Summary

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Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

So I was recently at the wedding of some hometown friends with my boyfriend and- no- he’s requested that no one applaud for that. Gay rights can take the ding, and he can do so much better than me. Man, he’s really slamming it. Anyway, we grew up together with these friends, but didn’t work our shit out until we were like, forty, which is statistically insane. Because my appeal has only nosedived since I hit puberty. I didn’t even start out as like, the ‘Hollywood ugly’ geek friend in a John Hughes movie who’s one line is ‘You should go for it, dude,’. As far as I can tell, I was in the next fucking movie theater, dropping my glasses in front of Wolfman and getting my balls ripped off. So this- my whole deal now? Is the After picture of that.

All that teen rom com shit was totally lost on me. Not for lack of a dorky shoulda-been-the-guy-Molly-Ringwald-picked unintended heartthrob, though. When we were in high school, my boyfriend, who- hello it was the early 90’s, was just my Top Secret, sealed, lock the file in a safe and drop it in a fucking shark tank crush at the time- he had the looks of Ralph Macchio... and the killjoy vibe of Ralph Nader. Like, a Karate Kid sequel where the dojo has a showdown with Congress to pass the
Clean Water Act. Fucking weird hybrid, but I loved it. He buckled my knees, and my seatbelt.

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When the music shifts from a clubby dance beat into something much slower, Richie stops trying to bring back the Funky Chicken. He drops his ankle in favor of snapping his fingers along to the music with a gentle side-to-side step. Bill gives up on the Herky Jerky and does the same, head bobbing to look over the crowd on the floor.


Bill boogies in closer, fighting a grin. “I’m sh-sure you’d be a generous lover, Richie- but I p-promised Mrs. Hanscom-”

“Oh, right. Where is Ben’s mom? I’m ready to make my move.”

“No way, I saw her f-first,” says Bill. “Find Eddie.”

Bill shoves past Richie with an elbow, leaving him alone in the middle of the dance floor as people start to pair off.

“Harsh, man!”

Richie scans the scene in front of him for a glimpse of Eddie’s silvery jacket, but the stealthy little bastard must have taken it off. Then a hand lands on the small of his back, and so close to his ear that he feels the heat before he hears the words, Eddie speaks, voice low. “You avoiding me, Tozier?”

“If I wanted to avoid you I would go to a waterpark or a buffet,” Richie points out. “I’ve practically been performing a fucking mating dance this whole time trying to lure you out.”

“My mistake. I thought you and Bill were trying to ward off the rains, or something.”

“In this house we love and bless the rains, Eds, you know that.”

Richie reaches out and rubs the satin knot of Eddie’s tie. He had taken his off pretty much as soon as the ceremony was over, but Eddie was a Dance With The One That Brung Ya all night tie wearer. A little uptight, but not so bad when Richie knew he could try to take it off with his teeth later. As if he can read Richie’s mind, Eddie gives him a suspecting look as he wraps his arms around Richie’s waist.

“...What? Something on my face? I’m not falling for that again.”

“Nothin’.” Richie slides his wrists over Eddie’s shoulders until they cross behind his neck. He sucks his teeth to affect a mouth-breathing, braces-wearing nerd Voice. “You just sure look nice tonight.”

“You too,” says Eddie. He doesn’t even roll his eyes. He keeps on being as handsome as ever, then tilts his head in consideration. “I do sort of miss your tropical prints, though, dude.”

“See?!?” Richie preens. He has a brand, carefully cultivated and endeared to his most loyal fan. But no shade on Bev’s taste in tailoring or anything, it was her day, her call, an honor to be involved, etc.

The first verse of the song kicks in, and they give in to the relaxed rhythm for a minute. They don’t actually have to be running their mouths every waking moment to enjoy each other’s company, Bill. It’s just more fun if they do.
“This is so high school,” Eddie sighs in amusement.

“Oh yeah,” Richie agrees. “These dweebs never evolved their music tastes past Y2K.”

“I’m warning you now, if they play the fucking Macarena I will walk out.”

“You’re no fun,” Richie says adoringly.

“I keep thinking if I looked up at the ceiling it would magically be the auxiliary gym with dodge balls and balloons stuck in the rafters.”

“Your hands should be like, nine inches lower if this is a school dance,” says Richie, wiggling encouragingly. Eddie stops contemplating the lighting fixtures and smacks his butt. God, it’s so easy to get him to do that, and even though he basically asked for it, it makes Richie yelp and go jellylegged every time. He clears his throat to recover a little dignity. “I’m speaking as a degreed expert in the performing arts, of course.”

“Oh really?” Eddie raises an eyebrow and glints at Richie. Kicks his toe on purpose. “If you don’t perform this slow dance to my satisfaction, can we ask for the money back from your BFA?”

“Maybe. To whom should I direct my complaints? Who taught you this two-step, Eds? Richard Simmons exercise tapes?”

“Fuck you, dude, it was your fucking mom.” Eddie sheepishly shifts into a dance move built a little more on knees and hips than on fancy footwork.

“Mhmm. Love you too, dickbag.”

Then a seriously, unbearably cute thought occurs to Richie. A thought he can’t immediately share with Eddie, because Bill and Mike each independently cornered him and made him swear not to steal Bev and Ben’s thunder.

Ah, fuck it.

“I can’t think why we would possibly be in another situation in the near future where there’s dancing but also my mother is there for some reason, but holy shit, Eds! I have got to see you dance with Mom. During this very special situation. For which I will make hand calligraphed invitations and hire a photographer and-”

Eddie’s eyes dart in either direction before he lets out a short, slightly hysterical laugh. “Uhhh, I also have no idea when or why that would happen, or what sort of event that would be appropriate for.”

Richie bites the insides of his cheeks and tries to look innocent as Bill and Mrs. Hanscom waltz by. Seeing as Eddie cannot look him or them in the eye without bursting out laughing again, Bill and Mike have obviously gotten to him, too.

It’s not like they don’t talk about it as an eventuality all the fucking time, but officially speaking, there’s no ring and no date, yet. Well. There is a ring in Richie’s glasses case, next to Eddie’s shaving kit (and hey, maybe a second one in Eddie’s shaving kit, but you didn’t hear it from Richie!). And they did spin their wheels once or twice about how hilarious it would be to do it on the midnight between their birthdays so they could pretend fight about the true date of their anniversary. Really the only disagreement was that they know someone will be right on paper, and Richie wants it to be Eddie and Eddie wants it to be Richie. The stars are aligned- they just haven’t pulled the trigger.

When they find themselves in a private moment again, Eddie takes a steadying breath so deep that it
cuts off Richie’s nervous giggling, too. “Richie, I am dying to dance with your mom. It would make me- so fucking happy.”

Richie’s fingers all curl tight and he stops breathing and swallowing.

“Maybe sometime in March I could be available? Did I hear someone say March?” asks Eddie, glancing in Bill’s direction like, See? No one said the M, W, or E words... He looks back at Richie, his mouth an easy smile as he asks a question he already knows the answer to. “Would you, Rich?”


“Okay, okay,” says Eddie. “For real. I’m in, we’re in. Fucking about time, right?”

Richie grins. “What do you mean, Eddie darling? When we report this to our friends, this is happening several days from now, wink wink.” He does actually wink as he says ‘wink’, because Richie is never above a cheap gag.

The lights over the dance floor sparkle on the shine of Eddie’s hair as he tip toes up to kiss him. Again, he tastes the champagne they drank earlier, on Eddie’s lips like a secret toast. As much as Richie would like to really jam his tongue down his throat in front of loads of Ben’s Texan relatives he’s never met-

Man, nevermind Texas. Fuck the Alamoo!

He really goes for it, sinking his fingers into Eddie’s hair and kissing back until he gets a borderline pornographic groan out of him. He wants to be with Eddie, Eddie, Eddie. Knowing everything about him and being completely known by him. He wants to be inside Eddie and around Eddie, all at once. He thought the thing his mouth did best was talk, but really it’s this- his lips on Eddie’s, kissing him. Oh, he’s gonna get E’ed to this man, and then M him at their W where everyone can see it. Hard.

“Love you so much,” Eddie mutters against his mouth.

“Mmm,” agrees Richie. He noses at Eddie’s dimples. “That’s fantastic, because I have a major thing for you.”

“I noticed.”

Cue the Hallelujah Chorus.

“Okay, I’m just gonna call Mom real quick-” Richie pretends to pull away but Eddie catches him close again.

He chuckles. “Just don’t tell Maggie I did this,” he says, fully grabbing Richie’s ass.

“Unnf.”

Richie zips his lips and throws away the key. He keeps his eyes locked on Eddie’s as he grinds their hips together so thoroughly he can tell that Eddie left their house keys at the hotel. Between that and public groping, he’s really letting his hair down tonight. What’s next? The carefree dip of a strawberry in the chocolate fountain? Maybe if Richie really plays his cards right he can get Eddie to screw around with him in the coat room.

Buoyed by the fucking spectacular occasion and the heat of Eddie’s body against his, Richie gets
really into lip synching the most graphic lyrics as they dance. So many years into a career behind a microphone he knows better than to trash his voice by shout-singing over a party, but he will if he must! He has a long history of taking drastic measures to get Eddie’s hands all over him- even if it’s to smother a serenade.

“Would you keep it in your fuckin’ pants?” Eddie huffs, as though he didn’t start it, wasn’t chubbin’ and didn’t still have his hands glued to Richie’s ass. “It’s a slow dance, you don’t see Ben and Bev grinding!”

