taking them both to the bedroom. Usually all the jostling is enough to wake Louis up as he's become hyperactive because of Bean, but he just wraps himself around a pillow and goes deep under again. Harry covers him up to his ears like he knows the boy prefers and closes the curtain while he goes back downstairs.

His own baby monitor starts to come alive when he's going through some of Zayn's messages, reminders for things to be done about *Hybrid* and meetings to attend. He drops the phone and rushes upstairs to take care of his daughter before she starts crying enough to wake Louis up. "Hello there, little Bean." Harry slides his hands under her arms and hoists her into the air, resting her mass against his shoulder and rubbing her back.

She holds onto Harry's shoulders and sniffles loudly into his neck where he holds her.

"Are you hungry?" Harry asks, turning his head awkwardly to look at her blinking with less discomfort.

He takes her back downstairs with him and goes through the refrigerator for bottles of pumped milk for her. There are none and Harry grinds his teeth at the thought of waking Louis up to feed her, but after switching the stove to a lower heat he does so.

Louis is in the same position, breathing peaceful and slow as his small snores are muffled by the pillow he's cuddling.

"Lou?" Harry leans slightly towards the sleeping boy and Olivia recognises her mother, reaching for Louis immediately.

Harry tries to keep her back, away from the threat of falling, but she starts to cry at the denial and Louis wakes up to the disturbing sound. He blinks and rolls onto his back, bleary but capable of realising what's happening.

"There's no milk?" Louis sits up with a pillow behind his back.

"No." Harry hands over Olivia when Louis' lifted his shirt. "You need to remember to pump, Lou. I hate waking you up."

"I could have sworn there were bottles." Louis frowns as he tries to gather the correct information.

"I'll pump after she's done."

"She's going to sleep and so are you." Harry says sternly, in the reprimanding voice he uses. "You need to sleep when she does."

Louis winces as Olivia latches on. "I feel guilty when she's awake while I sleep."

"I'm here, darling. I'll take care of her."

"I know." Louis puts his hand flat on Olivia's chest and awes at how tiny she is. "Next time."

When she's done eating Harry burps and returns her to Louis on the bed. By then the boy is settled amongst his pillows and made a decent nest for Olivia to sleep in beside him. Harry feels better
anyway that both of them are in one room.

"Food's going to burn." Harry says, kisses Louis' lips and Olivia's forehead, and leaves with the door open.

Louis spends the next two hours sleeping with Olivia on her front and his hand on her back to ensure she didn't move without his notice. She sniffs sometimes and sneezes thrice, something that wakes Louis up and makes him pull up her baby blanket from his drawer to cover her with. He's curled around her little body while they slept.

He wakes up half as tired but twice as hungry at something to eight at night. Olivia is awake and staring up at the bland white ceiling, kicking her little hands and feet in her onesie. Louis rests his head right next to hers and smiles.

"Hey there, Livvy baby." He catches her hand when she reaches for him and kisses her extra little thumb nail. "How long have you been awake?"

She makes a soft sound with her nose and Louis decides that she needs a nappy change. Rising up from the bed with a yawn and stretch, Louis gathers her up in a bundle and carries her to her own room.

"Let's just have a bath, shall we?" Louis proposes, stripping her down to her bare bottom and filling a mini plastic tub inside the porcelain one with water.

Olivia loves bath time and makes a point to splash water all over Louis when he's washing her. He uses a mild soap and luke warm water. His baby's skin is very sensitive and the doctor told them to be especially careful with toiletries.

"I bet you don't do this to your father." Louis drains the tub and grabs her fresh smelling white towel to pick her up.

"She does." Harry answers, having stood unsuspectingly by the doorway all this time.

"I'm losing my touch." Louis standing and moans softly at the ache in his back from being bent over so long.

"Your back hurts?"

Louis shakes his head and says that it's just something he's always had. Harry seems to accept that for now and offers to dress Bean while Louis goes to shower before dinner.

"She sleeps after she's had a bath." Louis tries to discreetly rid himself of the straining muscle throb at the base of his spine.

"I'm aware, princess." Harry smirks and smacks a firm kiss on Louis' lips. "Now go."

The steam of Louis' shower helps a great deal with his back problem but it also seems to just numb the pain so that it develops into a knot. He dresses in socks, sweats and his favourite faded graphic T-shirt before making his way downstairs.

"Smells amazing." Louis finds Harry in the kitchen again and hugs him from behind.

"As do you." Harry lifts his arm and pulls Louis under it. He connects their lips momentarily before withdrawing. "How's your back?"
"Fine." Louis assures him. "A little sore but it's okay."

"We'll see what we can do about that later." Harry hands him plates and cutlery.

"Fancy?" Louis questions as he goes across the counter to set the table.

"Just formal." Harry carries three dishes laden with food to the table while Louis stands and giggles at him.

"Are we celebrating?" Louis raises his eyebrow at the bottle of red wine Harry brings with him.

"Maybe we are." Harry sets the glasses and bottle down. "We have lots to celebrate."

It doesn't go as planned in Harry's head because they end up sharing one chair at the head of the table, sharing a plate of food and a glass of wine. It's a squeeze but Harry would much rather have it this way. Louis' a genius for crawling into his lap.

"At least we saved ourselves from another set of dishes to wash." Louis says optimistically, legs bracketing Harry's in the cushioned chair.

"Is that the only reason you're here?" Harry brushed Louis' fair cheek with the backs of his fingers. Louis' brilliantly alluring blue eyes flickered with glints of amusement. "Also, I love you."

"Do you?" Harry gropes Louis' behind through his loose sweat pants.

"Enough to let you do that." Louis shimmies his hips and laces his fingers together over Harry's shoulders.

"Enough to-"

"Don't-"

"-marry me?"

"Haz." Louis sighs exasperatedly and pulls himself closer to the man. "Stop making me feel guilty."

"You should feel guilty, princess." Harry chuckles, squeezing a little tighter and nuzzling Louis' neck. "You're mine to marry."

"Would you love me any less if I didn't marry you?"

"That's not what I asked, princess."

Louis laughs and rolls his eyes, reaching behind him for the entire mini casserole dish. Inside was broccoli and chicken in some kind of mystery cheese sauce. He grabs a fork and starts stabbing the crispy top layer of bread crumbs.

"What do you hope to achieve by asking me so many times?" Louis feeds himself then Harry.

"Eventually, your consent obviously." Harry states blatantly, studying Louis as he chewed slowly.

"You're going to have to wait a long time." Louis meets his eye and let's his raw honesty reach him through that connection. "At least until I've convinced myself."

"You will be my death, princess."
Harry nuzzles Louis' neck roughly, forcing the boy to set his casserole down so he can grip Harry's shoulders. Louis hides his face in Harry's shoulder-neck junction, inhaling the expensive effective cologne Harry wasted on an evening spent indoors. He smiles against the muscular exterior when Harry's cold fingers slip under his shirt to touch him as if they were nude.

"How much did this shirt cost you?" Louis looks horrifically at the YSL label at the neckline.

"Two hundred dollars, one-ninety to be exact. I have over two dozen shirts of the same price." Louis blinks. "Why-"

"You are not convincing me not to buy expensive clothing anymore than you're convincing yourself to marry me." Harry cuts across his protest and smirks when Louis deflates with a pout.

"You're mean, you know that?" Louis felt the need to clean the table because it would just pile up for later.

When he gets up off Harry's lap - making the man feel like the world has had all its warmth sucked out of it - he is held back by the flesh of his hips. Warm and slightly sticky lips press a kiss to the exposed skin at the base of his spine, sending silent shivers up Louis' spine.

"Sit, darling." Harry encircles his waist and pulls him down. "I'm not done with you."

"What are your plans?" Louis giggles at Harry mouthing along the softness of his neck, pressing his always warm fingertips to the open skin of Harry's chest where buttons are undone.

"To sit in this chair and hold you for as long as I can." Harry gripes Louis' bum like he can never let go, anchoring himself to Louis' smaller presence.

Louis, upon being allowed some space to breathe, starts unbuttoning the rest of Harry's shirt. He goes all the way to the last one and separates the two halves, exposing all the tattoos and marks of Harry's chest and abdomen.

"You're getting very muscular." Louis pokes Harry's abs.

"Want me to lose it?" Harry questions, crooked smirk conveying his amusement.

Louis considers this while running his fingers along the lines of all the tattoos spread out everywhere. Birds, overturned crucifixes, and multiple things he can't recognise.

"Nope." He stops his inspection to wrap his arms around Harry's neck and lean in really close. "Kiss me."

Harry processes the request and closes the gap between them. His mouth crashes over Louis', an arm crossing the boy's back and tongue forcing Louis' lips apart. He groans when Louis sucks the muscle into his mouth, tasting him and letting Harry dominate him.

The kiss gets deeper, more fiery but made for moments of isolated passion. The older of the two picks himself up, Louis squeaking and clinging to his upper body without breaking the kiss. Harry carries him to the couch, dropping Louis down onto it first to strip his shirt off.

Louis' vision is glossy and he bites his lips to get the taste of wine from Harry's mouth. He let's Harry crawl up between his thighs and runs his small palms down the length of Harry's back. Teeth latch onto his neck and suck harshly to get blood pumping, nerves alight.

"I love you." Harry hovers above him, suddenly hoisting Louis up onto his lap as he sits straighter.
"Whatever you did to me a year ago has not stopped. You have my heart and I'm not afraid to say how terrifying it is that you have control over me."

Smiling softly with a faint blush colouring his cheeks, Louis pushes Harry onto his back and straddles him. He holds Harry's hands on his waist while he leaves scattered kisses across the man's chest, moving up his neck and jawline until their faces are a hair's breath apart. Harry tilts his face upwards and captures Louis' lips in place with his, hands gliding up the boy's back and the warmth from Louis' kisses spreading through him.

Louis' hot little tongue teases Harry's mouth until the man growls and pinches his hip. He rests their foreheads together, bodies aligned and spread out together. They kiss lazily for the rest of their free time alone, only managing to get upstairs because Louis made an enticing promise.

"I think naked cuddles should be a paradox." Harry whispers across the pillow they share to Louis.

"A sad paradox."

Laughing with his bright blue eyes crinkling at the corners, Louis hitched his leg over Harry's hip.

