What Can't We Do (If We're Together)

by Diaryofanarcissisticgayman

Summary

When Niall's father dies he can't afford to keep his family farm going. He sells it to Harry Styles, International Pop Sensation. He's forced by contractual jargon to stay and help him until Harry knows how to run the place himself, but he recruits his ex-boyfriend Liam Payne to help teach Harry the ropes and cope with having to stay. Liam and Niall reconnect, intensely, but when Harry starts developing feelings for both of them what can he do? Does he say anything and ruin their relationship? Can he pick one? Or can he maybe have both?

Louis is Niall's physical therapist. He's not as gay as he seems.
Zayn is Harry's agent and best friend. He's not as evil as he seems.

I'm shit at summaries but I promise it's better than it sounds.
I originally planned on publishing this as a one shot when it's all finished, but I passed the character limit a very long time ago and I have to split it up. I've broken it down into large chapters that separate out the story into the major parts, and I'm still working on finishing it. It's going to end up well over 200,000 words according to my writing program, so the chapters are going to be quite long. I already have over 175,000 words, and I'm not that close to the end. Chapters will come every so often because I have to go back and edit them while still writing the overall story.

A massive thank you to frommylips2yourears.tumblr.com an amazing fan who encouraged me every step of the way and has patiently waited for me to get my ass in gear and publish something. I probably should have told you this was a Narriam story instead of just a Narry story, but I hope you still like it anyway.
Chapter 1

In county Westmeath, just north of the sweet little town of Mullingar by Ballyglass, there lies a small lush farm. The same family has owned it for longer than anyone can remember, six generations in fact. The father was a polite man, always up for a drink at the pub and a good story to compliment it. The son is a boisterous young thing, remarked as being such a staple in the community and yet not quite fitting in.

He’s constantly seen out and about, chewing on sweets at Christ the King or snatching an apple from a stall at market. He’s easy to spot, with his dyed blond hair acting as a beacon in a sea of browns and reds, yet never easy to scold. The boy, young man now actually, near always has an infectious smile splitting his face and a laugh ringing from it.

One day in early march, seemingly no different from the day before or after, changed that boy and that town forever. A small ceremony is all Niall Horan can afford when his father suffers an aneurysm in his sleep. A slow gray drizzle paints the land with a clear somberness as thirty or so people huddle around a cheap wooden box, watching as it lowers into the ground, and Bobby Horan goes out of their lives forever.

Niall doesn’t speak at the funeral except briefly to eulogize his father, nor at the memorial the pub throws in honor of one of Mullingar’s favorite sons. There is no smile on the boy that night, not that anyone would be able to see it, around the seemingly endless stream of pints he drinks, if there were. Men toast to Bobby, sharing the stories he had so often thrilled them with, women cry for the last remaining Horan boy.

Three times in ten years had this pub hosted a Horan memorial. First for the eldest son Greg, who had an accident on the road not far from here when Niall was only fifteen years old. The next, six years ago, just shy of Niall’s nineteenth birthday, for his mother. She’d fought long and hard, but in the end cancer had claimed her life as it had so many others. And now, now the patriarch of the Horan family had passed, leaving behind his scion, Niall, to manage the family farm.

The local odd jobs man, who also happens to be Niall’s ex, offers to take Niall home when he passes out snoring on the bar. It’s more noise than he’s made over the prior two days combined. Liam scoops the fragile boy into his arms in a familiar gesture, and bids a small farewell to the inebriated townsfolk, holding his finger up to signal they needed to be quiet. He loads Niall into the passenger side of his pickup, gently so as not to wake him.

The drive to Niall’s home is slow and quiet, Liam keeps the stereo off and he drives carefully to avoid many of the bumps on the unpaved country road. Niall wouldn’t have noticed if the pickup had hit every one along the way though. He’s passed out, drooling on the door and snoring so loud the stereo wouldn’t have been much competition. Liam’s sympathy and adoration for his ex colors his perception though, and he sees a perfect sleeping angel in the seat next to him.

When he pulls into the drive for the Horan farm he has to slow down. Sheep have filled the entire lane, kept from running into the street by the large gate Liam has to get out to unlatch. Before he moves the gate he puts two fingers to his mouth and a sharp shrill whistle splits the heavy evening air. Large flashes of gray weave in between the sea of white, yips and snarls punctuate the night between loud bleats. Two wolfhounds appear suddenly before Liam, pacing up and licking at the hand he hangs over the gate.