A little ways across the floor, dappled in purpleblue light, Ben and Bev sway. She’s got his suit coat on and her head laid on his shoulder and one of his hands is petting her hair. It’s so cozy and they look so wrapped up in only each other that it’s almost as obscene as if they were grinding. It’s so good to see them so happy, it amplifies all the gooey, sugary feelings inside of Richie like throwing an truckload of Yankee Candles on a bonfire. Life should always be this good from now on. It should have been all along.

“Eh, hard to tell what’s going on over there, with that much dress,” Richie teases, but he cuts Eddie a break. He all but stops moving and just hangs on tight, there in the middle of the crowd with his still grinning cheek pressed against Eddie’s hair.

He’s so mind-bogglingly lucky. It feels like he must have unwittingly punched in a cheatcode while he’d been fumbling around the controls all these years, and now they’re bouncing through a secret bonus level, racking up stat multipliers to the point of invincibility. He will get every flu shot, look both ways crossing the street, and choke down every nasty smoothie Eddie makes so that he is in tip top condition to appreciate the rest of their lives together. Every damn day, he’s gonna treat Eddie so right, even Babyface would struggle to find words saccharine enough to describe it.

As they sway, Eddie picks at one of the buttons on his shirt. If they stand like this any longer, Richie’s sure his heart will start beating to the pluck pluck pluck of Eddie’s fingers on his chest permanently. He hopes so.

“When we, uh, go dancing with your mom- you could, you know. Dress more like yourself. Have some fun with it. That’s who I’m- who’s mom I’m dancing with, after all.”

It was going to kill Richie not to start sending Bev links on Pinterest tonight, huh.

“You might not want to give me that much free reign, dude. You didn’t see the ruffled tux shirt I was lusting after when our prom happened.”

“Jesus, yeah. Within reason, Richie.”

“Hmm.” Richie chews his lip. “Do you think if I had asked you to prom ‘as a joke’... you would have gone?”

Neither of them had, in the end. He couldn’t go with who he really wanted, so Richie saved the ticket money for some other splurge. Probably retail therapy, knowing the avalanche of both clothing and angst that was his teenage closet.

“Maybe. I don’t know if that would have freaked me out or... freaked me out but good. We did still hang out, though,” Eddie reminds him. “We ate hotdogs and saw Speed with Mike and that girl he was trying to get with.”

“Oh right! Geez. Poor kid, she thought it was a group hang, not a double date with a couple of lovesick losers.”
Even long before Richie and Eddie were a couple, they acted like it. Every time they went to the movies together Eddie meticulously buttered their shared popcorn while Richie staked out seats. He’d proudly fold his jacket over the chair intended for Eddie until he arrived and offer it as a blanket when the A/C ran too cold. They’d very nearly sit with their heads on each other’s shoulders as they snarked the plot, and any time there was a shock on screen, Eddie was sure to grab Richie’s hand or knee in surprise. After, they would cram into the booth at the burger place and monopolize the group conversation with their bickering and re-enactments. If there had been a power ballad over the end credits, you can bet Richie was wailing it into a spoon until Eddie wrestled it out of his hands.

Now, Eddie grins up at Richie as he mouths along to the music. “Lovesick, huh?”

“Go ahead and put me on blast! Like you didn’t try and share my sleeping bag, camping that weekend.”

“I should have made you let me in,” says Eddie. “Let me get in there and drive you crazy all night.” He circles his arms tight around Richie the way he wished Eddie would have back then, if he had succeeded in invading his little pocket of desperation.

“Odds are I was hiding a boner—”

“Then I should have rolled you into the lake.”

Richie hisses. “Mixed signals, thy name is Edward Kaspbrak.”

Eddie smiles a smile that doesn’t quite reach his eyes. “I should have asked you to prom. As a joke,” he adds, a little too solemnly. He doesn’t apologize again for all their missed chances, there was no point— but he still imbues a ‘sorry’ into other words, sometimes.

Richie scratches the back of Eddie’s head, It’s okay. Don’t worry about it, man. While he wishes he could have been with teen Eddie and twenties Eddie and dirty thirties Eddie, he loves now Eddie so fucking much— it was kind of lucky there was a surrounding flood zone.

Plus— it’s hard to be bummed about it when some perky horns start to blare in and the DJ blends into the next song. Something jazzy for the Boomer crowd in attendance. Either that, or Bev and Ben were actually twice the age they claimed to be.

“You really missed out, Eds,” Richie says, taking Eddie’s hand. He swings him out at arms length then reels him in again. When they’re back face to face he ducks in to whisper. “I totally woulda given it up if you’d taken me to prom. If you showed up at my front door with a shiny little bowtie and a hypoallergenic boutonniere, I would not have been able to get my white tuxedoed knees on the ground fast enough.”

Eddie goes wide eyed as Richie puts him through an underarm turn. When he spins back he sputters. “You’re such a floozie, Richie. Right at your front door? With your parents home?”

“Or you know. In the rec room under that orange crochet blanket. Remember?” He had it on good authority that was the traditional way teenagers in Derry lost their virginities to each other.

Eddie gags. “I don’t think that gross fucking thing ever saw the inside of a washing machine. The things I heard about your sister's basement hook up parties...” He shudders.

“Would you stop tryin’ to poke holes in this, you dick? I’m fantasizing here.”

“You’re the one fantasizing about poking.”
“Fuck yeah,” Richie awkwardly tries to loop under Eddie’s arm so he can get a whirl, too. “I can’t believe you just called me a floozie.”

“I think the dated music is rubbing off on me.”

“I’ll rub off on you.”

Eddie snorts. “Even as I said it, I heard your dumb voice in my head fucking saying that and yet I couldn’t stop.”

“You wanted me to say it, only explanation.”

“You caught me.” Eddie gives up on trying to get Richie as dizzy as Richie has gotten him, and throws his arms around his neck instead. He smiles. “We should make up for it, though. Do some things that we missed out on in high school.”

“Yeah?” As far as Richie can remember from his last tour of his parent’s linen closet, that cursed blanket was still around. Maybe they could mail it. Look at him go, racking up things to call his mother about. She’ll be thrilled.

“I mean, you already stalked me while I was working at my after-school job, and left unsigned valentines in my locker, and carved our initials in shit, and—”

Richie’s face goes surface of the Sun hot. He really was Derry’s most hopeless secret homo. “I get it, I get it. I was devoted, all right? Gimme a fucking break.”

“You were the best boyfriend I ever didn’t know I had!” Eddie smirks at him. “I’m just saying you didn’t leave much to the imagination, Rich. If they handed out Letterman jackets for Drama Club, I’d of had yours off of you by the first frost. ‘Oh Eds, are you cold? You’ve got no body fat, stringbean! Here let me warm you up, bro. Don’t read into this!’ ”

He squeezes Eddie around the middle 50% vengefully, 50% nostalgically. New England winters had been so gracious, offering so many freezing cold mornings for them to huddle together at their bus stop.

“Well, obviously I forgot something, or you wouldn’t have brought it up.”

“Wouldn’t you like to know?” Eddie says mysteriously.

The jazzy music fades out, and in comes some unexpectedly hip club banger. Richie tries to guess whether it’s the bored DJ’s bid for some self expression or something that defied the odds and made it to Ben and Bev’s ears in that brief, impressionable window between turning on the car radio and plugging in the iPhone. This becomes clear when Bev shimmies up to them and cuts in with Eddie.

“I want somebody I can manhandle,” she shouts in explanation, and shoots a sorry-not-sorry smile back at Richie.

“Fair’s fair,” says Ben, fist pumping his way up into Richie’s grill.

“Yeah, c’mere Haystack. Inks not dry yet. There’s still time to run away together!” Richie puts a hand in the air. “Spin me.”

Three sweaty minutes of Kesha later, the whole Loser’s club has converged in the middle of the dance floor.
“Hey Bev,” Richie shouts. “Eddie is too shy to ask, but he’s really hoping you have Macarena on the playlist tonight, and if you don’t-”

“No! Fuck!” Eddie hipchecks Richie out of the way. “Don’t listen to him! I do not request the Macarena!”

“I think it is on there,” Bev laughs and pats Eddie apologetically. She looks at Richie. “He told me about your little Loser Prom.”

“What’s this?” asks Ben.

Bev clasps her hands and pouts her lip. “They’re pretending they’re at prom together,” she coos. Ben nods, like this is a normal thing to say.

“Aww,” says Mike, hand to heart. “Cause you didn’t go and you always wanted to?”

Richie raises a hand. “Uhm, we’re not fucking pretending its prom, we’re not perverts-”

“Yeah, just Richie is pervert.”

“- stop helping, Eds.”

“I think I’m the only one who w-went to prom in Derry,” says Bill. “N-none of you dirtbags could get a date.”

“We’d already moved.” Ben motions a thumb between him and Bev.

“All right, Bill, you’re the expert,” says Richie. “What made your prom night special? Don’t skip any gory details.”

Bill grimaces. “Uh. I think my d-date broke up with me as soon as dinner was over.”


“That sounds kinda f-fun.”

“...There was some line dancing, yes,” Ben admits. “And then we crushed beer cans that I didn’t personally drink-

Bev rats him out. “He was a straightedge nerd.” She raises an eyebrow at Richie and Eddie, next. “What’d you two do instead of go to your prom?”

“Ruin my date with Samantha Jones,” Mike says dryly. Eddie scoffs. “Ruin? Dude, what happened to ‘aww Richie and Eddie’?!”

Mike crosses his arms. “I just remembered how you two talked all through the movie and every time I tried to put my arm around her, you made cracks about going too fast.”