"But-" Harry's arm drapes over Louis' side around his shoulders so he curls under the weight. "-sex is important."

"I forgot to tell you." Louis reaches behind him to get his phone and set an early alarm. "I have to wake up at two again."

"Why?" Harry frowns.

"I'm going to finish the last module and assignment I have before dropping it off tomorrow."

"Want me to do it?"

"No." Louis puts the phone back and rolls onto his front. "It's at least six projects. I have one more and I may need your help with it."

"Tell me more tomorrow." Harry kisses Louis' shoulder. "What time do you have to go to campus?"

"Between twelve and two."

"I'll come fetch you at one."

"Didn't Zayn ask us to go to the club today?"

"I called him already, relax."

Louis falls asleep after Harry's been asleep for ten minutes. The latter doesn't argue when all Louis does is squirm and wriggle until he's comfortable, ending in both their bodies using a strip of space in the middle of a massive bed.

At two o'clock on the dot, Louis' alarm goes off by his side. He turns it off and slowly gets out of bed. Harry notices of course and his very deep, very gravelly voice speaks up.

"Lou?" He doesn't open his eyes, just furrow a little in his haze.

"It's two already." Louis bends with the rustling of their sheets to kiss Harry's dry lips. "I'll be back
With Harry asleep again Louis makes the journey to Olivia's room to check that she's still asleep. He gives her forehead a kiss and Lego bumps his ankle on the way out with his baby monitor. Louis makes himself a cup of black coffee with three tablespoons of coffee and one tablespoon of sugar, carrying it upstairs after cleaning the dining room.

He sits in his big leather chair that matched the one in Harry's office, typing away with irritable eyes that burn sometimes. His assessment gets completed after an hour of mind mapping on paper then formulating sentences with his rapid fingers. He hits the print button and by then he's wide awake, preparing a folder for the assessment task and rubric.

Opening up Google he logs into his student profile and checks what else he has due. By the end of this week he needs to complete the literary piece *The Swiss Family Robinson* and get Shakespeare's *Antony & Cleopatra*. He needed to check Harry's library for the latter and already had the first novel halfway done.

The white baby monitor starts to pick up movement in Olivia's room and Louis checks the time. 03h22. He gets up and pads across the hallway to her room where he tiptoes in to find her squirming in her little cradle.

"Good morning, little Bean." Louis lifts her up and gets a whiff of the perfect baby smell she's carrying.

Her sniffing and the verge of crying uncontrollably softens to a quiet few sleepy sounds. Louis holds her to his chest and kisses her chubby left arm when she grips his shirt like a vice.

"Are you hungry, baby?" Louis touches her lips, notices her tongue dart out, and smiles. "Yes you are."

Olivia nurses from him for a good long while, sucking slowly and peacefully with her eyes half closed. Louis brushes her cheek with his thumb, holds her securely to his chest and walks out of the nursery to his study again. There's a small crib space for her in there, as there is one in Harry's office.

"Wanna play here with Grey while I do some work?" Louis sets her down in the rocking bed and judges her response to it.

She settles and holds her teddy bear tightly against her little chest, letting the structure set her mood. Louis goes back to his desk and starts his reading session of *The Swiss Family Robinson* while jotting down notes on a random sheet of A3 paper he keeps as its bookmark. He reads for an hour before deciding he's hungry enough to make something to eat.

"Wanna come with me to get some grub, baby?" Louis picks Liv up and walks with her downstairs to the kitchen.

He hunts through the refrigerator and eventually spends twelve minutes making a decent grilled cheese sandwich. The first light of day appears through the curtains in their living room when he's done and instead of going back to work, he sits on the couch with the curtains drawn. Liv plays until she's tired, yawning with her small lips making an 'o' shape.

"Tired?" Louis takes his plate to the kitchen and gets Liv up to carry upstairs. "Hear that?"

Liv could almost understand what he's saying because at the buzzing alarm from Harry's phone, she smiles and makes a delighted noise. Louis takes her straight to their bedroom and finds Harry still
lying on his back.

"Morning." Louis greets, stepping into the soft atmosphere of tranquillity and drowsiness.

Harry uncovers his eyes with his arm and smiles, dimples on full force. "Hello, darling. Hey baby girl."

Louis hands Liv over when she starts to reach for her father, setting her down on her front on his chest. Bean seems overjoyed to be in the big bed and her little hand pats Harry's pectoral as her only way of communicating.

"How long were you awake, Livvy? As long as Mommy?" Harry touches the faint hair on her head, chuckling when she just hits his chest again and smiles.

"Why are you awake so early today?" Louis asks Harry, perched on the edge of the bed. It's five in the morning.

"I have an early and busy day." Harry sighs, sitting up and keeping a babbling Olivia pinned to his chest. "I'll be back by one or so to pick you up."

"I can drive, you know."

Harry kisses his cheek and stands up, Liv still playing with his hair. "But you won't."

After their toughest times Harry refuses to let Louis travel alone, especially since wherever Louis went so did Olivia. He could not jeopardise them to run errands. He'd bring the continents together before letting that happen.

"Shower with me." Harry has Olivia sitting on his forearm, her sleepy head on his shoulder.

"I have to put this little one to bed." Louis takes Olivia away from him when she starts to lean the wrong way. "Then make breakfast? I don't think I can."

Harry gives him a ten second kiss that he loses count during because Louis' smiling and he's tasting coffee from his favourite source in the world. He pinches Louis' bum before watching him leave.

After he leaves Olivia in her room for a short while spent napping on her back, arms on either side of her head and lips forming a little pout, Louis goes downstairs to start breakfast. He puts two plates on the stove on and places regular frying pans on them. He drizzles oil on the frying pan and gets bacon strips, eggs, pancake batter with a few other ingredients out.

He switches on the mini radio he has on one of his isolated shelves and listens to various music tastes as he prepares breakfast. The pancakes get done last, the eggs and crispy bacon being first. He puts a filter in the coffee machine and let's it work while he nibbles on a pancake dipped in golden syrup.

"Stop staring at me." Louis tells the silent intruder by the entrance to the kitchen.

"Why should I?" Harry comes up behind him and two arms close around his waist.

"You're not dressed." Louis leans back against the presence and warm body he knows better than himself. "You're usually gone in half an hour."

"I came to ask you something but upon seeing you-" Harry kisses his shoulder, biting down gently. ".I forgot the question."
Louis turned around and peered up at Harry, into those emerald stones he has for eyes. "You're a strange man, Harry Styles."

With a diligent smirk and bemused eyes, Harry kisses Louis' forehead and tip of his nose. "You are far stranger for wanting a strange man like me."

* * * * *
Louis utilises his day to shower for thirty-five minutes, eat a really big breakfast and nap after feeding Olivia. She of course wakes him up three times during his nap but he's okay with that.

"You haven't worn this." He tells his three month old while she makes sleepy noises and holds her own hand. "Your father chose it so let's surprise him."

There was nothing significant about the pastel blue nautical outfit with little anchors for gloves and a ship captain's hat printed on a beanie. Louis bathes, changes and dresses her all before she manages to fall asleep on him while he's shirtless.

"Sweet pea?" Louis tests the waters. Whenever Liv fell asleep on either of them, there's no moving her unless it's onto the other parent. "Well then."

He manages to get a dress shirt on that he'll button up when Harry gets here. Bean's diaper bag gets packed with one hand and Louis drinks from a water bottle while she remains serene on his shoulder. Harry's car pulls up in the driveway outside their door a little before half one, and he uses his keys to unlock the front door.

"Lou?" Harry walks into the boy's study and finds him stacking papers with one hand. He leans against the doorway, one ankle crossed over the other and smirks. "This is a pleasant sight."
"Sarcasm?" Louis' eyes flitter to him and back.

Pushing off the doorway's wooden pane, Harry drops his keys onto Louis' table and takes his snoozing daughter from him. She starts to fuss and her face twists up in baby irritation but he whispers something to her and kisses her cheek, leading to her silence.

"How long has she been asleep?" Harry asks, holding the baby under his jacket so she's warm and cradled.

"Fifteen or so minutes." Louis slips things into his book bag and picks up the strap to throw over his shoulder.

He looks at Harry watching Olivia sleep, standing as if he's the only person in the room with her in his arms. His smile gets wider when she tightens her fist on his shirt.

"Zayn says he wants to go somewhere with Niall tonight." Harry informs Louis while grabbing the diaper bag and his keys.

"That means?" Louis takes Olivia and begins the process of buckling her into her car seat. "I have to be at there until when we usually close up." Harry sighs, biting his cherry lips and frowning. "We really need a fucking manager."

After strapping Olivia into her seat, Louis turns in his seat so he's facing out the door. He beckons Harry forth silently and brushes his arms on his way up to grasp his shoulders.

"Relax." Louis tells him slowly, studying the molten disaster in Harry's eyes. "Don't let something slight stress you out so much."
Harry nods but it's to dismiss the subject. "Can we talk about this later?"

"Sure." Louis hops down from the high Jeep with Harry's help.

The drive to Louis' campus is silent because of Olivia sleeping, except at red lights where Harry holds and kisses the knuckles on Louis' hand. They arrive just before two and Louis tries to jump off but finds that his door is locked.

"We're still doing this?" Louis asks after Harry's come around to his side and opened his door for him.

"Why wouldn't we be?" Harry holds Louis' hips and lowers him from the Jeep. "Now where to?"

"I have to hand one assignment in at a lecture and the rest I'll sign off at the admin office."

"You have three minutes before I come looking for you." Harry warns, planting a kiss on Louis' cheek and letting him go.

The journey through the campus halls makes Louis think a lot about his days as a full-time student. He smiles at some people but never stops to make small talk. Upon reaching the correct lecture hall, he pushes open the heavy door and slips inside.

"I have two and a half minutes." Louis says, regarding the person behind the professor's table apprehensively. "Make it fast, Liam."
Chapter Fifty

You must understand that when you are writing a novel you are not making anything up. It's all there and you just need to find it.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

"I have two and a half minutes." Louis says, regarding the person behind the professor's table apprehensively. "Make it fast, Liam."

Liam looks up from where he's snapping a line of HB pencils like they aren't worth cash at all. His gaze borders on amused but he's not taunting Louis, just basking in the emotional reward he gets for getting Louis here.