“Thor, Loki, I need to get Nialler home. Can you get these guys out of the way? I’ve got a treat for a job well done.” Liam knows these dogs well. He’s played with them since they were puppies, but it
still scares him how big they’ve gotten and how well they do their job. Both hounds let out sharp barks, they split up and weaving in and out of the herd, creating the illusion that there are a dozen of them driving the herd down the path.

Liam opens up the gate after the sheep move several meters down the way. All of them are to distracted by the dogs to notice they could make a break for it. Liam climbs back in his pickup and drives through the gate, getting out once more to close the gate again behind him. By the time he gets back behind the wheel and resumes driving the herd is out of sight. Distant bleating can be heard when Liam pulls up in front of Niall’s little house. Liam pulls Niall out softly and takes him inside. The door is always unlocked at the Horan house.

Niall curls up immediately when Liam lowers him into the bed. Just as Liam closes the door he hears Niall murmur “Thanks Da. Night.” Tears well up in the muscular boy’s eyes and he closes the door. Niall will need him tomorrow so he sleeps in Maura’s old guest room. When he hears muffled sobs coming from the next room he doesn’t move, Niall wouldn’t thank him for it.

When Niall wakes up the day after his Father’s funeral his eyes are painfully dry and his tongue appears to have grown wool overnight. His head throbs like a bass drum with each heart beat. It’s a typical Saturday morning for the blond lad, except a sucking wound in his chest keeps reminding him that his family is all gone now. His father is dead and his house is empty. Or at least it should be, but the smell of grease coming from the kitchen either means that somebody is in the kitchen or that God is really mad at the Horan family right now.

He stumbles onto legs as unsure as a newborn calf and makes his way to the door. It takes most of the strength he can muster in his arms, which feel as if they’re laden with cement, to open the door and heave himself through it. A beautiful voice sings softly in the kitchen, but the throbbing it causes in Niall’s already painful skull makes him irritable.

“Payno, leave the sausage on the table and go away.” Niall’s groggy voice pulls Liam out of his trance and he whips around to face the blond. He laughs and scoops the bacon rashers onto the plate next to the fried eggs.

“Sit down and drink your Lyon’s. It’ll help with that hangover I’d bet my left arse cheek you’re nursing.” Liam says. He doesn’t look back at Niall, instead choosing to tug the apron off his shirtless torso before he sits down.

“I’ve seen your arse, you wouldn’t lose much there.” Niall grumbles. His hands are wrapped around a mug of tea, his head however is in his own arm pit.

“I’ll let that slide for now. Don’t expect that courtesy tomorrow.” Liam says, sliding Niall’s fry up in front of him.

“You won’t be here tomorrow Liam.” Niall’s words are barely understandable around the whole slice of soda bread he shoved in his mouth. Luckily Liam has been around the boy for hundreds of breakfasts and could probably understand him without teeth or tongue.

“Actually I’ve decided to stay with you until you find a hand for this place. I’ll do it for room and board.” Liam says, arranging all his different foods so that they make a smiling face.

“Liam.” Niall says through a mouthful of beans.

“Niall we were best friends for sixteen years before we dated. I know it’s awkward after how you
ended things, but I think you should have someone here with you.” Liam says. It’s a painful reminder for both of them.

Niall swallows and says “Liam, you don’t understand. Neither of us will be here tomorrow. I sold the farm. I’m packing off tomorrow night.”

Liam’s jaw hangs slack and the forkful of food he was about to eat falls back to the plate. The farm has been in Niall’s family for generations. He can’t imagine this place without the blond lad. “Why? Where? What?” Liam can barely stutter out the questions.

“I sold the farm. Some guy from London bought it. He’s moving in tomorrow.” Niall says flatly. He hoped he wouldn’t have to have this conversation, that he could slip away like a shadow in the middle of the night and not look back. Everybody would miss his father, would miss his brother and his mum, but few would note the absence of the youngest Horan.

“How? What about escrow? Your father never would have sold this place and he only died a week ago.” Liam is scrambling for something to hold on to.

“He paid me an extra ten percent for a reduced escrow. I can’t stay here and run this place by myself Liam. It’s barely big enough to get me a profit, if I hire a hand I’ll go broke. It’s not like we still have all the land we used to. We sold off over half to pay for mum’s treatments, remember?”