“It was fucking Speed,” Eddie bristles. “The plot was about going too fast.”

“Oh.” Richie remembers. Woops. “I was definitely taking shots at Mike’s girlfriend.”

“Jerk!” says Bev, slapping Richie’s arm. “I don’t think you missed much, though. All I did at my
prom was hang around in the bathroom and play Never Have I Ever.”

“Spilling the beans. Always a classic.”

Bill takes a poll. “H-hands up who wants to go p-play Never Have I Ever in the bathroom?”

Eddie nudges Richie, in what is undoubtedly a reminder that they cannot gossip about certain recent developments. If Mike suspected and was out for revenge all it would take is a Never have I ever been engaged and by the laws of Loser friendship, forged in blood of interdimensional spider demons- they would be bound to answer honestly.

Luckily, only Ben puts his hand up.

Bev pushes his hand down. “-And who wants to go crush beer cans in the parking lot!??”

The Losers raise their hands.

Richie throws up devil horns with both hands. “LOSER PROM.”

-

I called my mom. We have this fun game, me and my mom. I never got to come out to her on purpose- classic case of she always knew and just never told me- so every time we talk I like to pretend like this is brand new information. In this case it was something like-

Hi Mom. Yeah. No, I still don’t know the time difference between coasts. So, heeey, do you remember Eddie?

And Mom’s like- Yes, Richard. From, you know, your entire childhood spent up each others armpits and also the years you’ve spent dating him, living with him, and relentlessly gushing about it.

Fuck. Wait. I have to translate this out of a Maine accent or we’re gonna lose everyone in this audience from south of the White Mountains, which I’m guessing is, uhm, all of you.

We have crossed paths, she says. My mother is now played by Frances McDormand. She’s hot off her win, so that’s why there was no budget left for hair and makeup tonight. Sorry to anyone watching this mug in HD.

Mom...

Right, go on, Richard. Which one is Eddie?

That little four-foot-nothing chatterbox with the big Bambi eyes? Well he’s all grown up now and we’re in love and there’s nothing you and Dad can do about it!

And she’s completely unmoved. -Do you think you could just put Eddie on the phone to tell me whatever this is? I’m a little busy, sweetie. Are you two still coming for Dad’s birthday?

I know! She likes him better than me. They text each other low-carb cauliflower pizza heresy behind my back and make fucking holiday itineraries. She high fives Eddie when you assholes don’t clap.

-

“Hi, Maggie.”
“Hi, Eddie.” Mom bumps his cheek with a kiss as they come through the door. “Congratulations, again!”

“Thank you!”

Richie holds out his arms to receive his welcome, too, but she turns to holler up the stairs, instead. “Went, get down here!”

“Typical,” Richie sighs.

He drags their bags through the foyer and dumps them at the entry of the living room. The colors have been updated a few times since he last lived here, but the furniture is in the same configuration it’s always been. If he blindfolded himself he could probably still get the TV dinner tables out from the hutch and set them all up without stubbing any toes.

Having summoned his father, Mom finally comes over and tugs on Richie’s sleeve so he’ll lean down for a kiss. “Hi, buddy. Thanks for coming.”

“Oh, right. It's been a few weeks, so he'd stopped being on guard for whatever hijinks Eddie is planning. No wonder he had come over with a sudden zeal to celebrate Dad’s birthday. Historically the two had always gotten along great, but really, a phone call would suffice. Where better for Eddie to make good on his threat to get a little old school than the place where the literal school was? Sure, they might get arrested for trespassing to suck face under the bleachers, but that could only add to the thrill!

Richie shifts from foot to foot in a parody of nervousness. “Wow, dude. Do you wanna go out on a date? Like, a date date?”

“Yeah,” says Eddie. “Because I like like you. I asked your dad’s permission and everything, so you better put on a fresh shirt and comb what’s left of your hair.”

“Be still my beating heart. Oh man. Are you gonna wear one of those sweaters around your shoulders like the preppy little dreamboat you are?”

Eddie rolls his eyes and brushes past Richie to go bring their luggage upstairs. He follows close at
Eddie’s heels, wishing he had the foresight to pack an old D.A.R.E. tee. *Ah, well.*

They meet Dad at the landing.

“What up, Daddy-o?”

“Hi Doc!”

“Hey, guys. Good flight?” His father pats them each on the back and makes an attempt to lift one of their bags.

“Yeah, no trouble at all, and Happy Early Birthday-”

“I can get that!” Eddie dives in to snatch the bag first, as the self appointed Vice President of Mom’s campaign to keep Dad from giving himself another hernia.

Mom follows them upstairs, needlessly explaining the guest accommodations. Sure, this is the first time that they’re staying overnight here, rather than at the Townhouse, but it’s not like they don’t both know this house backwards and forwards from years of playing Extreme Hide and Seek. Unless his parents have taken to parking the car in the dining room, they can figure it out. He nods along anyway.

“We replaced the twin in your sister’s old room with the queen sized pull-out, since it’s more of an office now. I don’t think the mattress is all that great, but if you’d like it firmer, you could always put it on the floor.”

“Thanks, Mom.” Richie sing songs. He puts his bag on Dad’s office chair, noting the boring ass RTS game currently paused on the computer. He’s been trying for ages to get Dad on to one of the MMOs he plays, but the closest to cooperative play they’ve gotten is online chess. That’s more Eddie’s bag, so he let him take over his account and keep Dad company. *Old farts.*

He follows Mom out to the linen closet down the hall and holds out his arms for her to load him up with pillows and blankets.

“I know you like two of each,” she says, piling on. “Does Eddie like two pillows?”

“He brought his own.” Tempurpedic, of course. It had been a real battle of wills to stop Eddie from bringing a mattress topper, too, especially when Richie fucking loved that thing. He’s never been a great sleeper, but three inches of memory foam and a back massage made a huge difference. Literally sleeping with Eddie had completely turned his life around.

Richie hooks his chin over the mountain of bedding to cart it back to the room.

“Heavens, Mamá! I’m shocked you’re letting an unmarried couple sleep in the same room! I seem to remember Meredith’s gentleman callers being banished to the dungeon.”

“Basement,” corrects Mom. “And she was twenty.”

“Is my virtue of no concern to you?”

“You’re in your forties, sweetheart.”

“An old maid! All the more reason to safeguard my few prospects.”

Inside the office again, Eddie has already pulled out the couch. He takes the sheets from Richie and starts unfurling them across the bed. “Listen to this backtalk. You should ground him, Maggie.”
Mom chuckles and gives Eddie a hand with the sheets. “Richard, you’re grounded. Go to your room.”

“But it’s only got a twin!” Richie pouts.

“Finally, I’ll get some peace and quiet.” Eddie throws Richie a wicked glance over his shoulder as he tucks an elasticized corner.

“Hmph!”

With the bed set, they freshen up from their flight then reconvene downstairs. Richie and Eddie stand at opposite sides of the front door, waiting for Dad to echo-locate his car keys. A whistled rendition of “On the Road Again” winds through the house as he checks every flat surface on the ground floor.

“Spooky isn’t it.”

“It’s like looking into your future,” Eddie smirks. “Just replace Willie Nelson with Beastie Boys.”

“You love it,” Richie shoots back.

“God help me.”

Finally Dad gets his act together, jingling his keys at the two of them. “Let’s went!”

Richie opens the door to let them out. “Get it, Eds? The past tense? And his name is Wentworth? He thinks he’s funny.”

“That affliction runs in the family,” says Dad, beeping the car lock like a drum sting.

Eddie snickers all the way down the front steps and to the driveway. “Thanks for the ride, Doc.”

“Sorry you got roped into our weird thing, Dad. We’ll have a rental tomorrow.”

Dad shrugs. “It’s only ten minutes away and retirement is boring. Maybe if I like chauffeuring you around I’ll do Uber.”

Richie snorts. Watch out Derry.

“Shotgun,” calls Eddie. He jogs around to the passenger side of Dad’s Hyundai.

“Aw c’mon! I’ve got legs!”

Richie slumps his way to the back door but gets in just the same. It really is a throwback to the olden days, sucking on his kneecaps in the back seat and trying not to rip the Rand McNallys jammed in the pocket behind the driver. At least Dad thoughtfully pulls up his seat a notch.

“You okay back there, Larry Bird?”

“Uh... yeah?”

Eddie slides in on the other side of the back seat and buckles up, despite his treachery just moments ago.

Richie scowls. “You called shotgun.”
“So that you wouldn’t.” Eddie slips his hand across the seat until his pinky bumps into Richie’s. The ring that he put on Eddie’s hand that night after Bev and Ben's wedding glints invitingly.

Richie turns over his palm to let their fingers weave together. A lump rises in his throat when he realizes they don’t even do this in cabs. He’s not sure if that was because he was still a little scared to, or if he had just never got into the habit, having spent so many years taking cabs alone back to an empty apartment. His eyes flick to the front seat, but obviously Dad doesn’t care if they hold hands like a couple of teenagers. Probably wouldn’t have cared back then either- just another element of Richie’s touchy-feely way with other boys that no one but bullies bothered to point out. He has clear memories of swatting and grabbing hands with Bill and Stan in the back seat, *stop hitting yourself* *stop hitting yourself*, but not so much with Eddie- at least not that he initiated. Too risky.

He rubs his thumb over Eddie’s knuckles. Eddie’s hand in his is like an extra layer of protection. Not armor, exactly. It's not taxing to wear. Maybe it's like putting scotch tape over the holes in a cassette to record over the old stuff. *I love this, I love him* playing over *I shouldn’t, I can’t*.