"You came." Liam smiles. It's a sadistic sort of smile that would make Louis shiver if it was on Harry, and now frown because it isn't.

Louis keeps a distance of a few meters between them, standing close to the door that just swings shut and the big table with the brooding presence.

"Two minutes." He says snippily. He's not here to waste time, having already risked Harry's wrath by even sniffing in Liam's direction.

"Fine." Liam stands and drops the thirteenth - unbroken - pencil from his hand.

He comes forward, pushing the boundary, until Louis extends his arm and his palm hits Liam's chest. "That's enough."

Nodding stiffly and restraining something formidable in his eye, Liam stops moving. He combs his hair back with his long but chubby fingers and sighs.

"I imagine you know Dylan Archer?" Liam abruptly walks away just when Louis got used to craning his neck at the man's height.

"Yes." Louis crosses his arms and rubs his fingers over his elbows.

"What do you know about him?"

"Why do you want to know if we both know the same thing?"

An amused chuckle forcing its way onto Liam's visage, he offers Louis a once-over. "You don't look like you've just had a baby."

Louis works up his best glare. "You're easily distracted."

"Dylan's picked up an interest in Harry." Liam picks up a pack of cigarettes with no brand name and lights one up. "He hired me to get some stuff done."

"What kind of stuff?" Louis looks at his watch. One minute. "Hurry."

"Are you afraid of him?" Liam raises an eyebrow at the boy's appearance. "Afraid he'll- Louis!"

Liam called after Louis when the latter grabbed the door handle and dashed outside like he was being chased. Inadvertently, he was but Liam really didn't expect him to be so ready to leave. Louis
knew his time was up and he'd rather be caught by Harry in the hallways amongst hundreds of other unfamiliar faces than a deserted lecture hall with one known identity.

"Louis!" He jerkily grabs the door and flings it open, standing halfway out in the hallway and calling down it to the boy.

Louis' gone as fast as he came and Liam sighs, resigning to his previous occupation as he comes up with another way to get Louis around again, to tell him the whole truth in bits and pieces so he has to keep coming back.

Harry's leaning against the Jeep with his phone in hand, brows furrowed in deep concentration and fingers tapping away at the screen. Louis pauses at the top of all the narrow stairs to catch his breath and glance over his shoulder to ensure Liam isn't right behind him. He bites his lip and starts to descend the outside concrete staircase, his foot just managing to cover the width of the step. Unfortunately for him and his lack of a railing to support him, a bustling student rushes past him and knocks him off his feet.

"Sorry, excuse me." The inconsiderate individual says carelessly before bumping shoulders with Louis.

His ankle twists at a cruel angle, the cuff of his jeggings catching under the sole of his shoe and shortening his stumble to a tragic fall. He cries out in crippling agony and lands on his bum, the muscle across his foot stretched in permanent pain.

To keep Louis' head from bashing into the concrete in a lethal impact, Harry's caught his weight with a hand cradling his head. The man's eyes are frantic, dismayed and filled with horror while Louis feels dazed and the throbbing ache in his ankle worsening slowly.

"Oh my- *fuck*. I'm so sorry." The person hurriedly apologises, making it half-hearted and hardly making it past the blood rushing through Louis' head.

"I'm fine." Louis manages to cough out, shaking his head at the help that is offered to him. Until there's a person hovering over Louis who he can never get out a decent negative response to, Louis is pretty sure he's okay. Harry's previous disposition of calm composure is tossed out the window when one lethal glare from him sends the culprit running off towards his class.

"You okay, princess?" Harry helps Louis to his feet and checks any vulnerable areas for cause of injury.

"I'm okay." Louis takes a moment to kiss Harry's lips and hold his hand linked through their fingers. He even smiles to make it more convincing.

Harry ropes Louis into his personal space with his arms, solidifying the boy's soft and vanilla scented safety. He cups both sides of Louis' face in his hands that overlap to the back of his neck, curled there as cold fingertips touch warm skin. Louis' lips are thin pink cushions and his eyes are a little unsettled from the shock of adrenaline still racing through him like wild horses.

"Does anything hurt?" Harry double checks.

He's so sure that if Louis were hurt badly enough he'd be able to feel it himself because they're so attuned to one another. Unfortunately that theory is nothing but his possessiveness. Louis starts to shake his head. "Promise. I'm okay."

Accepting this answer for temporary evaluation before he takes his family home and dumps Louis on the bed for his own evaluation. They arrive back at the Jeep and find Olivia screeching
with discomfort and fussy tendencies.

Louis' limp kicks in just when he hears his baby crying, and attempts to yank a locked door open. His dizzy conscience sends him on a short stumble before Harry secures him by his hips and regards him with a short wary look.

"She just missed you, princess. Calm down." Harry unlocks the Jeep and hoists Louis into the back seat just to ensure no more falls on the boy's behalf.

After barely sliding onto the seat with a sore behind, Louis is unbuckling his baby's car seat and pulling her against his chest. She continues to wail and snuffle pathetically until she gets near the beating of his heart, as if she had known her mommy was hurt and now he's okay.

"I love you so much, Bean." He kisses her little chubby cheek and rocks her until she's peaceful again. "My perfect little wiggly baby."

Olivia squirms until she's comfortable in her onesie wrapped up in Louis' arms, yawning with pouted plump lips. Louis gives her tummy and neck a bit of kisses to get her to smile after her distressed tantrum. He uses a small baby cloth to wipe up her face.

"Is she alright?" Harry's in the driver's seat with his keys in the ignition.

"Fine." Louis holds Bean's arm and kisses along the length of it. "She's had her nap and she needs her play time."

Olivia's schedule is rocky but developing into a steady routine quickly. It's after noon now and she is due for some tummy time with her mommy. She stays wide awake, patting Louis' hand whenever its offered to her and making soft bubble noises. Her gloriously big green eyes can't stay focused on any one thing, and Louis' little whispers in her ear bring brilliant smiles to her face.

"Which toy are we playing with today?" He asks, getting her perched on his hip as he jumps off in their driveway.

"I'm going to close up the garage." Harry tells Louis out the window of his door, playing with Olivia's hand when she reaches out for him. "Do you need anything before I do that?"

Bean starts making her little sounds again, as she understands that there's a question being posed and would like to answer. Louis giggles and kisses her cheek. "Not really. Just lock up and come find us in the den."

Liv goes with her mommy after waving to Harry with a little bit of Louis' help. She gets a diaper change in ten minutes and taken into the den where her toys are set up in a corner by the fireplace and television. Harry walks into the kitchen to get a bottle of water, thinks that maybe Louis would like one too, and gets a second one before going in as well.

He finds Olivia on her tummy, playing with all her soft toys and Louis cross legged - on a cushion - holding Grey. Bean would sometimes make a curious noise and look to Louis with a toy in her baby fist for approval. If Louis smiled and kissed her nose, he approved.

"What are you up to, Livvy?" Harry strips off his suit jacket and sits against the coffee table with one leg bent up to his chest.

His daughter ignores him and continues playing with her toys on her baby blanket. She couldn't crawl yet but she would hold a hand up towards a parent when she wanted attention.
"How's your ankle, princess?" Harry handed Louis a water bottle which the boy took gratefully and sipped from.

Harry grabbed ahold of one of Louis' folded legs and let's go immediately when he hears a pained hiss come from him. Bean doesn't seem to notice when Louis bites his lip and bats Harry's hand away.

"I just got it to stop hurting, Haz." Louis waited for the beats of throbbing shocks to die down.

"You can't do that, Lou." Harry tries again and this time doesn't stop until he's got Louis' foot on his lap. "How bad is it?"

"A nine out of ten." Louis feels no relief with Harry peeling off his socks and setting about massaging his ankles.

Harry frowns deeply. "Why didn't you ask for my help coming in?"

Louis rolls his eyes and hands Grey to Bean when the baby grips the other bear's paw. "It can't be that horrible. I'll be fine by tomorrow."

"We are putting some vapour rub on this tonight." Harry's cold fingers lessen some of the burn in Louis' ankle bone that's in blistering pain. "I love you."

With a quick amused glance, Louis bends his knee and risks a wince to kiss Harry's lips. "I love you too."

Bean finishes her play session with her usual routine of signals. She rolls onto her back and starts to fuss until one of her parents picks her up for cuddle time. This time however, she's hungry too.

"Sit here." Harry sits Louis down on the couch length wise with his foot on a cushion and puts Olivia on his torso. "I'll be back."

Louis gives his wonderful baby girl all his attention while Harry gets one of her bottles ready. He let's her lie across his tummy and chest where she felt most comfortable while he watched TV. Her eyes would follow what happened on TV for short intervals of time until her bottle arrived.

"Open up, lovely." Louis tested the milk first before offering his daughter.

While she drank with a hand on the bottle and one on Louis' arm, Harry sat with Louis' legs on his lap. He's very insistent about this ankle problem because he has a match on Friday and can't have Louis hurt at home.

"Hazza?" Louis had one leg behind Harry's back to annoy him, curling it at the man's hip.

"Love?"

"Look."

Harry's gaze moves from the television's flying frames to where Louis is seated, raising an eyebrow when nothing outstanding is happening. His attention is redirected below to where Bean is nestled comfortably between Louis' chest and his arm. Her eyes are pinned to Harry's face, as it has been for a few minutes now.

"Hey there, little love." His grin becomes infectious when he notices his beautiful daughter staring at him while she ate.
He got between Louis' legs, hands gliding up Louis' body until he's in a good position hovering above them both. He's careful not to leave too much weight on Louis' lower half when he drops down to be near Olivia who seems so chafed to have him near her. Her bright smile shines while she feeds and Louis forgets about the pain in his leg briefly.

"What are you doing, baby girl?" He whispers secretively to her, kissing her tiny ear under her beanie. "Your food is better than mine."

Louis has to hold Olivia's bottle with one hand and secure the baby with his other so he's not free to poke Harry's cheek for that comment. When Bean is done eating and Harry is nowhere closer to moving away, he gives his daughter's nose a peck and wipes her lips with a cloth of hers. He burps her and sets her back down on his chest before she starts to fuss.

"Can you hand me Grey please?" Louis asks Harry, allowing the man a moment to stretch over the couch's edge to grab the mini stuffed bear. "Who knew I had two children?"