“This place is in your blood Niall. You can’t just leave this farm. You can’t just leave Mullingar. You... You can’t just leave me.” The last few words are spoken so softly Niall can barely hear them.

“My family is all dead Liam. Both my parents died right here in this house. And after what happened with you I don’t have a single reason to stay. I never wanted to be a farmer any ways. I made the right decision.” Niall’s tone leaves little space for argument.

“Niall I need you. You can’t just do this and leave me behind forever like I don’t matter.” He’s standing now, he crosses to the counter and drops his plate in the sink. Unconsciously he starts scraping his beans down the drain and rinsing his plate. Even with all Niall is saying, all he’s probably trying to process, he’s still overly responsible. “I deserve to matter Niall.”

Niall wraps his arms around Liam’s waist and gently nuzzles his cheek between Liam’s strong sharp shoulder blades. “You do matter ya cunt. I’m gonna miss ya, but I can’t stay for my ex. That’s not sane and we both know it. With what I got for this place I can finally go to uni and have a life that doesn’t smell like wet wool.”

“And what about me?” Liam refuses to turn around. Niall can see him wiping at his eyes, stinging with the watery wrath of unshed tears. His hands are shaking under the heavy stinging flow of scalding water from the tap. He drops the sponge he likely didn’t even know he had picked up.

“You can finally move on. We both can.” Niall has a soft tone in his voice. It isn’t quite sadness, but it isn’t hopeful either.

Liam can’t help but turn around now. His large calloused hands are warm from the just dried water. One winds itself into the smaller boy’s bed mangled hair in an almost unconscious gesture of habit. The other tilts Niall’s small chin up with a gentleness you wouldn’t guess they could have if you didn’t know the muscular man. “I don’t want to move on Niall. I never stopped loving you and I know you never stopped loving me either. I always thought you’d take me back one day. I always thought we’d end up together. I knew it in my heart.”

“Liam... I would be lying if I said I’m not still in love with you. But I can’t start a relationship right
now, not without wondering if I only took you back because I was afraid of being alone or if you were accidentally taking advantage my grief to get me back.” Niall’s tears are flowing freely now. His hangover is taking a back seat to the waterfall of emotions he’s trying to dam. “Maybe we will end up together one day. But not right now. Not yet.”

Liam pulls Niall in for a kiss. It’s gentle but passionate. His calluses rough Niall’s cheeks but the smaller man doesn’t care. His small jumper clad arms wrap around Liam’s strong broad shoulders. Liam places one hand underneath Niall’s arse and the smaller lad instinctively jumps up and wraps his legs around his ex’s hips. Liam spins, sitting Niall on the counter. Niall pushes the dirty dishes he’s been too grief stricken to clean off on to the floor. Several shatter, but in twenty four hours this house won’t be his anymore and he doesn’t give a damn.

Liam tugs the black hand knitted jumper Niall is wearing off, hardly changing his rampant bed head. The blond boy’s eyes are puffy, his hair is wild, and he obviously hasn’t eaten in days, but Liam stares at him like he couldn’t imagine a more beautiful sight. He kisses up and down Niall’s neck, trying to pinpoint the exact spot that drives him wild. He finds it at the very base, where the shoulder connects to the neck, just where he always used to kiss.

Everything about Liam making love to Niall again is familiar yet exhilarating. Each moan is a memory of happier times. Their fingers entangle and it feels more natural than either could have imagined. Every need is silently indicated and responded to without a single word needing to be exchanged. When they finish it’s in tandem, as if it were an intimate spiritual experience, and they fall back, spent, onto the kitchen table.

“That was-” Liam pants.

“A mistake.” Niall rolls off the table and runs back to his room leaving behind his clothes and a very confused Liam. He runs after Niall, but the smaller boy is surprisingly fast when he wants to be. The door to his room shuts and a latch clicks. Liam pointlessly attempts to open the door, to make things right with him, but it’s to no avail. No amount of pounding or pleading is going to work with Niall right now.

Cleaning up the dishes takes longer than Liam thought it would, though that’s mostly because he stops every few minutes to walk back and knock lightly on Niall’s door. He never gets a response. If Niall hadn’t been naked when he left Liam would be sure that he’d slipped out the back door and left rather than talk this out. That would be incredibly Niallesque.