They pull up to the town square still entwined. Richie doesn’t even feel particularly sweaty-palmed when he gets his hand back to unbuckle. Before he gets out of the car he sticks his head between the front seats to check in with Dad.

“So, I guess we’ll give you a call later?”

“Guess again,” says Eddie, peering into the car from the sidewalk. “I’m walking you home.”

Dad taps the gear stick expectantly. “It’s a school night. I want you back by 9.”

“Really?” Richie glances back and forth between him and Eddie. What level of realism are they aiming for here?

“No, Rich. Come on.”

“Have a nice time!”

“Thanks, Doc.”

Addicted to it now, Richie meets Eddie at the curb and takes his hand again. “By the way, it’s stupid cute you still call him Doc when he hasn’t been your dentist in thirty years.”

“I have a continuing respect for the profession. Dental health is very important to overall life expectancy, you know this.”

“If I didn’t, I’d have you to remind me, Eds.” Richie flashes a toothy grin and swings their arms as they begin to walk. “So, Eddie, my fourteen going on forty studmuffin. Where to? I know you rake in the big bucks bagging groceries at Hannaford. Does Derry have a Ritz?”

“Shit, man.” Eddie’s face washes over with the sort horror reserved for remembering the minimum wage from decades prior. “I’m thinkin’ Burger King, and if we scrounge around under some park benches for loose change, maybe we can split a side of fries.”

“You spoil me,” says Richie. "But, if that's what you want to do-"

“I am not sharing a pull-out with you after a greasy five dollar dinner, relax.”

Eddie pulls a smarmy face back at him. “I’m gonna use my influence to put in a good word for you and get you ungrounded, how’s that sound?”

“My hero. How ‘bout The Grill Room?” Richie suggests. They’ve stopped just across the corner from it.

“Perfect.” Eddie slaps the crosswalk button in agreement.

“I love to watch the waitstaff twitch when you order red meat.” Eddie is all about walking that line between insisting on a safe cook and not getting their food spat on. It’s edgier than any comedy Richie could attempt.

The inside of The Grill Room is a time capsule. It’s still sort of churchlike, with all low built wooden furniture and those mottled red glasses that looked just the same as the prayer candles you weren’t supposed to light. Having been raised in Mom’s very chicken-centric view of nutrition, a visit to The Grill for some real meat was akin to the one time a year they got spruced up and dragged to Christmas Mass. Asking the hostess for a table for two feels vaguely sacramental.

“How’re you liking these buns?” Richie asks, as Eddie bites into a dinner roll. He waggles his eyebrows.

“Modestly portioned, but nice and hot.”

Richie bats his eyelashes as he unwraps his straw. “You say the sweetest things, Eds. What a gentleman.”

Eddie makes a little bow with one arm and then tries for an encore. “That shirt looks really sharp with that jacket.”

“Why thank you- Bev is teaching me about power clashing.” With the moratorium on engagement news lifted, they’ve been doing a lot of online shopping while seeking Richie’s Look. He’d never consciously worn much else besides cotton and polyester until entering Bev’s tutelage, but he must admit- “Something about a silk shirt makes me feel super fuckable.”

Eddie rests his chin in one hand and looks at Richie, impressed. “Man. That’s the gayest thing you’ve ever said to me.”

“Really? Power clashing silk shirts? I know I’ve kept a lid on my musical theatre opinions to prevent fistfights with Lloyd-Webber stans,” Richie demures. “-but am I not being vocal enough about how much I love sucking your dick?”

“Yeah,” Eddie coughs, caught off guard by the point blank. His chin slips out of his hand for a moment before he recovers. This shirt must really be something else. “You usually hold back on that sort of locker room talk.”

Richie rolls his straw wrapper into a loop that’s much too big for a finger and presents it to Eddie. “As the philosopher said, ‘If you like it, then you shoulda put a ring on it.”

“You’re really filling up the leaderboard today,” Eddie says, accepting and pocketing his gift.

“You think that’s gay, wait until you see what Bev was suggesting for reception themes. You are gonna have o-pin-ions!” Richie Z snaps.

They barrage each other with increasingly bizarre wedding pinboard items until their dinner is served.
“No joke, I’m all about the National Aviary. Reminds me of Stan.”

“Pittsburgh’ll be freezing in March,” Eddie gently reminds Richie. “Could try one that’s more southern, though. You like tropical things- tropical birds. Speaking of birds, how’s the duck?”

“The duck’s delicious, s’anks for asking,” he answers in Daffy Duck’s slobbering Voice. “How’s your steak?”

Eddie sighs, cutting off a sliver of the outermost edge. “A little underdone.”

Richie thunks the handles of his silverware against the table with an ecstatic groan. “Dude. Are you gonna send it back? Oh my god. Wait- let me open my camera app-”

Eddie takes a resigned bite. “Don’t tease me.”

“Who’s teasing? I am rock hard right now. This is my porn.”

In the end, Eddie makes up for the steak he doesn’t eat with pilfered potatoes from Richie’s plate, a delicious dessert, and the satisfaction of telling the waiter that, aha, No. He will not be wanting a box for the leftovers.

“Even if it was good and I wanted it later, I wouldn’t have wanted to babysit it during the movie,” Eddie grumbles. “But they don’t need to know about that.”

“You’re right- whatever meat you choose to have in your lap this evening is strictly between us,” Richie agrees, sliding out of the booth. As he stands he flaps the back of his jacket at Eddie, serving up one last pair of modestly portioned buns, for the road.

They head over to The Capitol Theater a few blocks away, which has reopened and refurbished since the last time Richie paid a visit. Most things in Derry are looking better, these days. The planters along the sidewalk are blooming, and the people passing by are more likely to smile and nod if they have to squeeze past each other. Maybe they don’t know what sort of cloud they used to be under, but they’re certainly out here now, enjoying the sunlight.

Since this outing is unpremeditated on Richie’s end, he wavers at the door of The Capitol, unsure if Eddie already has tickets. “What you thinking, Eds?”

"Pfft." Richie chuckles indiscretely and Eddie glares at him.

"I'm- ! I- You're the one who- !"

Richie just pulls Eddie to his side. “Own it, babe.”

Eddie is picky, but he picked me, he thinks. It’s turned out to be one of the best things about him, after all. He’s also forgiving. Eddie leans into his shoulder and slips his arm around Richie's back.

“I just want to treat you to something you’d like. We haven’t seen any of these yet. I’d say maybe go for something nostalgic, but...”

The schedule is wall to wall remakes, reboots, and reimaginings. Going for nostalgia doesn’t really narrow things down.

Richie spots something that starts soon. “That Mister Rogers doc I want to see is up in fifteen minutes but- full disclosure, I did cry through the entire trailer.”
“Don’t be a hero, man. We can stream it from the privacy of the kleenex nest we call a bed.” Eddie gives him a squeeze then keeps running down their options. “*Solo* is in ten?”

“It’s so messed up that I’m ambivalent about seeing a new Star Wars movie—*while on a date with Eddie Fucking Kaspbrak*. If you told thirteen year old me that this was going to be his life he would—” Richie throws his hands up in astonishment. “Coming from you, Eds, I would have dropped dead of shock on the spot. But anyone else! I would have expected them to spontaneously combust, butt hole first, for telling such a crazy fucking lie.”

Eddie turns to him with crossed arms and a knowing look. “Oh, I see. So you don’t care how Chewbacca is doing?”

“Yes, of course I do! How could you even ask that!?” He grabs Eddie’s hand and pulls him towards the box office. “Let’s go.”

They get their tickets and go in. Since general admission seating is increasingly a thing of the past, Richie tags along while Eddie presides over the popcorn at the concession stand. He preemptively grabs napkins to deal with any future butterfingers, then hooks his arm into Eddie’s and off they go to Theater 6, Row M. The very back.

They’ve got about three minutes until trailers, and four rows between them and the other audience members, the sensible adults in the middle of the theater where Richie and Eddie would ordinarily choose to sit. It’s not a very well attended showing, truth be told, but all the better to canoodle in.

As they make their way into the aisle, Eddie winces at every tack of their feet on the sticky linoleum. “Ok, this definitely is the handjobs seat. Like no doubt about it, the fertility bank could set up a fucking pop up clinic back here.”

Richie giggles at Eddie. “This is the teen sweethearts experience, man. That’s what you wanted. No privacy, no money to get a bomb ass hotel room and go to town on each other. Just some sweaty hormone monsters feelin’ up each other’s nards in the dark of the picture show.”

Eddie takes his seat gingerly. “How did we live like this?!?”

“We *didn’t* that’s why we’re here.”

When they were kids they might have snagged back row once in awhile, but that was almost always because they were with a group. In the high school etiquette book, two people on their own couldn’t just waltz into a theater with ample options, pick seats in the least observable spot and *not* invite the conclusion they were there to hook up.

Before he sits down, Richie pulls up the arm rest between their two seats. It means someone will always have to keep hold of the popcorn, but this way they can snuggle together comfortably. He slides in with his arm around Eddie and leans over, the tip of his nose brushing just below his ear. “Isn’t this nice?” He lays a single, plump kiss on Eddie’s neck, warm and scented like the vanilla bean soap at Mom and Dad’s. He must have washed his face while Richie was changing, earlier.

“Mmm.” Eddie leans into his attention for a moment, then stills. “I’m just gonna remind you we are not here to get Pee Wee Hermaned. We’re not actually some fucking puppylove sixteen year olds who’ll get their record expunged in two years.”

“Yeah, no, I’ve got a career to think about. No hands in pants,” Richie swears.