Harry had gotten a path made to Louis' chest, avoiding where he knew the boy was sore but he rested his head next to Olivia's so she could share some space with him. Louis' fingers combed through Harry's hair and Harry kept a hand on Olivia's back so she was steady.

"Didn't you have to go back to work?" Louis asks with his head angled towards the TV but his eyes closed.

"I have-" Harry checks his watch. "-thirty minutes to spare before I do."

Louis hums and circles his arm around Bean's body. She's on her tummy again with her eyes fluttering from object to object, at last granting Harry some attention as he shares lots of words with her.

"She looks like she knows every secret I've ever had." Harry says quietly, thumbing his baby's cheek and grinning proudly at her smile.

"That's what I feel like around you." Louis laughs, only half joking.

"Really?"

"Yup."

Harry smirks as if he's completely smug and satisfied about the fact that Louis feels emotionally bare around him all the time. Louis giggles when Harry presses three consecutive kisses to his neck dangerously near his weak spot. Olivia notices this sweet interaction and offers up a hand with baby strength for her father to kiss. Harry rewards her intelligence with more kisses than necessary.

"You're going to spoil her." Louis cradles Olivia when she starts to yawn. She has yet to complete her planned fifteen hours of sleep for the day. "I don't want my baby to be spoiled."

Harry doesn't allow Louis to get up and takes Olivia from the boy to take upstairs first. "I spoiled you, baby. It's only fair that my daughter gets the same treatment."

Louis tries getting to his feet and besides Harry's insistent attempts at making him sit, he finds that he can't take a step without experiencing unnatural pain and his ankle bending at a weird angle. Harry leaves Olivia upstairs in their bed with pillows supporting her on all sides and comes back down to get Louis.

"I'm sorry." Louis murmurs, truly regretting this, as he holds onto Harry's shoulders.
"What for, princess?" Harry sits him down at the foot of their bed and helps him undress.

"For getting hurt." Louis has to shrug. He doesn't know what else to do.

Harry's frown worsens to a few creases on his forehead when he kneels between Louis' legs to be at his eye level. He captures Louis' chin between his thumb and forefinger when Louis averts his focus, and eventually connects their lips a little savagely.

"If you're blaming yourself-" Harry taps Louis' nose. "-expect a spanking when I get back later."

Louis' cheeks flame up a perfect matching shade of raw pink. "I'm too clumsy."

"You're perfectly graceful, darling." Harry gets to his feet and picks Louis up by the backs of his thighs for other reason than he wants to hold him. "I love you, okay?"

"Okay." Louis giggles in abandonment, locking his arms around Harry's neck and continuing their kiss.

Harry entertains their deep union until he has to stop, pulling away to breathe and peck Louis' lips once more. He puts Louis down under the covers by a sleeping Olivia and gets the vapour rub they have in the bathroom cabinet.

"Don't apologise if you know what's good for you." Harry can easily read Louis' facial expressions now. He says this nonchalantly as he rubs the medicinal ointment onto Louis' ankle and a little further.

Louis pouts. "I'm still sorry."

Sealing the sock over Louis' foot, Harry covers the tube of ointment and shakes his head, leaning over Louis to kiss him. "Your glorious bum is going to be red for days after tonight."

A pair of lips graze Harry's cheek. "Don't make promises you can't keep, Daddy."

Harry sends Louis a very significant eye roll and loosens the boy's arms from around his neck. He bumps noses with him and has the hardest time of his life letting go of him.

"Go on." Louis rolls onto his side and curls protectively around his three month old precious baby. "Hurry up and go so you can come back."

He feels a hand skimming over the curve of his hip and a quick peck is placed on Bean's cheek before Harry leaves. The room settles into a silence and Louis only falls asleep after he hears the front door being locked.

This lasts for about twenty solid minutes before someone is rattling the window from outside. Louis is shocked out of his sleep by the abrupt noise and just barely manages to contain his scream to keep Olivia asleep when he sees someone standing on their bedroom balcony. It's a little less terrifying because he can see it's Liam and not a ruthless home invader, but still.

He glares at Liam and doesn't move an inch. He mouths to him to go away but Liam merely steps back and leans against the hand railing with his arms crossed.

Louis desperately tries to get him to leave without using sound but the man outside is as stubborn as he is. What if Harry comes back? He's going to be so angry Louis shivers at the possibility. He gets up but one foot on the ground meant he almost fell over from the small amount of pressure. Liam is still there but he's holding up his phone which makes Louis glance at his own on the bedside table.
"Go away." Louis whispers into the device once he's picked up Liam's call.

"We never had our full meeting." Is the response he gets.

"I don't care. Go away."

Liam makes an unimpressed noise. "I'll tell you now then."

Louis folds his able leg under the other one and checks on Olivia. He's thankful that she's still sleeping soundly. "Fine. Hurry up."

"Oh is the little one here?" Liam's face lights up with the probability.

Why did Louis have to have psychopaths in his circle of acquaintances? Why is this his destiny?

"Talk, Liam."

"I want to see her." Liam pouts Louis wants to slap him.

"No." He says firmly. Nobody's seeing his baby but him right now. "Talk or I'll call Harry."

"And tell him you're going behind his back to get information about his childhood pal?"

"Whose story do you think he'll believe, Liam?" Louis quirks an eyebrow and knows Liam can see it through the glass panes of their balcony door.

"You've spent too much time with Harry, you know that? He's ruined you."

"Liam hurry up. Please."

"Alright fine." Liam clears his throat like he's preparing for a monologue. "Harry has to kill Dylan."

Louis' mouth goes dry. "W-What?"

"The bastard's being so relentless. He wants something from Harry and God fuckin' knows what that is but it's big."

Liam's been recruited by Dylan himself to keep an eye on Harry and his family, which is why Louis knew this had to be genuine. Even if it is a ploy to lure them out or something, the proof he was given was quite detailed and waterproof. Liam felt riddled with guilt about what he'd done to their family unknowingly and he owed them this.

"If Harry doesn't kill him, he's not going to give up." Liam looks around him like he hears something. "I have two theories and neither is pleasant to hear."

Liam settles back against the steel posts that support his lumbar regions with cold contact. He discreetly rubs his arm to rejuvenate some warmth from the cold gust of wind constantly whipping his clothing.

"Tell me." Louis insists. He has to know this so he can tell Harry, or otherwise fix things.

"Shit." Liam's head had been turned to the left, and now it snapped forward as he leaned away from the railing. "Let me in."

Louis frowns at this man's urgency. "What? No. Liam-"
"Louis!" He is so far as to grab the door handle and rattle it with a look of desperation buried in his eyes. "Open the door please!"

Car wheels screech and doors open before slamming shut violently. Shouts echo in such vulgarity that it certainly can't have anything to do with this property.

"God damn it, Louis!" Liam is strong and the force he uses to shake the door almost convinces Louis that he can break it down.

Olivia wakes up because of all the noise and starts to cry in a terribly unfit sob. It hurts Louis' ears to hear it from his baby and he picks her up first as top priority. He manages to unlatch the lock of the balcony doors in time for Liam to fling himself through them and onto Louis.

Initially it's the shock that keeps Louis stock still and after his maternal instincts kick in with the sound of heavy metal cocking outside he shields Bean entirely. She's not stopped crying but Louis tries his utmost best to hide her away in his chest.

Liam's arms - whether intentionally or not - drape themselves around Louis and Bean. Gunshots fired whizz past them, as Liam bent their entire form at an angle that avoided being a target. Louis' heart leaps right out of his chest and into his throat.

What is happening? Why are people with guns outside their home? Why are they shooting at Liam?

"Liam, what's-"

"I need you to go downstairs." Liam immediately instructs across Louis' question, holding the boy's hip just tightly enough to keep him from falling. "Get into a car and wait for me."

Louis notices how Liam is sweating already and his hair is disarrayed, eyes wild with the adrenaline racing about his body. This moment is completely shattered by violence and the cries of Olivia who won't soften for the life of Louis.

"Liam, I-I can't. My ankle-"

"Shit, alright." Liam grabs something from the bed - a thin blanket that Louis uses under the comforter some chilly nights - and drapes it over Bean's back. "I'm going to carry you now."

Before Louis can protest there's the wind being swept away as he is hauled off his feet into the cradle of Liam's arms. It's not somewhere he wants to be but given the current circumstance, he has no choice. No further gunshots blast through their windows so the suspects probably spotted Liam in order to start shooting.

The balcony door is nearly shattered with the dozen or so bullets that flew through it, busting glass and splintering wood.

Liam says nothing for the entire trip downstairs until they're safely in the garage. Louis' tongue is twisted in knots much like his stomach. His own vehicle that was rarely ever used gets shoved into gear and Louis is placed in the back seat to work on calming Olivia down. The car makes a vicious swerve on their silent street as Liam turns it around, dodging whatever comes their way from the people invading Louis' home.

Louis cups the back of Bean's head to support her spine and whispers gentle words in her ear with many sweet kisses to make her less grumpy. Her fists clench around Louis' faded sweatshirt and her big eyes squeeze shut as she tries to sleep again.
Louis gets a good long look at all that's happening in their front yard when Liam reverses out of the driveway. Cars lay parked all over their lawn and one was adjacent to the pillar Louis claimed was needed to hold their balcony upright. So many strange faces with dangerous, sinister intentions all directed at his family.

Liam had broken through their garage double door just as the front door was torn down by five armed men.

"What is happening?" Louis wraps Olivia up in the blanket he has, pulling out a set of fresh clothing stored under his seat.

He sets Olivia on the seat and pulls pants on for himself. It's a task of not slipping when Liam drives recklessly and not getting his head hit against anything.

"I'd rather tell you and Harry together." Liam pulled out his phone and tossed it in the back. "Call him."

Louis' reluctant to do anything with hands as shaky as his, a mind as tired as his is. He still clutches the larger than life device and tries not to dial the wrong number. They're on the freeway headed towards the Hybrid nightclub establishment when Harry picks up on his end.

How did his life come to be this in a matter of minutes? He's grateful to Liam because who the Hell knows what would have happened to Bean if he wasn't there. Louis can't protect her very well with his sprained ankle.

"Who is this?" Harry sounds mad already, speaking loudly enough with a bark to be heard by Liam.