When he finishes cleaning up the shards of glass and ceramic on the floor, Liam pulls on his trousers and sits at the table. He’s poured himself another cup of tea, not to drink, but instead to hold and warm his body with. An early March morning in Ireland is formidable, and should not be tackled without as many warm beverages as you can stand. Liam learned this the hard way when he was five years old.

When he feels like he can stand again he decides to do Niall’s rounds on the farm. He gulps down his lukewarm tea and rinses the mug out in the sink. He goes into the guest room, tugs on his jumper and a coat. There are several old scarves in a basket that Maura had knitted before she passed. Liam digs to the bottom of the basket where he always hides his favorite. It’s a deep blue with little threads of gold and white that reminds Liam of Niall’s eyes. Maura had knitted it for Liam the month before she died and given it to him, making him promise to take care of her boy.

Liam almost collapses with guilt when he realizes he’s failed the poor sweet woman who was like a mother to him. He wraps the scarf around his neck with hands numb from an overwhelming amount
of emotions. He tugs on a knitted hat, gloves, and ear muffs for good measure and leaves the room without making another sound. He grabs a few sausages before he quickly walks out and closes the front door. Two streaks of gray are shooting towards him and he braces for the impact.

Both wolfhounds reach him at the same time and he’s thrown against the closed door as the dogs rear up, standing as tall as Liam himself “Morning boys. You two mad about last night? I forgot, sorry. Nialler needed my attention.” Both dogs snuffle around Liam’s face, licking and whining for their promised rewards.

Liam pulls his gloved hands out of his pockets and with a sharp “Sit!” gets the dogs to leap off him and sit on the small porch. Their butts wiggle with the force of their wagging tails in the snow. Liam throws each sausage in an upward curve slightly behind the dogs. They jump and twist, almost like Great Whites on those shark week documentaries Niall and Liam have watched together since they were seven. They realize only too late that turnaround is fair play. Liam tackles them both just as they snap the sausages in their mouths, with arms spread wide to make sure he got them both.

It takes only a few seconds for them to worm their way out of his grip, they’re absolutely massive animals after all, but for a few glorious moments he forgets his plight for the sense of victory he feels over Thor and Loki. It quickly fades as Thor starts licking his face and Loki sits on his chest. Bargaining and pleading to be let up do him no good in his negotiations to remove the dogs from his chest and face, forcing him to resort to bribery instead. He reaches into his pockets and pulls out another two sausages. He throws them as hard as he can in the direction opposite his truck and runs for it as soon as the dogs bound after their prizes.

Inside his truck he turns the heat on full blast and sings along to the American songs playing on the radio to keep warm. The dogs hop in the bed of his pickup and curl up together. When the truck is sufficiently heated he pulls away and down the little path the sheep use to get around. The snow is mostly melted and brown on the path from the way the sheep mill about so it’s easy to follow even with the blanket of white that’s still covering the countryside.

Liam parks when he comes across Niall’s small herd of Irish Moiled Cattle and takes a count. He’s not sure what the herd size is supposed to be so he makes sure to write down how many he sees, how many appear pregnant, the bull’s location, and a note to ask Niall how many there should be. The cattle are grazing on the sprouts of grass peeking through the snow like small green hairs. There’s a large trough filled with silage sitting mostly untouched, and Liam scribbles another note about that as well.

The dogs let out a lazy sigh as Liam rumbles forward, following the muddy path to the larger flock of Galways. When he finds the flock, milling about aimlessly in search of food in an area that seems to be completely foraged through, he gives two sharp whistles. The cold air cracks open with the sound and both dogs immediately jump from the bed and wait for a command.

“Search the herd. Let me know if there’s any injuries.” Liam says, his voice commanding their respect from both instinct and habit. All Liam sees are two streaks of gray rush into the sea of muddied white in front of the truck. Predictably the flock splits, a slow stampede to let Liam count head. The dogs dart in and out, checking any slow movers for blood. The sheep have no real predators in the area, so should they be injured they’ve generally done it to themselves.