With that clarified, Eddie relaxes and lets Richie pepper him with a few more little love bites. “I *do*
want to watch some of this movie. Like, I like Han and Lando- I wanna know what their fucking deal is.”

“Amicably divorced.”

“Well, duh,” Eddie laughs. The projector starts playing some local ad that he ignores by turning into one of Richie’s kisses, and then he settles in for the show.

Until Han Solo starts macking on the *Game of Thrones* chick, that is. Eddie turns to Richie with a look of utmost betrayal. *Does Princess Leia know about this??* Richie just shrugs at Eddie.

After that initial shock is adjusted to, they make it to the bottom of their popcorn (which Richie lets Eddie monopolize because of his displeasing steak) and the second wave of character death quite chastely.

“Eh, that’s a bummer,” says Eddie.

“Oh oh,” whispers Richie. “This means it's time for a studio mandated missable-action-sequence-slash-pee-break to lift the audience’s spirits.”

Eddie quietly pushes himself out of his seat and gathers the empty popcorn bag and used napkins. “I’m taking my chance.”

On cue, the movie lapses into a bunch of pat technobabble and the space equivalent of a Look! Sponsored Car Go Vroom sequence.

“If this bullshit’s still happening when you get back we are making out,” Richie mutters.

Eddie winks at him, and when he reappears a few minutes later, the Millennium Falcon is still hurtling senselessly through space. Richie curls a finger at him as he comes back down the row.

“You didn’t miss much,” he hisses.

Eddie sits down next to him and immediately tucks his face into Richie’s neck and puts a freshly de-buttered hand on his knee. “Sure I did,” he kisses Richie’s cheek.

Richie catches his lips with his own and lets Eddie push him back into his seat. He pins Richie in place and licks into his mouth, the musical click of parting lips and tongue somehow louder in Richie’s head than the booming soundtrack. He never knows what he likes better, climbing on Eddie or having Eddie on him. Any which way, his brain just goes *this this this this right now please.* He takes hold of Eddie’s jaw and spreads his fingers on his cheek, then down and around his neck and into his unbuttoned collar, feeling every perfect inch. He runs his thumbs along that V of muscle running from ear to sternum, but it’s not enough skin. He fumbles for the hem of Eddie’s polo and rucks it up to touch just a little more. He only promised no hands in pants, after all.

“Fuck,” Eddie inhales as Richie teases, clawing his nails into his waistband. “Watch it.”

“Don’t wanna watch. M’kissing,” Richie mushes. He shoves his hand from Eddie’s waist to his chest and pinches a nipple. He knows it’s like the doorbell to Eddie’s dick, and boy does he love ringing it until he gets an answer. As soon as he gets one nipple hard, he laser focuses on the other.

Eddie shivers and shifts his hand further up Richie’s thigh, pushing more of his weight into him until he’s nearly out of his own seat. “Then kiss me,” he growls. “Don’t make me shove your fucking mouth on my dick.”
Richie thinks fast. His best sport was always Calvinball. He could definitely give head without using his hands! “Is mouth in pants?”

“Unngyeah- no. No.” Eddie kisses him with a hard bite. “You are so gonna get it, later.”

“Yes please.” Richie backs off, pulling his hand out of Eddie’s shirt. He lays back in his chair, smugly. He’ll take a raincheck. “That’s a verbal contract, Eddie.”

They make it through the rest of the movie and out of the theater with only the happy threat of indecent exposure, but Richie feels so thoroughly loved-up, he can’t complain. He slings his arm around Eddie as they step out into the evening.

“Say what you will about the Disney monolith, Eddie.” Richie takes a deep breath of the cool air. “Since the buy out, they’ve really leaned into the characterization of Chewbacca as the Ideal Boyfriend.”

Eddie looks at his suspiciously. “Is that why you always got to be Han and I always got Gumby-bacca?”

“No, don’t be silly. You had to be Gumby-bacca because I didn’t have the real figurine! And because I’m the smoothtalker,” Richie grins and points his thumb to his chest.

“You know, I feel like you’ve misunderstood this galaxy for your entire life but considering you’re exactly as much of a hotshot dumbluck dipshit as Han Solo, I’m gonna let that slide.”

Such high praise, it’s a wonder Richie doesn’t trip over his own feet in shock. He slides his arm down to catch Eddie’s hand again as they beginning walking. “See? That’s what Chewie would say.”

Eddie shakes his head. “I just didn’t know what kind of competition I was being measured against. The king of all bears, Richie, really?”

Richie snickers. “That feels stereotyping based on body hair. Is he a bear? Or is he just a daddy?”

“Jesus Christ.”

Richie slows and strokes his chin in thought. “He’s definitely daddy.”

"Please stop ruining my childhood,” says Eddie, breaking away from Richie’s grasp and double timing it down the sidewalk.

“That was already a lost cause!” Richie hollers after him.

They catch up with each other on the corner of the block. Eddie stands under the streetlight, biting back a smile. It’s unusual reversal of their pattern as pedestrians. Richie is the one constantly stopping at crosswalks, tapping his foot and popping off offers of piggyback rides or to put Eddie on rollerskates and a rope. Call him co-dependent, whipped, whatever, but after so long apart- fuck it! Maybe he’d really do it. His back would break from hauling that little fucker around, but at least they’d always be connected. Eddie slips his hand in Richie’s and they cross the street back to the town square.

“Are we gonna be those people, now?”

“Which ones?”
“Hand holders,” Richie says ostentatiously, like it’s holders of annual box seats at the opera. “We’re kind of on a tear, today, dude. Just wondered if it was going to last.”

“It’s happening right now. Enjoy it.” Eddie tugs his arm, pointedly.

Richie does, for a few blocks. They make it off of the main commercial drag towards the more residential area, but he keeps circling back around to thoughts of what will happen in the future.

“It’s just- I don’t know how these things go. If we’d started dating just before we left Derry—” he trails off.

They stop at the next corner, and Eddie takes a breath. “I know- I know that we’re two years in and it’s the longest relationship you’ve ever had. It feels longer, too, but it’s not all that long so you don’t know—”

“Fucking hell!” Richie starts to panic. “We wouldn’t even be half way through college yet! It’d be ridiculous that we’re—”

“Stop, Richie stop.” Eddie grabs both his hands. “This isn’t the same as that. Fuck, this isn’t the same as anything, except maybe Bev and Ben. It’d be fucking stupid if we were engaged at nineteen, yeah- but we’re not kids. It’s not like we know nothing.”

Richie huffs. “I have no actual experience- I know things fucking anecdotally, maybe! Like that the longer people are together, they stop doing the little things. Holding hands. Big things too. Hell, half of all stand-up is built on bitching about wives that won’t fuck anymore.”

A lopsided grin cracks Eddie’s face. “At least when I stop fucking you as your husband, the comedic premise will be fresh.”

“I’m being serious!”

“Yeah, I know.”

“One day you’re not gonna want to! I might not want to!”

Eddie’s smile drops and he just looks up at Richie with those big brown eyes, more hatched in by worry lines than he’s seen them in quite a while.

Oh no.

“Fuck. Sorry. Fuck. We’re having a nice time, why did I have to get on this track. So what if we never hold hands again?” Richie asks, breaking away to throw his hands up. As if he can prove it won’t hurt him, losing this thing he only just realized he wanted. “We didn’t really do that until just now- it’s not conditional! I just need—”

Eddie squares up his full height like he’s got a battle to fight and throws his arms around Richie. He burrows his chin into his shoulder. “Richie... As long as you want anything from me—”

Richie’s voice cracks. “- I just need to be near you,” he finishes, and he knows it’s what Eddie is trying to tell him, too. They hold each other tight for a long moment.

Eddie slides the circle of his arms up to around Richie’s neck to look up at him again. He threads into the curls at the back, the blunt of his nails rasping a soothing pulse. “Listen Rich, the truth is- yeah. Things slip away. But if the relationship is any good, then new things come up, too.”
This dazes Richie as much as a kiss would. “Like what?” he asks. What was he not realizing? How much more could there be to being with Eddie than he knew?

"Lemme think. Uh..Oh!" Eddie laughs. He laughs so hard he lets go of Richie, but it’s hard to mind when he’s bubbling over like this. Whenever he really lets go it has a way of putting Richie at ease— if Eddie is laughing then things can’t be so bad after all.

“Oh, it’s a real groaner.” Eddie wheezes.

“Tell me!” Richie swats his arm.

“You’re gonna. So- you know how like? For the longest time we couldn’t say what the fuck it was we wanted from each other? It was all mom jokes and- it was kind of fun! Right? Like, getting that energy out, however we could...”

“We still roast each other, like, non stop, Eds.”

“Yeah!” he grins. “But instead of making mom jokes because I’m too chicken shit to say I fucking love you, now I just? I tell you I love you and like—” Eddie shrugs and grins. “I have a meaningful friendship with your mom? Because she's a nice lady and she loves you and by extension-”


“See?”

Richie nods and wraps Eddie into a bear hug, rocking him from side to side and off his feet a little. He slobbers a wet kiss on Eddie’s forehead. “I get it. And when we’re eighty and get tired of taking fucking Viagra, I’ll take up gardening. You’ll see the flowers I cut for you in the kitchen and be like, those are my commemorative sex flowers. How beautiful.”

Eddie sighs, held tight against him. “You know, you can pick up hobbies before our physical relationship falls apart,” he points out.

“Nope. We're gonna be too busy fuckin’.”

“Not here,” chuckles Eddie, pushing out of his arms again. “Let’s head back, already. Jesus. This is the longest its ever taken to walk back to the neighborhood. Get moving slowpoke.”