"H-Harry." Louis' sigh of relief at hearing the man's voice, however hostile and cold, lasts him a few moments. "Harry, s-something hap-happened and we're coming over now-"

"Louis?" Some shuffling and shouts later, all Harry's background noise is cut off. "Baby, where are you? Why are you coming here?"

Liam catches Louis' eye in the rear-view mirror and shakes his head, silently urging the boy not to tell Harry anything over the phone.

"I'll um....when we get to you-"

"We? Louis, who are you with?"

Louis starts to panic. He's thrown the trust in their relationship to the dogs on his behalf because he failed to tell Harry one of the biggest secrets he had concerning the man. It was disgusting of him, and very silly for him to entertain the idea that the two worlds wouldn't collide.

"Liam." He says truthfully, out of breath and energy to keep up the facade.

Harry sucks in a sharp breath, already on the verge of venting his anger over the phone. "I'll be waiting outside."

The line gets cut and Louis has to hold his baby close enough to inhale her sweet, talcum vanilla scent to keep his chest from erupting. His life was being brought down in dramatic violence and he was caught in the middle with no say.

"He's angry?" Liam checks, pulling onto the street where the Hybrid club was.
"Very." Louis whispered out the closed window, fingertip brushing Olivia's cheek and lips pressing discreet pecks to her skin.

When they pull up in front of Hybrid, the discover that Harry had stuck to his promise and indeed stood outside the main doors under the elegantly lit sign board. His fisted palms were in his suit jacket pockets and face twisted into a hard frown.

Louis took a deep breath before stepping out onto the pavement, securing Olivia to his front with the blanket encasing her dozing form. Harry is on him the second he sets foot on the cold stone. "Are you alright?" He asks, checking Louis himself for any other injuries and taking Olivia from him, wrapping up the bundle in his arms.

Harry held Louis around his waist and led him inside to where it was warmer and safer, sitting him down all the way in his office.

"I have questions, Louis, and I want the honest fucking answers." Harry walks from wall to wall, pulling on the ends of his hair and ignoring the fact that Liam is outside at the bar. Louis' answer was a soft: "Okay."

"What happened at home?" Harry sat at the edge of Louis' sofa with a deeply concerned frown worrying his lips. "I'm in the dark and I hate it."

"I don't know, Haz. I swear. Liam, he-"

"Liam." Harry grits his teeth around the name. "Why the Hell was he at our house?"

"He-" Louis thinks about what he should say and what Harry wants to hear. "He came to tell me some stuff about that man, Dylan."

"And why would you want any information about him?" Harry was seething and it wasn't hard to detect. "That's none of your business anymore, Louis."

"Of course it is!"

"I don't fucking care!" Harry erupted, eyes dark with a lust for anger and reddening features. "How long have you been doing this?"

"I only met him once."

"When?"

Louis winces and feels the greatest desire to melt into the couch so he doesn't have to face Harry any longer. Well, this is the cost of his betrayal. He blames himself and that's alright because he's not wrong.

"On campus....when I went to hand my assessments in."

"Fuck!" Harry punches something that Louis doesn't see because he's staring at the floor and his socks. "You've been doing this under my fucking nose?!"

Louis takes the chance to look up with pitiful blue eyes with reddening cheeks and a quiver in his lip. Maybe being shot at isn't meant to count as punishment.

"I'm going to talk to him." Harry starts for the door. "Don't you dare move, Louis."

And that's exactly what Louis refrains from. He composes himself for Olivia who is awake again
and watching him like she can feel his pain, her little nose scrunching up and lips wobbling. Louis shakes his head, wipes the wetness from underneath he eyes and smiles.

"Everything's alright, little Bean." Louis kisses that button nose of his on her face. "Sleep for me, angel. Please?"

Maybe she doesn't understand him but her eyes still get a little heavy and after a soft yawn, her head lolls off drowsily on his arm. He cuddles her close and sets her down in a cloud of all the cushions and quilts he can find. It's a strain on his ankle and he falls more than three times without someone to help but he's not in any position to complain.

He watches her sleep, finally resting his leg that's begun to swell to twice the size of his small ankles. His finger traces Olivia's hand and she grabs ahold of him when it's close enough.

His mind throws him down memory lane and he thinks about everything that brought him Bean, every single event that thrust him a little closer towards being here right now. He met Harry and got stuck in a monster's world. He remembers Harry trying to call him endearments for the first time and playing with the magnets on his fridge. He remembers the numerous sexual encounters they had - both in Chicago and Middleton. His body remembers Harry's touch like it was his own skin. He left that monster and discovered that leaving never was an option. Harry's heart had a one-way door.

Left alone for an hour, Louis is on the cusp of sleep when a door opening and closing wakes him up. Knowing it's Harry by the heavy footing, he keeps his eyes closed and pretends to sleep. He doesn't want to fight anymore, not when all he can hear is the sound of gunshots.

His arm that's over Bean's little nest feels a caress on the warm skin, bumpy from goosebumps. Harry holds Louis' hand after kissing Olivia's forehead, and it's all Louis can do to not leap out at him for comfort. He doesn't deserve that he knows it. This is all his fault and his guilt will never allow him to sleep.

"I know you're awake, princess." Harry's lips are right at Louis' ear. *Princess?* "You don't frown in your sleep."

Louis is caught red-handed and he opens his eyes slowly, not fooled entirely by Harry's sudden kind nature. Half his face is blocked by Olivia and he flexes his fingers in Harry's hand.

"Liam's not dead." Harry tells him, green eyes shocking blue with how calm the waters are in there.

"Zayn convinced me not to kill him."

Louis nods and curls his fingers up again before wrapping the arm around Olivia.

"You didn't tell me they had guns, Lou. Not that if they didn't it would have been better." Harry hated to hear from outside sources that his family was targeted when he wasn't at home to protect them. "Are you hurt?"

"I'm okay." Louis lies. His voice shook and his leg was killing him but he's not here for sympathy and comfort. He doesn't deserve one stitch of it.

"Come here, Lou." Harry kneels away from the couch and takes Louis' hand to help him get out from behind Bean.

He picks Louis up by the backs of his thighs and nuzzles his neck, gathering all the relief he can for knowing his lover is okay. Louis hugs him tightly and holds him close, breathing brokenly into
Harry's neck. They comfort each other as a reflex; Harry rubbing Louis' back and Louis playing with the curls at the base of Harry's hairline.

"I'm not angry anymore, baby." Harry had taken ten minutes outside just to walk off whatever energy he had fuelling that rage. "Why didn't you come to me at all?"

"I was going to." Louis speaks softly, not allowing Harry to see his face. "I don't know anything worth telling you."

"That's alright, love. Liam told me everything."

"Do you still hate him?"

"It seems like you have a way to making every person I hate do something to make me hate them less." Harry sits on his giant leather chair with Louis in his lap. "I'm very disappointed in both of you but I'm going to need Liam's help to get this problem resolved."

"What-"

"I'm not telling you anything." Harry says firmly with the edge to his voice he uses when he feels necessary. "It's going to be quick and you're staying here with Niall. The club won't be open so you'll have the place all to yourself."

Louis understands this notion and sinks into Harry's space, keeping an eye on the sofa that Bean's sleeping on. He leans against one of the arm rests, his legs across Harry's lap to diffuse any steam of pain building in his ankle. Harry's eye catches the case of his foot being twice its regular size and frowns.

"What happened, love?" He takes Louis' foot and removes the sock gently, getting whiffs of mint and the vapour rub.

"Fell a little." Louis waves it off like it's nothing. "I'm alright."

"You're ridiculous, princess." Harry massages Louis' ankle and apologises for the pain he causes by pressing the swollen region.

"I love you." Louis whispered in his ear, just reminding Harry with his fingers brushing the man's strong jaw.

"I was hoping that hadn't changed." Harry turned his head and pecked Louis' lips.

Louis blushed and tucked himself under Harry's chin. He knew he was absolutely, undoubtedly safe here where nothing evil in the world could reach him. All he had to do is turn his head into Harry's throat and they'd be gone. Harry's beast kept the monsters at bay.
Love that we cannot have is the one that lasts the longest, hurts the deepest, and feels the strongest.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

Louis and Olivia were taken home after a whole day had past, and the premises were inspected by the security company thrice. Harry did his own homework and uncovered the names of every individual who set foot in their house, without uttering a word to Louis about what his plan was. They had a blow out on Thursday, the night before Harry's fight when Louis can't sleep with this cloud over his head.

"What are you doing awake, princess?" Louis found Harry in his studio, frowning at his phone screen. He didn't even look up.

"How'd you know it was me?" Louis stood in the doorway with all the pressure off his weaker ankle and his hands in the front pouch of an old hoodie.

"Who else would it be?" Harry locked his phone and sat back in his mafia chair with a sigh. Louis frowns. It flashes across his features briefly before he wraps an arm around himself from inside the pocket and steps forward into the warm room. "It's almost midnight. When are you coming to bed?"

Harry's had two nights of minimal sleep and maximum agitation. All the secret keeping from Louis has had him on edge. He couldn't share what he wanted with the boy because he wanted this job to clean and taken care of by Saturday morning. It was stressful but it was one of his things that absolutely needed to get done.

The men who broke into their home were undoubtedly Dylan's and were going to kidnap Louis for reasons they're not sure of. Liam and Zayn have promised to be with Harry on Friday when they go into a private meeting spot after the fight. Harry's less than pleased that it has to be Liam at his side too.

"Not yet, darling." Harry cracks the knuckles of his long, deft fingers and runs one hand through his hair.

"Why not?" Louis moved closer to Harry's desk, flooding the man with his natural scent of vanilla and citrus after a shower. "I'm lonely up there."

Harry stretches out his arms, too hypnotised by temptation, and grabs Louis' waist. With careful strokes, he rubs Louis' curvaceous hips and lures him into his lap. Louis tries not to depict all the pleasure he feels from having his feet off the ground. He feels most powerful right here, in Harry's lap, and has therefore made it his throne.

"I have to do this tomorrow." Harry looks away from Louis' face when he says this, pressing his forehead against the boy's shoulder and accepting the comfort he's offered by Louis' fingers in his hair. "I need to prepare."

"Prepare what?" Louis kisses Harry's forehead. He's mothered Harry's baby girl and that gives him
more leeway in this relationship.