After several minutes Thor and Loki report back to the truck, neither barks nor signals at a sheep, the indications they were taught should they find an injury. Liam smiles and rubs their heads through the open window. After Liam takes note of his head count he moves his pickup into reverse. The last thing that needs to be done for now is to check the fences for breaches. Afterwards maybe he can salvage his relationship with his best friend, if not as the love of his life.
The perimeter fence check has to be done by foot in winter, his pickup isn’t made for the snowy-hilled terrain. Both dogs gladly accompany him, a silent show of affection. He’s going to miss these dogs almost as much as he will Niall if he can’t convince the smaller lad to rebut the deal he made on the farm. He helped Bobby train them with Niall, taking childlike glee in the way they’d lick him when their master would turn his back. He’d helped Niall pick the names for both of them, going so far as to present a slide show to his best friend as to why the names were perfect. He’d worn a checkered bow tie and Niall had given him his first kiss, on the tip of his nose, when they agreed.

He’s so caught up in thought, smiling at the sweet memories he shares with Niall, that he actually jumps when the dogs snap and snarl at his side. Both Thor and Loki race across the snowy landscape howling towards a figure clad in green. A lanky man throws his arms up in a defensive gesture, just as the hounds surround him. They won’t attack a human without a command, but the intruder clearly doesn’t know that. Liam bites back a laugh at the terror and confusion on the man’s face.

“I think you’re lost friend. This is Horan farm, it’s private property.” Liam smiles, but doesn’t move to help the man yet. The man’s look of terror doesn’t fade, and his mouth remains a thin unmoving line. “They won’t bite. Not unless I say to. Feel free to speak.”

“Oh thank god. They scared me half to death. Hey wait, you aren’t Irish. I have an ear for accents. London? It’s London isn’t it?” The words coming from the now relaxed man feel like an assault this early in the morning.

“Wolverhampton.” is all Liam can get out before the man starts talking again.

“Damn! I’m usually good at this I swear. It’s still nice to meet a fellow Brit. I kept getting all these looks in town and I felt like such an outsider. Well I am an outsider but-“

“Sir?” Liam attempts to impede the absolute stream of words coming from the man’s admittedly beautiful mouth. How can a man talk so slow and deliberately and yet not leave any space to get a word in edgewise.

“Not yet. My agent is pushing for it, but I don’t think the Queen is quite as interested as I am in my knighthood. Ooh I wonder if you can carry a sword around if you’re knighted? That’d be cool, wouldn’t it? Can you imagine Elton John just walking around with a sword strapped to his waist? It’d probably still only be the third most ridiculous thing he was wearing at the time”

“Sir!” Liam isn’t proud of the tone he has to use, but the young man in front of him startles enough that his mouth finally closes for a full second. “I’m sorry to snap, but this is private property. I’ll walk you back to my truck and drive you to whatever hotel you’re staying at.”

“I’m not at a hotel. You said this was the Horan farm right? I’m here to see someone. Nail I think? Niles maybe? NO! It was Niall. Niall Horan.” The man says. His face is beaming with pride, as if remembering the name was a true achievement.

“You’re here to see Niall? You do know we put his father in the ground yesterday? Now isn’t the time for an impromptu meeting.” Liam’s tone is gentle now, laced with ribbon’s of grief and pain.

“I heard. Part of why I’m here is to offer my condolences. I’m not proud of coming at a time like this, but he is expecting me I believe.” The young man wears a genial smile. It’s sincere and kind and Liam’s attitude softens towards him.

“Alright. I’ll take you up to the house. I wouldn’t expect this to be a pleasant visit though. Like I said, he did just lose his father.” Liam directs the man through the path he and the dogs created on the way. The trip is surprisingly silent. The young man occasionally remarks on the landscape or the
dogs, but otherwise remains quite mute. He never offers his reason for being there and Liam never asks. It’s not his business.

When they reach the vehicle Liam unlocks it climbs in. The man stands around on the other side, not saying anything, but pouting and shuffling his feet back and forth. Liam stares for a moment before he realizes he hasn’t unlocked the other side. He reaches over and unlatches it, beckoning the stranger in.

“Sorry about that. I haven’t had a passenger in a long time. Well a conscious one at least.” Liam says casually.

The young man laughs nervously and gropes for the door handle, refusing to take his eyes off Liam. Liam cocks a brow until he realizes what he said. He laughs, it’s booming but still has a tinkling sound to it. The man’s face goes through a multitude of emotional gestures, each making Liam laugh harder than the last, before he settles on confused.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t realize how that would sound. I work at a pub in town some nights, and I have to drive some of the passed out ones home occasionally. It’s an occupational hazard.” Liam’s face is stained with tears of laughter. He hasn’t laughed this way in a long time, not since he and Niall were together actually. “I’m not crazy, I swear, everybody just knows me here. I’m not great with words.”