Richie follows. “Yeah, I think I got all the emotional detours out for now. Does look like there’s a new bus stop up ahead, though. Maybe I could have a mid-life crisis there.”

They set off walking again. Some of the streets have sidewalks, some only have a crumble of sand between lawn and road. They nudge shoulders as they go, holding hands and letting go around sign posts, then joining back up again. It’s just like how they used to roam on their bikes, weaving on and off of the pavement to dodge cars, hopping curbs and swearing at uphill climbs. When they get to Richie’s street, he starts freestyling new lyrics to “On The Street Where You Live” from the not-so-classic musical My Fair Eddie.

“Eddie left his steaaak- at the restaurant- But he let me go see any movie that I waaant!”

“I’m in hell,” says Eddie. “I actually died and I’m in hell.”

“Then he walked me hooome- cause he wants to booone- This is what you get for hitching your wagon to a song and dance man, Eds.” Richie throws his arms wide for the finale. “-In the hoooouse, on the street where I liiiived!”
Eddie slow claps. “Fantastic. I’ll get in touch in six years when I forget about this and my ability to get a fucking hard on returns.”

Richie hooks his arm back into Eddie’s. Ah, there is no greater privilege than to embarrass Eddie with affection. “Great! I should be done workshopping it by then. I’ll get you comp tickets and we can make a real night of it.”

Finally they arrive back at the Tozier house, where the light of the TV flickers in the living room window. Thirty years ago at this time of night? Mom and Dad were probably watching Cheers. Maybe they still are. Richie strains to hear a laugh track as they walk up the paving stones to the front door, but the windows are closed for the air conditioning- not that it’s hot out. It was just the right time of year for being walked to one’s door by a high school sweetheart, in fact. Prom night weather.

At the top of the steps, Richie leans back against the door. He mimes putting on a chapstick and smacks his lips. He doesn’t bother to carry any because Eddie always does, and it’s much more fun to rifle through his pockets. Eddie steps up in front of him and offers him the real deal.

“Hah. Thanks.”

“Ruins your little joke, but since when has that ever stopped me?”

“Never stop, Eds.” Richie swipes some on and licks his lips.

“I won’t.”

Eddie looks so charming, standing on his doorstep, back-dropped by the beech trees and azalea bushes that hem in the yard. Still dimple-cheeked as he was as a boy and demanding to be adored with everything Richie has in him. Pucker up, buttercup. He puts the tube back in Eddie’s jacket pocket but keeps his hand in, using it to reel him closer. When their chests bump, Richie’s stomach flips. He must have kissed Eddie a thousand times by now, but this doorstep is one of the first places he’d fantasized about it happening- a dream on the verge of coming true.

“So, what now?”

“I kiss you goodnight, pretend to go back to my house, then run around to the patio door?”

“Well, you brought me home late, so I doubt your old buddy Doc will let you in.”

“We could sneak in-”

“I don’t wanna sneak you around, Eds. I want to show you off.”

Eddie leans up and ghosts the tip of his nose along Richie’s cheekbone. “Such a fucking romantic,” he says, low. His hand lands on Richie’s waist under his jacket and rubs at him through the soft material of his shirt like he’s polishing a priceless work of art.

Richie waits. He waits for Eddie to kiss him first, like he did that first time Richie put his heart on the line. That was all he ever wanted- for Eddie to notice he was waiting and wanting him so much. Eddie notices. He tips up his chin and kisses Richie’s cheek and then the corner of his mouth. With one hand, he turns Richie’s face to his and connects not just their lips, but the two versions of this moment in Richie’s head. Richie is kissing the Eddie at the front door of his childhood home, where they played together and grew up, and he’s kissing the Eddie he’s going to marry and have his own home with. Maybe one day they’ll sit in their own unchanging living room and watch the gritty 2035
reboot of Cheers and wait for their hapless child to come home from a first date.

“How was that?” Eddie smiles at him.

Richie melts against the door. “Worth getting grounded for,” he sighs.

“Should we go in?”

Richie’s eyes go wide. “I don’t have keys anymore.” He stands up straight and rattles the door knob. “Oh that’s fucking cute. We have to knock for them to let us in. Are we disheveled? Quick, Eddie, gimme a hickey.”

He reaches out to wind an arm around Eddie, but Eddie leans past him and raps the door.

Eddie wrinkles his nose at Richie. “What? I’m protecting your reputation.”

“My parents will be so relieved.”

The door opens and Mom stands there with a slightly embarrassed smile. “We locked you out, huh?”

“Sheesh, Mom- we were about to set up camp on the front lawn.”

They come inside and check in on Dad in the living room. He’s poised with the remote, waiting to unpause.

“How was your date night?”

Richie grins and points his thumb at Eddie. “I think he likes me back!”

Mom chuckles as she sits back down on the couch. “I could have told you that. You should hear what he says about you on the phone.”

Eddie raises a finger to his lips. “It’s more fun to keep him guessing.”

It’s cute- its so fucking cute that they get along like this. Some gentle hearted, doting in-laws are a gift he didn’t realize he had given Eddie until tonight, and it fills him with tenderness. It’s what Eddie deserves after having such shit luck with his own parents. “Mind if I grab a shower? Give you pals a chance to yuck it up…”

“Sure, sweetheart.”

“Could you turn off the computer while you’re up there, Rich?”

“Yeah, no prob.” Richie kisses Eddie’s cheek and practically floats up the stairs.

As he climbs, Dad starts their show back up. “Eddie, are you caught up on The Good Fight?”

“Of course.”

After his shower he trades off with Eddie, and then stretches out across the pull-out in his striped shirt and some boxers. He buries his nose in Eddie’s Tempurpedic and listens to the sound of the shower, the TV playing downstairs, and his parents laughing along. He hadn’t expected to feel at home here ever again when he left. Horrendous quality of the pull-out mattress aside, he’d been so wrong.

Before long, footsteps creak on the stairs and Mom pokes her head through the door. Dad waves
from behind her, too.

“Night, Rich!”

“You have everything you need, sweetie?”

Richie rolls over and grins back at her. “I know you mean, like- towels and toothpaste, but yeah, Mom. I’ve really, really got everything I need.”

“I’m glad to hear it.” Her eyes crinkle. “If you want to jog with me in the morning, I go out at six.”

“If I’m up. You’re a rock star, you know that?”

“I guess you had to get it from somewhere, Richie,” Mom laughs. “Goodnight. Oh! Goodnight Eddie.” She slips away to let Eddie through the door.

He crosses to the bed and reaches out to squeeze one of Richie’s feet, hanging off the pull-out. “You sleepy?”

“Eh. I’m relaxed, which is the next best thing.” He travels in and out of too many time zones to have a consistent bedtime and Eddie is a saint for rolling with it.

“Good.” Eddie crawls up the bed on his bare knees, his tee shirt and shorts clinging to his shower dampened skin. He lays his wet head on Richie’s stomach. “Oops.”

“Oops nothing! You just want me to take my shirt off,” says Richie.

“I like your shirt. It’s, as you say- super fuckable.”

“It’s wet now!” Richie sooches up the bed to grab his towel hanging off the back of Dad’s office chair. He props himself up against the couch part of the pull-out and then motions for Eddie to come sit in between his legs so he can towel him dry.

“I feel like I just took a dog out for a walk in the rain.”

Eddie growls at him. “Too rough.”

“You’re the one whos always saying harder, Richie. Stop fucking flirting and really give it to me.”

“Well now I’m saying softly, Richie. Flirt with me.”

“Picky, picky.” Richie bends and kisses the back of Eddie’s shoulder as he gently massages with the towel. He should do this all the time. He already waylays Eddie when he’s coming out of the shower on the reg, but this is a good addition to the seduction repertoire. “I love you, you know.”

“I do know.” Eddie puffs a laugh. “I’d say the same but that’s a little too direct for flirting, don’t you think?”

“I don’t do coy!” Richie protests. It’s not his fault people don’t appreciate a little bro-on-bro wooing when they hear it. “All right, asshole. Indirect. Dear Diary,”

“Uh oh.”

“Beverly Hills Cop?” Eddie asks, his voice going high.

Richie drops the Voice to explain. “Eddie, Eddie Murphy? It’s a code name, it was the 80’s. The Cold War was still on and I wasn’t committing my gay crush to paper, Eds.”

“Right, right. Good cover,” Eddie snickers. “I love Beverly Hills Cop. I’m always thinking about Beverly Hills Cop. Beverly Hills Cop makes me fucking horny. People read that in your diary and go- from what I know of Richie, this checks out.”

Richie puts down the towel and pulls Eddie back into his arms. “It was like, the perfect night. Despite Beverly Hills Cop’s steak. And the mini freak out I had. And the unblown blow job I’ve been like, drooling for-”

Eddie lolls his head back comfortably on Richie’s shoulder. “Okay, that’ll raise some flags for even your most oblivious readers...”

He loses track of the Valley girl and just pours it out to Eddie while raking his fingers through his hair. “And all the times Beverly Hills Cop interrupted my bit, when I’m trying to tell him that he took me on the perfect date and I wanna go steady with him. Forever. Beverly Hills Cop is capital T, capital O- The One. I wanna walk home with him and kiss him at the door and talk through movies and refuse to split brownie sundaes with him, because that way I wind up with mine and half of his. I wanna have a stomach ache later because then he harasses me about it and his eyebrows do this adorable, angry little thing, right here.” Richie taps Eddie’s forehead with one finger, then resumes combing.