Harry groans and wheels forward so Louis' back is against the table's edge, caged in by Harry's arms and the chair arm rests. His disgruntled noise gives Louis a chance to frown again and secure both sides of Harry's face to gather his attention.

"You know you can tell me anything, Hazza."

Staring into those translucent blue electric marbles, Harry almost does spill the means. He manages to capture Louis' wrists and kisses them with a deep inhale. "I can't."

"I can see that this is stressing you out so much." Louis presses, worried for the receding hairline Harry had and his constant mood swaps. "I hate to see you like this."

Harry loves Louis enough to be the one swooning whenever his princess said something so loyal. "I know, love. The safety of my family is top priority right now."

Louis tucked himself under Harry's chin, with his arms curled and eyes closed. "Are you still fighting on Friday?"

"Yes." Harry's arm come around Louis' little form to keep him warm. "You, Bean and Niall are going to be at the club until I'm done."

"The club?" Louis puts his hands on Harry's shoulders and straightens up after his brief cuddle-up.

"Why the club?"

"It will be closed. The bouncers will keep you safe."

"What about Zayn?" Not that Louis wanted Zayn's presence but Zayn was always there with him and Niall when Harry was fighting.

"He'll be with me." Harry's expression transforms to apprehensive while he answers. "As will Liam."

Liam? "Harry, what are you going to do?" Louis withdraws even further and crosses his arms, eyes resolute.

Harry decides that this night has been long enough and glances at his watch for the madly late time.

"Not now, princess. Let's-"

"Now now?" Louis manages to get to his feet with flexibility Harry's not noticed on him before. It's magnificently dangerous. "When on Earth do you want to discuss why you three are forming some sort of mini mafia on Friday?"

Harry doesn't mean to laugh so loudly but his cackle comes out anyway and Louis is peeved.

"Harry!" He appears to be thrown by the amusement but remains angry. "It's not funny."

At last Harry stops mocking Louis' 'mini mafia' analogy by laughing and stands as well. He brushes Louis' cheek with his knuckles gently, always gently. "You worry too much about me, darling."

"It's my job." Louis' raw eyes burn past the walls Harry's set up around his mind. "Let me do my job, Haz."
Harry starts shaking his head but between the left side and his midpoint, Louis kisses him. It's a sweet and chaste kiss, ones they did in the morning before Harry left and at night before bed - no sex.

"I'm fine, darling." Harry sets Louis back on the level of his flat feet carefully. "This will all be over by Saturday."

"Are you-"

"Don't." Harry's gaze flickers to something sharp, something edgy and cold.

"Don't ask questions I don't want to know the answer to?" Louis provides, amusement at none.

"Yes." Harry takes Louis' hand but Louis pulls away and he sighs. "What now, Louis?"

"You're going to kill him, aren't you?" The realisation slams into Louis like a freight train on steroids. His face falls to the deepest pits of heartbroken, angry and furious about being betrayed.

Harry remains impassive. He's a master at the notion, but these few past days have been cracking his skill. "It's late, Lou."

"As if I were worried about the time right now, Harry!" Louis throws his arms up and looks exhausted.

"Raise your voice to me one more time-"

"Enough punishing for crying out loud." Louis does lower his voice but he remains adamant on his position in this argument. "You get to raise your voice and I don't? For as long as we have Bean that rule is void."

"This doesn't concern our baby."

"Everything concerns our baby." The fire in Louis' eyes burned bright and defensive. "Did you think about what this would do to her?"

"How is she ever going to know?!" Harry had to close the door to keep Bean asleep. She always fussed when her parents fought. "She's three months old and I'm doing this for her."

"Oh now you're doing it for her?" Louis hitches one leg on the table - the injured ankle one. "Who were you doing it for before?"

"For me!" Harry pulls on his hair for a short second with one hand. "Is that what you want from me? To know that I'm going to do what I am tomorrow for myself. Someone fucking forbid I do something for myself for once."

Louis rolled his eyes then it sank in what Harry meant. "Are you implying that you do too much for your family or your family demands too much of you?"

It hurt. It did but Louis wasn't going to let that show. Harry blew out a long breath while he thought of rectifying the situation. "I meant that this needs to be done and it needs to be me who does it."

"Sure." Louis draws the other knee up to his chest. "Did you consider what I told you about going back to hurting people?"
"Now you're threatening me?" Harry's black eyes turn yellow with the glint of the faint lighting in here.

"I'm reminding you, Harry." Louis hated how Harry turned everything on him. "Stop putting this on me."

"I'm not going back to my old ways." Harry instead says. "This needs to be handled anyway."

"What about the police?!" Louis shouts when Harry turns to leave the room, leave him alone in here.

"Oh fuck, Louis." Harry closes the door again. "He's a fucking CEO and he's got the best lawyers. They'd rip apart our pasts and show it to a jury if we go to the police."

That's true but after Briarville, the investigation taken has closed with a conclusion in their favour. If they had to go to court, Briarville would serve to dismiss all Harry's charges here and Middleton never had any police records of what he did there. When Louis' boss was murdered back there, and the suspect was found all missing persons were blamed on him.

"You know we can handle something like that." Louis glares at him as powerfully as he can with his eyes heavy as lead.

"Fine then." Harry stands a good distance away and crosses his broad arms over his broader chest. "Do you think he deserves a five year sentence for what he did? To me, to this family."

"It doesn't matter what I think." Louis persists. "Can you imagine how much more peril we'll find ourselves in if and when this comes to light?"

"That's why it's taking me so long to prepare!" Harry exclaims. "Everything needs to be-"

"There is no perfect murder, Harry." Louis sores his expression. "There never will be."

Harry wasn't listening and he knew that. It made his heart heavy with sorrow and forlorn as he stares at the man he still loves so much, who is plainly staring back like Louis' a stranger.

"You'll see soon enough that there is, darling."

* * * * *

Friday came as Match Day for Harry once again.

Louis did everything as usual except accept Harry's kiss before he left and sleep in the same bed until morning. Olivia woke him up three times during the night with her wailing and he'd shuffle down the hall to her nursery to attend to her, which left him hungry and tired by morning.

He made a full breakfast for Harry but didn't wait to share it with him. Things were on stormy waters between them, to say the least. Harry came downstairs at ten to find Louis asleep on the couch and Olivia on his chest, knocked out like her mom.

After eating his breakfast in silence and a little regret, Harry washed up so Louis didn't have to and dropped by the couch to kiss his family goodbye.

"Don't do this." Louis woke up when contact was made on his cheekbone by a pair of soft lips.

Harry gave Louis a smile instead, not saying anything as he pressed his forehead against the boy's.
"I love you."

Louis tried to say it again but Harry kissed him and Louis turned away. He looked at Olivia as she shuffled and her big green eyes flickered to life. She saw her daddy so close and started to smile, flailing her arms around so she at least got the chance to be held. Louis held her out and Harry gathered her in his arms for a small snuggle.

"Morning, angel." Harry kissed her head and cheek, closing his eyes at the peaceful scent she carried.

Olivia babbled and her little pouty lips had spit bubbles forming from her eagerness to convey a message to her Daddy. Harry wiped it off with his thumb and grinned at her, making her reach her chubby fingers out to poke his dimples.

"Be a good girl for your mom, Liv." He tells her before handing her back to an awaiting Louis. He knows he's getting any affection from Louis so he smiled weakly and turned around without saying anything, duffel bag on his shoulder.

"Wait." The small voice had him halting mid-step and spinning back around.

Louis put Olivia on the couch with cushions to keep her from rolling off, before crossing the distance to Harry. His eyes held a swimming emotion that Harry couldn't read, and it made him frown. Louis' arms locked around his neck and Harry immediately dropped his bag to pick the boy up.

He thinks he's gotten Louis' consent and it's a huge relief. He nuzzles Louis' neck and kisses his shoulder. Louis combs through his hair silently while he shivered with unspoken words.

"Don't do this." He said again, voice chopped in half like he was choking on something.

Harry chose to ignore that and enjoy his moment with Louis. He kissed a few spots of soft skin and crushed Louis against his chest in a hug, letting him go when he knew he wasn't ready.

"I love you." Louis told him in his ear, that indecipherable emotion spreading through his features wildly.

The whole car journey to the gym Harry spent trying to understand what Louis was feeling with such a foreign emotion in his eye. His phone rang and distracted him for a short time.

"Zayn?" He answered with.

"Yeah. Niall left his phone here so I'm calling to let you know that he left." The man on the other end responded.

"Thanks." Harry stopped at a red light and sat back. "Did you speak with Liam?"

"Last night." Zayn is probably getting into his own car because Harry heard a car door close. "He said he'll be there at eleven and stay until it's done."

"Good." Harry chewed his lip, Louis' face haunting him like a nagging at the back of his mind. "I'm ten minutes away."

"You never listen when I tell you to take a fucking short cut." Zayn chuckles, connecting his device to the car's radio for convenience.
"Maybe next time." Harry accelerates into the stream of traffic again and turns into the off ramp that will put him on the gym's road. "Don't forget-"

"-to go to the club and pick up the stuff, I know." Zayn finishes for him. "I'm hanging up. Call Liam."

The call ends before Harry can consent but he sighs and dials Liam number at the next red light anyway. Liam answers in a voice that says he's been awake for a while now.

"Hey, Harry." Liam answers.

"What time will you be there?" Harry had to verify with Zayn's information.

"Eleven, before that even."

"Okay."

"Hey, Harry?"

"What?"

"Do you think he'll show up tonight to watch your fight?"

Dylan hasn't been to any other boxing matches of Harry but he's received a special invitation to this one that Harry sent himself. They were going to settle this once and for all.

"He can't stay away." Harry hangs up.

He gets to the gym in time for Paul to ask why he's seven minutes late. Harry trains for an hour on weights, cardio and swimming. He hates the last part but having a personal trainer like Paul doesn't mean you get any say. He stops when his muscles burn and his heart is one step away from being in his throat.

"Shower." Paul tosses his towel at him. "You've got a visitor."

At first he thinks it's Louis and brightens up but upon stepping into the lobby he realises that it's just Liam on time as he promised.

"Hey." Liam extends his arm towards Harry. "You're trusting me with your safety today, so you better trust me to shake your hand."

Harry shakes his hand firmly. "I'll take you downstairs."