The young man’s laugh is loud, it fills the space with jubilant energy that Liam feels almost guilty for enjoying. “That’s alright. I have a tendency to overreact to things. In fact I’m surprised that I haven’t gotten all uppity that you haven’t recognized me yet.”

Liam’s brow crinkles in the cute way it does when he gets confused. “I’m sorry, have we met before? I’m not great with faces.”


Liam is flabbergasted. “Harry Styles? As in You and I? I love that song!” Liam’s enthusiasm feels almost like that of a child on Christmas morning. “It has like a thousand plays on my iTunes. What is someone like you doing on Niall’s farm?”

Harry blushes and says “Actually, as of tomorrow afternoon, it’s my farm. I um- I bought it from him. Well my agent did it on my behalf actually. This is my first time seeing it. I got lost right after the gate.”

“You bought this place? You’re the one who’s buying the farm a week after it’s owner died, taking advantage of Niall’s grief and financial problems? You’re- wait, did you close it? The gate I mean.” Liam’s sensible side taking precedence over his anger at the whole situation.

“Yes. I may be a city boy, but I know how to close a door behind myself when I go somewhere.” Harry huffs.

“The Galways are just really hard to wrangle back up once they’ve gotten on the road. They’re deceptively mischievous.” Liam laughs. He remembers the time Niall and he snuck back on the farm, stumbling drunk at fifteen, leaving the gate open. Bobby had burst into the room at half five and yelled at them to get up. They spent the rest of the morning hungover and chasing rowdy lambs while Maura laughed at them from the truck with a thermos of coffee for when they finished.

“Galways? I thought this was a sheep farm. I’ve never even heard of that animal.” Harry asks quizzically.

“They’re a breed of sheep!” Liam groans. He’s stunned by how ignorant the young idol in front of
him seems. “You don’t even know the breed of sheep you bought with the farm? Are you aware there are cows here too?”

“Ooh cows? I love cows! I always thought they were cute but my mum thinks they’re gross. She prefers pigs. Are there any pigs here?” Harry’s face is so earnest and excited at the prospect of pigs that all of the anger deflates out of Liam and it’s replaced with a small smile.

“No, Ireland doesn’t have any pig farms that I’m aware of. Greyhounds went extinct in the early nineteen hundreds and the Large White Ulster breed has been since the sixties.” Liam tells him softly.

“Damn. My mum would have been excited. Oh well. And for what it’s worth, I’m sorry about buying the farm this way. I had no idea about the situation until Zayn told me Mr. Horan had signed the contract of purchase. I was furious with him. He can be ruthless, it makes him a good agent, but not that thoughtful. He’s really sweet outside of work, I promise, but that doesn’t help my contract negotiations much.” Harry looks ashamed. “I guess it really is my fault. I hadn’t realized that until I said it out loud.”

“I’m sorry. It really isn’t my place to yell. I basically grew up on this farm. I’m attached to it, but I only found out an hour ago that it was sold. I’m overly emotional. I’ll take you back to Niall’s house now. Or your house I guess.” Liam’s tone is melancholy and Harry doesn’t know how to respond, so he doesn’t say anything at all.

The ride back to the house is completely silent except for the whining hum of the twenty year old heater trying desperately to raise the temperature in the pickup’s cab. Harry shivers, dressed inappropriately in jeans and with a matching plaid shirt and jacket. His knit cap is stylish but not particularly warm, and his gloves would be more at place at the symphony than an Irish farm in winter.

The house is visible over the ridge, solemn and cold. Liam parks in the driveway and Harry gets out offering a small smile and a “Thank you.”

“Wait!” Liam says before Harry can close the door. “Can you give this to Niall? It’s the head count for this morning.” He hands over two slips of paper and Harry nods. “And here’s my number, call me if anything goes wrong and you need someone local to help. I know this farm pretty well.”

He watches as the man walks up to the door, knocks, and enters. Liam’s heart breaks in half and he sobs quietly into his hands. He only allows himself a few moments before he forces himself to regain his composure. He looks fondly on the gray stone house for the last time and then drives away.