“Stop eating dairy,” Eddie says, as though it's so simple.

“I can’t do that. I’m just not a badass like you.”

“That’s true, Rich, you’re a dumb ass.”

Richie pulls Eddie’s hair, a little.

“Fuck.” Eddie squirms.

“Harder, Richie. Pull my hair, Richie.”

Eddie tenses, then starts shoving to get out of Richie’s lap and onto the flat of the bed. “Fucking right,” he says, dragging Richie down on top of him.

“Anyway, Diary- Richie signing off!” Richie yelps, struggling to rearrange his body so suddenly while Eddie rutts up against him. “Hugs and kisses, ex oh ex ohh.”

Eddie reaches up into the billow of his shirt and scratches at his happy trail. “Richie-”

“Yes, my dearest loveliest love?”

Richie snorts. He is aware he is a little over the top, at times. All of the times, probably. Oh! “Wait-like, literally?”

“Such a dumbass, Rich.” Eddie slips into his waistband, down the back of his boxers, and grabs his ass with both hands.
He kisses Eddie into the, *yeah actually*, pretty terrible mattress. Then his hands find their way into Eddie’s hair again and he pulls his head back by it, exposing his lovely throat. He scrapes his teeth hard down Eddie’s neck, making him moan. He does it again and Eddie’s fingers grip into the crease of flesh between Richie’s thighs and backside.

“You gonna play with my dumbass?” Richie mouths into his neck. At the suggestion, Eddie’s hands start prying his cheeks. There is no way Eddie will go for anal in someone else’s house, but maybe...

“*Love* your ass. Love it when I get you~” he inches his fingers tantalizing close to where Richie wants them, then stops. “Wait. You’re gonna be way loud about it. Your parents are like, twelve feet away, dude.”

“Basement?”

Eddie yucks. “Ugh. I am not gonna fucking finger you on the dirty rec room couch like a fucking-”

“*Teenager.*” Richie smirks.

“...We could just stay here and you could just *shut up for once.*”

“You don’t *really* want that do you, Eds?” He lathes Eddie’s adam’s apple with his tongue and feels him gulp. “We go down to the basement. I go down on you.”

“Shit...” Eddie squeezes his cheeks again.

Richie sits up, eyebrows bouncing. If Eddie wants any more of this hot piece, he’d better come play along. “Hey, basement’s just in theme with the night, right? Ehh? Just like high school? Which is lucky because after thirty years in the closet, my technique definitely got held back a few years. I am working on that GED, though. You know what that stands for Eds. Gagging on Eddie’s Dick.”

Eddie groans. “Do you even know what GED *actually* stands for?”

“I never needed to find out.” Richie points, demonstratively, to the picture of him and his parents at graduation, hanging on the office wall. He’s got a special tassel on his mortarboard and everything. “I fucking *crushed* academically.”

“How, I’ll never know,” Eddie sighs.

Richie swarms back down to Eddie again, pecking his face relentlessly. “Obviously I just wanted to impress you with my... Massive. Throbbing. Brain. Whaddaya say, Eds?”

“This mattress does *really* fucking suck... Yeah, fine. Fuck, Richie.” Eddie pats his hip. “Get off.”

“That’s the idea!”

Richie kneels off of Eddie and scots off the pull-out. He picks up the towel from before and tosses it over Eddie’s shoulder as he sits up on the edge of the bed. He turns off the light, opens the door to the hallway, and whispers back to Eddie.

“Stealth mish. I go first you follow.”

Eddie slips up behind him and curls his hand into Richie’s. “Shouldn’t it be the other way around?” he hisses. “You are... not great at stealth, man. There’s a reason you were always our look out.”

He turns and puts a finger to Eddie’s lips, then backs out the door, head bopping to the beat of
“Secret Agent Man”. Eddie almost loses it when he makes like he’s gonna go down the stairs backwards, but he turns around at the last moment and creeps down right way ‘round. At the bottom of the stairs he waves Eddie on, then scurries through the kitchen to the basement door, bowing deeply as he opens it.

“After you.” He follows Eddie down the stairs, dodging the reusable shopping bags hung along the wall.

Boy, he hopes there’s still a couch down here. Richie hasn’t actually come down to the basement since- ? Whatever Thanksgiving was right after Obama was elected. He and Meredith got champagne drunk and hung out under the foosball table. (Great night.) He’ll make it work on fucking beanbag chair if he’s got to, but he’s really crossing his fingers for a couch...

And there it is, spotlighted by moonlight, in all it’s crochet-throw, mismatched pillowed glory. Eddie turns and glares at him like he’s just suggested they dine Japanese style on the floor of a goat pen.

“What? Do you think we should put out a half played Jenga game for plausible deniability?”

“... get rid of that blanket, Rich, I swear to god...”

Richie automatically grabs the blanket and throws it clear across the room. He holds his arms out to Eddie. “C’mere, Eddie, it can’t hurt you anymore.”

“I should make you go upstairs and wash your hands,” Eddie says, but he lets Richie pull him in.

“Where were we?”

Richie answers by tangling his hands into the back of Eddie’s tee and pulling it off, then pushes him back into the couch. He climbs on Eddie’s lap and starts unbuttoning his own shirt while he kisses him. As fast as he can expose himself, Eddie’s hands are scratching into his chest hair, pulling down his sleeves and tickling down his arms. Richie loves to press their bare chests together. If he’d ever been asked to pinpoint an early, revelatory gay thought it was definitely- I wanna hug Eddie; no shirts. Like this Richie can feel him sweat, feel him breathe, feel every prickle of flesh as their kissing and touching raises the hair on their bodies. The only thing he wants between his heart and Eddie’s is the intangible. Love love love.

“You feel me?” he asks between kisses. “You feel how much I love you?”

Eddie nods without parting their mouths and shifts his hips tellingly.

“Yeah, yeah. I’m getting to that.” Richie drags himself away and slides down onto the floor between Eddie’s knees. He replaces his chest on Eddie’s with his mouth, drawing circles with his tongue around each of his nipples, lapping until they’re hard.

Everybody in the house, uh, just stay where you are, Richie prays under his breath as he pulls down Eddie’s pants. It’s one thing to know your son is a cocksucker, but it’s another thing to see it. This is what the mangey blanket is supposed to be for. Emergency sex tents. He gets hold of Eddie and pumps his fist a few times, though he’s already solid enough to found a fucking skyscraper on. “You
like that, Eds?”

Eddie drops his head back against the couch. “Yeah. Shit, Richie. Do you know how hard it was not to jerk off in the fucking shower? You’ve been winding me up all night.”

“I always make good, though, don’t I? I’m gonna take care of you,” Richie promises. He lowers his head to lick a wet stripe up the length of Eddie’s dick. He dips his tongue under the edge of his cockhead and into the divot, red and wet, making Eddie hiss.

“You’re gonna make it good. You’re gonna use that mouth.”

He grapples into Richie’s hair as he drags his lips down over the head. The pulling and the hot, dewy taste of Eddie’s flesh turn Richie’s spine into jelly. He bobs his head down and deeper, taking as much as he can and barely feeling the strain.

“Fuck. Fuck yeah,” Eddie pants. “You love sucking me off, and you’re so fucking good at it, Richie. Like this. Looking so gorgeous. Fucking swallow me sss-so. So good, Richie. So good.”

His glasses start to lose their fight with the physics of what he’s doing, so Richie pulls them off and tosses them into the couch. He can’t quite see, but he knows that when one of Eddie’s hands leaves the back of his head for a moment, he’s spotting them, keeping them safe in some corner. Eddie always looks out for him. He pets Richie’s hair tenderly, winds his fingers into his cowlick, strokes the shell of his ear with a thumb. For all his talk of Richie’s schlubby grooming, it’s obvious he feels the way about this that Richie does about getting their chests skin to skin.

“You’re really fucking going for it, Rich. You’re gonna- hnng.”

Richie sucks his dick like it’s the mechanism to keep his heart beating and he’s gotta bank up enough energy for a thousand years. He could. He could bear to live through lifetime after lifetime, if he got to do it with Eddie. Whatever empires collapsed or monsters reared their ugly heads- he’d face it.

Eddie’s hands flutter around Richie’s neck like he’s patting a hanky at a spilled drink, and he knows Eddie is close.


Richie pulls back just enough so that Eddie comes on his tongue, where he can taste it. What’s the fucking point of swallowing, otherwise? He mops his lips with a thumb, grins at an Eddie who is too blissed out and shut-eyed to see it, then dives back in for a few recovery licks. His fastidious Eddie will appreciate the thoroughness when he comes back to his senses. Not too far back to his senses though, Richie hopes, because he completely spaced on grabbing lube upstairs. He finds his glasses again and lays his cheek against Eddie’s thigh. He loves to watch him come down afterward, breathing deep because of the pleasure Richie just wrung out of him, his brow sheened with sweat and his mouth kiss-bitten. So beautiful, his Eddie.

“Ahh,” Eddie sighs. He claps his hand against Richie’s cheek clumsily. “That’s- that’s the good stuff. I’m like, mad that you that you can’t give yourself head.”

“Don’t get mad, get even,” says Richie. He takes Eddie’s hand from his cheek and sucks two of his fingers into his mouth. Eddie watches as hungrily as if Richie didn’t just rock his mic.

“Get ‘em good and wet.”

“Mhmm.”
“You’re gonna fuck my hand—”

“Mnnnn.” *Fuck yeah.*

“-and I’m gonna let you fucking kiss me with that dirty mouth.”