Downstairs meant the basement and Liam was taken to the gym locker room where Harry would be before his fight. He leaves the bag he brought in the locked room and exits for a trip to the loo.

Harry is left alone on a plastic bench thinking to himself.

Not oddly enough, it's Louis' face that returns to the forefront of his mind and he decides to call Louis to make sure everything's okay. Niall answers him.

"Hey, H-Harry." The blond friend replies, out of breath.

"What's wrong?" Harry immediately asks, standing up from his seat.

"Nothing. Louis made me run upstairs to get his socks." Niall lies smoothly.
That sounded like Louis when it came to Niall so Harry's worries were eased. "Let me talk to him."

"He's in the bathroom."

"You said he was downstairs."

"He's in the guest bathroom. He made me run upstairs for socks, Harold. Do you think he'll go all the way up there to pee?"

That also sounded like something his Louis would do so Harry let that slide. "Tell him to call me."

"Yeah. Okay."

Harry hangs up and throws his phone into his bag in frustration. He waits for the ten minutes it take Liam to get back, all the while pacing the room while he thinks over and over again about why all of a sudden this thing about Louis' expression is bothering him so much.

Louis objected to what he was about to do but that wasn't his decision to make. Harry was doing this for them, for Olivia. His baby girl whom he loved with all the broken pieces of himself and for Louis, who has had a longer time with those pieces.

The boy had to understand that this would benefit them. Bean will be safe, and all their other babies to come as well. Harry will have one less nightmare now and won't even have a past darkness looming over him.

He waits and on the seventh minute starts thinking about how his life has changed because of Louis, how Louis' life has changed because of him. They were both pretty lost to the world before they found each other and anchored one another to a comfort zone.

Louis became Harry's only obsession in a short period of time. He only wanted the boy's voice to be heard when he woke up, his smile and laugh when Harry made him happy, his body to make love to every night.

Liam returns and he gets distracted once again.

* * * * *

The fight is ten minutes away when Harry checks his phone next and finds no missed calls at all. He's getting ready to go out into the crowd.

Louis never takes this long to call back, everyone knows this. There was no emergency from the security system or neighbourhood watch orHarry figures out what the emotion in Louis' eyes was. That betrayal and hurt was mixing so well into a disguised type of naivety that even Harry didn't pick up on it. He hurriedly dials their home line. He gets no answer, just an endless ring that seems to bounce off his psyche like bullets.

He ran out of the locker room, the gym and shoves people away when they get too close.

He doesn't see the people grabbing onto his, his groupies and fans. He doesn't hear Zayn and Paul's confused shout as he weaves through sweaty bodies with his own. He only hears Louis' final 'I love you' to him and reads what it meant. He can only see Louis packing up and leaving him alone. His mind races and his heart is slowing picking up the pace, every welling disaster in his life is ruining him slowly. When he hears through a robotic woman's voice that Louis' number has been disconnected, his heart fails.
He only got in his car and didn't run the whole way because it was faster. Niall's phone remained unanswered as well.

The drive is agony. Harry can feel the pain, feel the anguish that he's ready to use when calling his Louis. He's torn and angry and his eyes are stinging for the first time in his entire life. He's not ready to say goodbye.

Their home looked just like how he'd left it and it was a small relief when he still hadn't heard Louis' voice. He flung the car door open with so much force that it made a protesting noise against him. He left it gaping as he sprinted up the steps against the tiredness of his body and stepped indoors.

"Louis?!” He called out when not even their dogs came to greet him like they sometimes would.

There was a bark and Thomas came jogging down the stairs to bump Harry's legs. The man searched the bottom floor like a sweeper, calling out in a desperation that made the vein in his neck pulsate evidently under his skin.

The night was silent and the house was empty. He tore through every room before going upstairs.

"Lou?!!" He called again, hoping with dread and fear in his chest like a bomb. "Baby, please!"

It was like he was talking to the boy while Louis stood there ignoring him. He refused to believe it. He refused to take in the fact that Bean's nursery was empty and every item he bought Louis - from clothing to gadgets - lay on their bed with only one half made.

He's desperate and alone. He doesn't know left from right anymore, utterly lost after being with Louis for so long. He only knew Louis. Louis and his baby.

"Please, you have to answer me!"

He screamed at the top of his lungs but it did nothing. He split his knuckles on the wall while he held one of Louis' favourite sweaters from a clothing line that was too expensive. He remembers the day they they bought it and it hurts. He feels pain for the first time while searching their bathroom and Louis' almost barren study.

With the sky cloudy and dull outside this afternoon, Harry sinks to the ground in Louis' study with a pained howl. He felt his wet cheeks and didn't care. He pushed Louis away completely this time. That's why Louis hugged him this morning and drew out the moment he told Harry he loved him. Let him hold his baby one last time, hold him one last time.

There was his minute salvation stuck on Harry's office door. A yellow page folded in half with writing from edge to edge on it. He sat down on the floor before reading it.

My Harry

You know why I did this, why I had to. I love you and you'll always be the one with my heart. Unfortunately, my heart's not that important anymore now that Olivia is here. It's not to cause you pain that I left. It hurts me more than you can imagine because my life with you is a complete one.

Don't look for me. I know you will try but I assure you, it won't do you any good. My daughter is top priority, Harry. I do everything for her and I wish you would do the same but you're not ready to. That's okay. She's safe with me. I left everything you bought me behind because one day you'll discover that I'm not brave enough to have you again.
Olivia loves you and she will know who her Daddy is, I give you my word. I have the ring you gave me. I will never take it off.

Your Louis.

Chapter End Notes

The end of Animal by ss98
How many nights would you wish someone would stay? Lie awake only hoping they're okay.

*LOUIS' POV*

Olivia turns six months tomorrow and considering there won't be a party of any kind, I have to try my best to make the tiny celebration as special as possible. This is why I've shown up at the local supermarket to buy the best birthday cake they have. Bean has been such a wonderful baby even with everything I put her through, and she deserves it.

I put her in the baby seat of the trolley I would push around with me, arming her chubby little arms with my shopping list that's compiled by Niall.

The hardest thing I had to witness was Niall leaving Zayn behind and the most gut-wrenching thing I was a part of, was leaving myself. It felt like the biggest chunk of my soul has been left behind in a tight plastic bag that would suffocate the hope it contained until nothing but pain was left behind.

I recall begging Niall to not sacrifice what he had with Zayn for me but my best friend gripped my arm and hauled me out the door with him anyway. He later told me that Zayn was falling out of love with him, and he wasn't sticking around for a slow sizzle end.

Everyday was harder than the previous one, and better than what's to come. At least that's what I told myself.

"Chocolate or vanilla, sweet pea?" I ask Olivia when we come to the bakery section, whispering it in her ear as she tossed my list around.

She didn't answer with words, instead made a very joyful noise at the appearance of chocolate icing and patted my hand the way she did when she wanted something. Her first go at solid food would be tomorrow and I'm determined to make it a good day despite the gaping hole I carried around with me.

"Chocolate, I know." I lift her out of the cart when I notice her cheeks reddening with distress. "Oh sweetheart. What's wrong, baby girl?"

Bean holds onto me while the lady behind the counter places the chosen cake into my cart. I pull her aside with the trolley and rock her against my shoulder until she softens. The neckline of my shirt shifts to accommodate her baby ear pressing to where my heartbeat can be heard.

"Oh love." I kiss her forehead and arm. "Better?"

She babbles nonsense and closes her eyes. I hate moments like these because although I love to comfort my daughter, it reminds me that I'm alone in that duty now. I didn't mind because I'd go to the ends of the world for baby Livvy, but it'd be nice to have a companion in the quest sometimes.
Olivia babbles some baby talk and shows signs of sleepiness. I kiss her soft forehead and put her back in the cushioned seat I'd strapped onto the trolley.

"Such a wonderful baby." A stranger approaches me, an elder one with a kind smile and wrinkled eyes. Middleston residents loved babies, as a stereotype.

"Thank you." I offer a polite smile but shield Liv as much as I can.

"What's this angel's name?" She asks, beaming down at my daughter while Olivia yawns with her father's pouted lips. I tighten my hand in my hoodie pocket in a desperate scramble for my cool.

"Olivia." I rub her little foot that's covered by the fabric of her onesie. "Olivia Jane."

"Beautiful name." She compliments before turning her attention to me. "You know, people seem to recognise you."

"What do you mean?" I have the unbreakable urge to walk away before this conversation ripens into something unfortunate.

"You're Louis from the fourth street, yes?" She gracefully moves away when I retake the handle of my trolley.

"I-I-" My lip is put under pressure by my upper jaw. "I have to go. Excuse me."

On my way past the other isles far away from where I met the newest stranger, I am now fully aware of the dozens of sets of eyes watching me. They burn my back and they don't stop staring. Nobody approaches me like the elderly woman had and I don't question why not.

After paying for the groceries I purchased, I carry Livvy out to the waiting car I left parked at the curb. The brown paper bags go in the back seat and her car seat stays buckled in beside the driver's seat. Liv is asleep and gives me no trouble while I get the trolley back to the supermart.

It's been drizzling all day, with deathly gloomy weather trailing behind with clouds blocking out any hope for sunshine. The rain seems to have worsened in the thirty minutes I was indoors, because now it's pouring like an act of revenge. My sweater is soaked down to the chill of my bones but Olivia gets under the car's roof before anything dampens her.

On my trip around the front to my door, I spot a figure in black that's standing across the pedestrian walk. I look once then another time before steeling myself with my hope of anything familiar getting squashed, but there's nothing there. The robot and yellow pole beside it is vacant, void of a person who was watching us.

With hope gone and three months behind me to recover from that, I go ahead and get in my old Ford before driving down my old street to my childhood home.

"Did you get the stuff?" Niall is lounging on our sofa, just having woken up from his night of studying.

"Yeah." I toss a bag of crisps at him and transport Olivia to him as well twice as carefully. "She's sleeping so keep her that way."

Niall cooes at the little one. He gathers her up against his chest and mutes the television to watch over her while she napped. I get myself to the kitchen with two trips from the car, my arms filled with bags. I lock the Ford on my last trip and glance up from the key slot, catching a glimpse of the same shadowed figure that made my heart race earlier.
This time I search for it after the truck for Woolworths drives past, for the physique that seemed to familiar. There's nothing there this time either, behind the postbox of my neighbour or friend. I chew my lip and hurry inside before I catch something worse than heartbreak.