When he reaches the gate he stops. He climbs out of the cab and the dogs jump out of the bed. He crouches down and ignores the cold that seeps through the knees. Both dogs leap on him and kiss him all over his face, lapping up the salty tear stains on his cheeks. “I’m gonna miss you boys. I’m going to miss you three so much. Give him some kisses for me, huh?”

Liam climbs back up to his feet and pets Loki and Thor one more time on their heads. He opens the gate, climbs into his truck, and drives through it. When he climbs back out to close the gate a sense of loss overtakes him. The gate closes shut and Liam feels a part of himself slip away with it. Liam gets back behind the wheel and drives away. He refuses to acknowledge the tears streaming down his face, or the depression slipping itself over his heart.

Niall startles when a closing door wakes him from where he’d fallen back asleep crying on his bed.
His body is sore with the hangover and the guilt of what he’s just done with Liam. When he hears his ex’s pickup pull away he emerges, runs down the hall, and locks himself in the bathroom with his iPod. He runs hot water into the tub and falls into it when it fills half way. Music blasts painfully in his ears and his skin feels almost as if it will boil off, but it’s self imposed penance for using Liam this way.

Guilt overwhells the blond and he sinks further under the water. His shame only builds as the waterproof ear buds Liam bought him for his twentieth birthday work perfectly submerged in the blistering water. He can’t quite tell if he’s crying until a sob tears itself from his throat and bubbles to the surface. Grief and anguish screams through the room, audible to Niall even immersed in the water. He surfaces and sobs freely.

He soaks and cries in the hot water until his skin is screaming and angry red like his eyes. He drains the tub and gets out. A threadbare towel is wrapped around his waist and he opens the bathroom door after groping through the thick mist hanging in the air for the knob. When he opens the door cold air rushes in, stinging his pinkened skin like an arctic wind. He sucks air in through gritted teeth, taking masochistic pleasure in the pain he feels he deserves.

He walks into the kitchen, dreading the mess Liam probably left for him to clean. Instead of broken glass and shattered plates he finds a stranger sitting in his chair. The yelp, he will insist it was a yelp and not a scream, is high pitched and girlish. It’s not a proud moment, made worse by the way his towel falls off and trips him when he tries to turn away. He lands face first on the cold wooden floor with his arse hanging out in the air.

A bright red blush paints his cheeks, the ones hidden in the wood grain, not the ones currently greeting the laughing stranger doubled over on the table. He pushes himself up, accepting that all his bits are dangling in full view for the man laughing in his kitchen. He really doesn’t have anything to be embarrassed about, other than his very manly yell of shock. He wraps the towel back around his waist and holds it firmly in place.

“Go ahead and take what you want. This won’t be my house starting tomorrow anyway. The frames aren’t worth anything, but if you want them please leave the pictures.” Niall’s defeated tone only shows a fraction of how awful he feels. “D’ya mind if I drink while you rob me?”

The man laughs some more before saying “I can’t believe you’re so calm. You think I’m here to rob you, and you just let me? That’s not very considerate to the person buying the place now is it?”

“What’s it matter to me? My life is falling down around me ears, might as well help a bloke out and screw the guy who bought me farm. Sleazy little dirt-bag he was. Sending some fast talking agent out to buy the place without even looking at it himself. He’s probably gonna tear down me home and build a strip mall or some such.” Niall crosses to the fridge and pulls a Guiness out of the fridge. He sits down at the table and resigns himself to watching his home get sacked.

“I’m pretty sure he’s not going to build a strip mall. It’s not a very convenient location for that now is it? Too far from the city to make any sense.” The burglar says, pulling out the chair opposite from Niall and sitting down.

Niall rolls his eyes. “Not much difference to you is it? Get it while you can. The silverware is old but it isn’t real silver. Those candle sticks are though. Me da got them for me mum for their twenty fifth. You look familiar, do you go to the Druid’s Chair pub?” He takes a long pull from his can of Guiness.

“No. It is a difference to me actually. I’m Harry. Harry Styles. I bought your farm. The one you’re trying to give away piecemeal to anyone who robs the place. I don’t blame you for it though. I’d
probably hate me too in your position. Zayn can be a sleaze when I need him to be. He’s sweet outside of work though.” The tall man pulls his cap off revealing his signature curls.