Richie chokes a little. That is a rare, Black Friday Sale, Everything Must Go level offer. At the very least Eddie usually demands Richie drink some water after taking a load to dilute the taste. He’ll swallow, but he won’t wallow, as Richie likes to put it. He pops his mouth off of Eddie’s fingers.

“I really really love you.”

Eddie rolls his eyes and smiles an open mouthed, still panting smile. Richie loves to work his ass off for that smile. “I love you. Take those off then get up here.”

“Hell yeah.” Richie steadies himself on the edge of the couch. He fishes around in the dark and hands Eddie the towel and his shorts back before slinking out of his boxers.

“Jesus, Richie,” says Eddie, eyeballing his erection. “Why didn’t you touch yourself?” He reaches out to wrap his hands around Richie’s hips and guide him into his lap again. His pruney, suck-swollen fingers are cold in the basement air, sending a shock through Richie.

“I’m leaking like the fucking Keystone over here, I didn’t think you wanted me to blow all over your feet,” he admits.

“Good call,” Eddie snorts.

Richie gets a hold of himself with a slightly shaky hand, and works his dick over while getting a quick one of those promised dirty mouthed kisses.

“You wanna top ‘em off?” asks Eddie. He shuffles his hips to get comfortable under Richie’s weight and puts his fingers in Richie’s mouth again for good measure. His off hand slides up and down Richie’s thigh, thumbing at the muscle, and the strength of his grip makes Richie’s mouth water even more. He nips at Eddie. Enough is enough.

“Hey!” Eddie pulls back.

“Bite me, Richie. Don’t bite me, Richie- it’s hard to keep track!”

Richie leans in to kiss him again, lifting to give Eddie a little room to work with. Eddie cups under him, sliding along until his fingertips brush his hole. He rubs around Richie’s rim, wet finger flicking like he’s trying to turn the page of a book. Then he sinks in. Defying Richie’s expectations, his tongue does the same, dipping into Richie’s mouth experimentally, then all at once, tasting himself on Richie’s tongue. It is hands down the hottest thing he has ever done. *What the fuck.* Has his disdain for some light snowballing been a long con this whole time? Richie’s got that tight, prickling sensation already-

Eddie hangs back a moment to check on him. “That good?”

“OhfuckI’mgonnacome,” Richie grunts.

Eddie huffs and twists his finger deeper. “Drama queen.”

“Ghhuh. No really.” Richie’s hand races to pull his dick and his legs shake. “Tongue me again, I—”

“Thafuck, dude!” Eddie’s voice pitches way, way up. “Are you fucking serious right now!?”
“Get up in there like it’s going out of style, ‘cause I am totally gonna come on you in a sec.” And isn’t that a pretty picture?

“Richie!” Eddie’s hand that isn’t in Richie smacks around for the towel, but it’s located on the wrong side. “All night! All this fucking foreplay and—”

“Eddie.”

“I just took a shower! I can’t take another midnight shower! That’s so fucking obvious! Fuck, Richie,” rushes Eddie, unintentionally hooking his fingers in his panic. It feels fantastic. “I’m gonna have to sleep in your fucking jizz.”

Now, if there were words that could throw the brakes on this train, this last sentiment was the equivalent of dropping a nuke in the furnace instead.

“Fuck. Ughhthat’s hot as fuck.” Richie’s head snaps back as his orgasm punches through him. He jolts as Eddie groans beneath him, splashed just a moment before he can successfully pull out and grab the towel.

“Goddamnit.”

Richie drops his head to Eddie’s shoulder and pats his hands over Eddie’s, holding the towel. “You’ll live,” he pants, before slumping off to the side.

Eddie takes longer to recover from this than Richie. Although he’s already dry and scrubbed pink, he’s still mopping at himself angrily when Richie gets his breath again.

“Eds. Eddie.” He worms up to Eddie’s side all doped up on endorphins and kisses his ear.

“Well I’m glad you’re enjoying this.”


“That was amateur hour,” says Eddie, clearly frustrated with himself. Richie keeps at it, lavishing him with distraction kisses so he can steal the towel. When he does, Eddie finally slides an arm around him. Eddie kisses his forehead, bumping Richie’s glasses askew. It’s the kind of messy goodness Richie thrives on.

He lays his head on Eddie’s shoulder and a hand over his heart. “Eddie, I mean it. I don’t care if you work me over for just a minute or for the run time of fucking Gone With the Wind. It’s always what I want. Just to be with you.”

Eddie softens with an exhale. “You work so fucking hard to make everything good for me. All the time. Making me happy, making me the center of your attention... I just want to make it good for you, too.”

Richie picks up his head to look Eddie in the eye, because he could not be more fucking serious about this. “You do.”

Eddie accepts this by leaning in to kiss him. It’s the longest, gentlest kiss of the evening punctuated only by soft sips and sighs. When they pull apart Eddie gathers him in both arms against his chest.

“I love you so much, Richie. But you’re allowed to admit I can be sort of withholding about it.”

“I like to crack your nut. If ya know what I mean.”
“Gross!” Eddie laughs. Richie enjoys surfing the rumble of it. “And is your bare ass on this couch right now? You don’t know what kinda of slimeballs Meredith has had through here!”

“Ugh, you’re right!” Richie should put his junk away before Eddie starts making a list of upholstery shampoos to recommend his mother. He toes around on the floor for his boxers until he hooks them on his foot. “Come on, Eds. I’ll throw the towel in the wash, and you go give yourself a sink bath. I’ll even drag the mattress off the pull-out and onto the floor for you. Splooge surprises aside, chivalry ain’t dead yet.”

A smile quirks Eddie’s mouth. “It’s like a canyon in the middle. We should not have treated that thing like a trampoline when we were kids.”

When Richie gets back upstairs, he makes good on his offer. He makes the bed again and waits for Eddie to come back before he takes off his glasses, just to get one more good look at him. First, he hears the tap of a toothbrush against the edge of the sink, then the water shuts off, and a few moments later Eddie creaks the door open, looking refreshed.

Richie pats the mattress. “Slumber party, anyone?”

Eddie kneels onto the bed and shoves Richie onto his side so he can snuggle up behind him. “Come here, you.” He pokes the back of his armpit with a giggle and snakes his arm through.

“Hey! No tickling.” Richie throws a retaliatory elbow as he wriggles and pulls Eddie’s arm around so all the angles are just right.

Eddie nuzzles into his hair and purposely scratches Richie’s neck with his stubble, vengefully increasingly the tickliness. It's Heaven on... the floor.

“I haven’t slept on the floor in ages,” Eddie muses.

“I know,” Richie yawns. “I think we’ve graduated to twenty-somethings with a futon. I’ll make you ramen in the morning and get a trampstamp that says Eddie Forever.”

Eddie yawns, too. “You know what, you dork? Do it. I dare you.”

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There’s only so many things to do in your parent’s half-finished basement. You’ve probably seen the situation down there. It’s pretty bleak. Mostly it's boardgames and boxes of Christmas shit, and VHS tapes of your aunt’s home birth that thank fuck there’s no player for anymore. But it was the end of our big date night so we... How should I put this for the heteros who’ve never gotten curious on Pornhub?

So we played... Jenga.

You know how to play Jenga, right? There’s a bunch of wood, and holes, and every other turn someone else is trying to get on top- maybe that’s just my House Rules, though- I can’t speak for the entire community. So yeah- you prep a bit to make your approach, taking your time, because god knows, if you try and poke before it’s ready to be poked, your Jenga partner will NOT want to play with you for a week.

Anyway. I played a move. I found a nice hard block I liked and put it in my mouth. Then he found a spot toward the bottom he was interested in, and even though it wasn’t really my turn yet- I got excited! I love Jenga! I realized I was gonna knock over the tower! Just. Sooner than you’d think. I let him know, and he was like- Richie, I’ve got ONE knuckle in, just let me finish my turn-
Meanwhile I’m shakin’ my block like its an asthma inhaler. Nuh uh, buddy. I’ve gotta knock it over. Right now.

So he says- If you knock the tower over on me I’m gonna be covered in fucking Jenga blocks all night because I can’t find the box to clean this up!

And that was. The Hottest fucking thing I’d ever heard in that moment so I just went- hhyah! He was so mad, grumbling. See if I ever stick a Jenga block up your ass again... It’s fine! If he bans Jenga and I want him to gobble my balls, we can always play Hungry Hungry Hippos instead. And I maintain that it was a perfectly high school way to end a date.

I just hope we stay together when we go away to college. First of all, Mom will kick my ass if I break his heart, and- at this age? I don’t think my hair could take it if we broke up and I dyed it black while burning our yearbook and crying to The Smiths.

-“Well? Comments? Questions?”

Bev’s coffee hovers at the midpoint between the table and her flustered smile. “Wow, Richie.”

“It sort of got away from me? The first draft I was just trying to make some notes for vows...” Richie trails off.

“Then I’m curious to meet your new boyfriend, because it’s definitely not vows to Eddie. He will kill you- at the altar - if you talk about getting your GED. You won’t even make it to Jenga.”

“Well obviously it’s for a set, now! Jesus.”

Bev holds a hand up in admission. “I mean- it’s definitely funny!”

“Good! That’s the point.”

“Was it just a bit, or did you really do the-” Bev stops herself. “Nope. No. I don’t want to know.” She sips her coffee. She considers. “The diary thing is cute though. And the part with your mom? If you did want to pull out some bits for your vows, I mean. That’s gold.”

“Thank you, I was very proud of myself for-”

“-And don’t think I missed the part where you two sneaks got engaged at my wedding and sat on it for a week!”
End Notes

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