"Niall?" I call once I'm indoors again.

"Lou?" He looks over the back of the couch at me, rubbing Olivia's back while she sniffled and dozed. She could never sleep silently.

"Are you working tomorrow?" I had to know because I had a dinner shift at the diner tomorrow. 

"Lunch rush and a couple hours after that." Niall answers. "I'll be back by three or four."

"Okay."

"When do you go in?"

"Six." I sigh, packing away the paper bags in a drawer beneath the sink. "I'll be back after ten."

Niall thought what I thought but neither of us dared to say. A few months ago we'd have said the money we had was enough and the time we had spare was in excess, yet these days it seemed to be reversed. Niall and I had savings to help us through tough times, and we tried very hard to manage from month to month on tips and our salaries.

"A woman stopped me at the supermarket today." I begin to narrate, taking a seat on the couch beside Niall with my legs crossed.

"Yeah?" Niall sits up too, flinching like I do at the clap of thunder from outside. "They've been doing it to me too."

"Really?" I frown about it. "She knew me, said the whole town did."

Niall studies my expression and whatever hidden emotions it beheld. "We'll have to get used to it, or move away."

"Really?" I frown about it. "She knew me, said the whole town did."

Niall studies my expression and whatever hidden emotions it beheld. "We'll have to get used to it, or move away."

"We can't afford a move." I run my hands through my hair. "We'll just stick to ourselves then."

"The thing about living in a town full of cronies is that they never go away." Niall doesn't laugh at his own words, even though they're amusing but true. "The old bastards don't know when to stop. How did you manage to grow up here?"

Old people in Middleton were always inquisitive, always wondering why the person on the next street got a grandchild before them. With me moving back home after valiantly leaving over a year ago, there are bound to be headlines about it.

"I stayed out of everyone's way." I mumble emptily, moving my gaze to my knotted fingers on my lap. "Mostly."

I get started on dinner before seven. It's as simple as pasta gets with bolognese sauce, and I have to stop once Olivia wakes up grumpy and hungry.

"She's awake." Niall strolls in with Liv screeching in his arms. "She'd like her mommy please."

Olivia reaches for me as soon as she sees me, spit bubbles at her mouth and tears rolling down her face. I discard the cloth on my shoulder to take her and walk out of the kitchen.
"Hungry, Livvy?" I walk around the living room with her against me shoulder, hiding her hot face in my neck.

When I touch her lips she juts her tiny pink tongue out, her green eyes sparkling like true gems and reminding me of a face I've worked towards not becoming a trigger for anxiety. She blinks tiredly at me and reaches up to touch my cheek. I kiss her small palm and smile.

"Let's go upstairs then." I tuck her smaller form under my chin and make the short trip upstairs to my bedroom.

I try not to glance at the cupboard, an effort that will soon become a longing stare. I sit at the edge of my bed that smells of another person rather than the newly washed sheets. Removing my shirt, I hold Olivia against my chest and let her latch on quickly. It's supposed to sting from sensitivity but I hardly feel the burn anymore.

Olivia nurses until she's full and her baby hand let's go of my finger. I burp her and give her tummy a kiss as the doorbell rings downstairs. I would ignore it but we haven't had visitors, not that we want them in a home that's stacked with boxes, since our arrival and it seems suspicious.

"Lou?!" Niall calls from the base of the staircase.

I cover Olivia's ear. "Yea-"

I'm cut off by the banging on our locked front door. My concern escalates to drastic proportions and I lay Olivia down on the appropriate nest of blankets I have made for her on my bed, with Lego seated beside her as a guard.

"What's going-" I get halfway down the stairs and Niall signals for me to be quiet.

He creeps up the steps to my position. His eyes are frantic, worry evident in the creased brow he's sporting. He ushers me back upstairs with sweeping hand motions and follows right behind me to shut out the pounding on wood when he closes the door.

"Is that-" I start, the rate of my heartbeat already picking up.

"Yes." He walks from the window to the bed and back. "What are we going to do?"

I bite my lip and watch Olivia play with her favourite bear, Grey. She's watching me too with a smile for whenever our eyes meet. Bean's just started her teething process but she's been such a good baby through it all. Of course she couldn't help needing me at the hardest hours of the night but her crying was manageable and she hugged me very tightly when I was around.

"How do you know?" I ask when the obnoxious noise pauses downstairs, crawling onto the sheets and picking Olivia up.

"I peeped." He confesses sheepishly.

Olivia shows me Grey with a small 'Ah' sound and I hold back my tears of joy. I hold the bear and kiss her cheek. "Did they see you?"

"Don't think so." Niall starts pacing again. "But I didn't see Harry."

I try not to let that utterly shatter the facet of hope I had a few seconds ago. Olivia falters in her crawl to fetch Grey from where I put him. I wait for her to have him before cradling her against me protectively. She's thrilled by this show of affection and makes a beautiful sound.
"Do you want to talk to him?" I ask truthfully. If this stressed Niall out, there had to be things left unspoken between them.

"No." Niall sits and gets up again. "Yes."

I pity Niall, and it shows on my face. "Would you like me to-"

"Yes please." He perks up by my mild offer. "Tell him to go away."

"I don't think Zayn's going to listen." I remind him gently, giving my baby one last kiss on her forehead before standing up.

Zayn's been to the brink of death and back. If he wants Niall back with enough passion and reed, I'm not anyone worthy to get between them. Olivia's curious noise from the mattress makes me look at her again with a special smile.

"I'll be right back, sweetheart." I promise her, hoping it is true.

"He won't." Niall bites his nail while he tails me to the door. "Tell him I'm dead."

I whirl around to glare at him. "No."

"Fine." Niall blows out dramatically. "Ask him nicely to go away."

"I'll try."

I jog downstairs after a useless pep talk from my best friend, more afraid of the rattling door than anything else. With a timid and actively nervous grasp, I twist the handle and pull.

"Louis?" Zayn questions my existence as soon as the door is open widely enough.

"Um-" I'm caught up in a hug I hadn't initiated instantly. I'd be lying if I said it wasn't comforting slightly to have another friend close.

"You two are....fucking crazy." He pulls back and releases my arms, a frightfully stern expression hovering around the redness of his eyes. "Why did you leave?"

Zayn is evidently showing his lack of coping. His eyes are bag-laden with red lines over the white space, his lips dryer and hair tossled terribly.

"I-" It seems I'm never meant to get a word in because Niall appears somewhere halfway down the stairs.

*NARRATOR'S POV*

"I was going to tell you that I'm indisposed but I figured that wouldn't work." Niall has an arm holding his middle together. "So go away."

Zayn manoeuvres past Louis. "I've fallen in love with an idiot."

Their relationship was perfectly repairable and Louis smiled when Niall let Zayn hold him. He knew how stubborn the blond got. Ignoring the inner turmoil when he discovers that there's no one else at the door, Louis shuts it with a soft click and goes into the kitchen to pull himself together.

"I'm not an idiot." Niall shoves Zayn's shoulder but realises they're on a staircase and holds onto him right after.
"Why did you leave me, you silly boy?" Zayn wrapped an arm around Niall's shoulders and kissed his forehead. He hid his tears of relief that way.

"I did it so you didn't have to." Niall answers, twice as many tears in his eyes.

"What?" Zayn grips Niall's shoulders.

Niall gets a tight squeeze and kiss until his lips are swollen bright pink. Zayn reinstates the fact that he's married an adorable, perfect idiot.

"Why did you take so long?" Niall whispers into Zayn's arm later that night. They're not letting each other go forever.

"I never heard of this place." Zayn covers Niall with his body. "I had to start searching from the beginning. I'm sorry I took so long, babe."

"You came at all, that's more than I expected."

* * * * *

"How dare you?" Niall glowered at Louis over the kitchen island, Zayn's expensive blue shirt hanging onto his body.

"I forgot!" Louis admits. "This house has no birthday candles either."

Niall had gotten back from his shift to this realisation, and after hours spent with Zayn doing nothing but talking he gets up to question Louis. In Louis' defense, he hasn't slept since Zayn got here either because of his own grief or Olivia's crying all night.

"Go to the supermarket." Niall orders immediately.

"I have to work in an hour." Louis fires back, his mind is exhausted even while he holds Olivia. "You go."

"No." Niall shrugs. "I'll get your keys."

And that's how Louis found himself on the way to the supermarket he'd visited the day prior for just a pack of birthday candles. He got there and took a moment to gather his thoughts, his thrown body clock disallowing him to concentrate.

Inside people are still staring at him but he doesn't care in the slightest this time. He walks in with his hands in his pockets and makes a beeline for the party section, browsing the racks for his desired item. Old and young, the Middleton citizens are on the prowl for news about him and other gossip. He feels the burn in his back from their stares.

Several items fall on his left, and it isn't his own doing just this once. He'd normally offer to help but he's not feeling in good enough shape to bend or crouch to help someone else.

First comes the breeze of a stranger walking in, then the undying feeling that the person to his left is known to him. He gasps at the cologne that gets closer to his senses, to blocking them up and disabling his focus. His fingers curl around the rack he's holding, praying for birthday candles so he doesn't have to look to his left.

He's weak, and he ends up looking.
Everything floods out of him at the same time as a whole new array of emotions flood in. He keeps that arm around his front and tries lowering his gaze but the blue crystals aren't looking anywhere but at the emeralds it belongs with.

Harry takes in Louis' appearance. He says nothing about it and when his swelling heart threatens to implode from Louis backing away, he speaks.

His arm extends in front of him with lightning speed. "Hello. I'm Harry. Harry Styles."

Louis' tears flow freely and he shakes his head. Thinking - knowing - he can't start over without unspeakable pain in his chest, he turns around as fast as his body will allow. Unfortunately that's not fast enough because Harry wraps him up in an embrace that's more comforting than any amount of inanimate softness.

He cries into Harry's shoulder and holds onto him with tightening fingers. Louis' tears dampen Harry's coat and skin, his figure almost entirely covered by the man's.

"Louis." He gasps through his sobs. "Louis Tomlinson."

* * * * *


End Notes

the end of chapter one by ss98

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