Niall spits out the gulp of stout he was drinking creating a fine mist that hangs in the air. “I’m so sorry! Let me get you a towel.” Niall stands up, completely forgetting his nakedness in favor of his embarrassment at staining a pop star with beer. He returns with the one clean dish towel in the drawer.

“I think you may need a towel more than I do right now.” Harry says with a cheeky wink. Niall flushes deep and Harry can see the redness spread it’s fingers across his cheeks, down his neck, and onto his chest. He pats the towel across his face, never taking his eyes off Niall as he covers himself and hurries out of the kitchen and to his room.

Niall pulls on an old woolen jumper. It’s too small, stopping just above his hip bones, and itchier than a colony of fire ants, but his mother made it and it’s his favorite. His underwear drawer is empty so he just tugs on some jeans and flies back out of his room to the kitchen. Harry is still sitting there at the table, examining the kitchen with his hands folded on his knee. Harry freaking Styles is sitting in his kitchen staring at the decor his mum had on the shelves and fireplace mantle.

“Is your hair alright? And your shirt?” Niall’s words are as clumsy as his feet are this morning.

“My hair will survive. I won’t though, if Karl Lagerfeld finds out I begged him to make me something in plaid only to have it ruined the first time out.” Harry’s voice is casual, name dropping like it isn’t a big deal.

“You plan on wearing custom designer clothes then? Whatever, it’s yer farm mate. Sheep shit is hard to get out of silk though, and don’t get me started on afterbirth from cows. Ruined my favorite shoes last year. Now, why are you here? The farm is still mine until tomorrow, and I have a lot of packing t’dо. Haven’t done it yet, what wit the funeral an all. In fact I still have to go buy the boxes, so if we could hurry this up that’d be great.” Niall doesn’t leave any room for interpretation, he does not like the man.

“Packing? Why are you packing?” Harry asks, his head turning to the side in an expression that’s Niall finds infuriatingly cute.

“Because I’m leaving this place, this cursed fucking place, behind. It’s why I sold it to you or Mr. Malik or whoever in the first place. I’m leaving before I lose anyone else I love to this place.” Niall’s eyes have grown dark, colored by grief to resemble an oncoming storm.

“We might have a small problem then.” Harry says nervously. “You see I came out here today so that we might have a chance to get to know one another before we start work tomorrow. Did you use a solicitor when you worked things out with Zayn?”

“Nope. He offered me twice what the farm’s worth, plus the reduced escrow bonus, why would I drag someone in that I’d have to pay?” Niall is frustrated with the curly haired man’s questions. He really doesn’t have the time or patience for this tight now.

“Because contractual terminology is next to impossible for anyone not trained in law Mr. Horan. Did you read the contract at least? Particularly the last part?” Harry moves closer, trapping Niall between the fireplace and the tall boy’s body.

“I scanned it, but I mostly just looked at all those zeroes. You really overpaid for this place you know.” Niall jokes, trying to ease the tension building between himself and Harry. The curly haired boy is getting so close Niall can smell his cologne, it’s frustratingly sensual and Niall feels guilt and
desire pooling in his stomach. He slips under the arm Harry has put on the mantle, bracketing his body around Niall’s, and sits at the table. “Specially since it’s only half the size of the one next door. We sold the O’Malley’s a third of our land a few years ago to pay fer me mum’s treatments.”

“I’m aware of this land’s history Mr. Horan. I bought that back from them at two hundred percent market value to restore the land to it’s original condition. So you’re telling me that you didn’t read the last section? The one detailing your involvement with the farm going forward?” Harry sits on the table, not a chair, and leans in as he says this.

“What involvement? My only involvement with this farm is selling it to you. I have no other involvement.” Niall backs his chair away and Harry sighs. His hands come up to his face and rub his temples. His jaw flexes and Niall finds himself growing hot in his sweater.

“Niall. Can I call you Niall?” Harry asks. Niall nods and Harry continues “The last section details your terms of employment. You signed a contract that said you’d stay here and help me learn the business until the new year, then you get your money. You’re obligated, by law, to work for me until I understand the business. You work for me now.”

Niall feels his head fill with fog. Harry’s last words echo in his head over and over. The world goes dark around the edges of his eyes and the last thing he thinks before he fades completely is “This is the absolute worst twenty four hours of my life.”

When the blond begins to come around Tarzan and Liam are standing over him arguing. He’s confused as to why Tarzan is in his kitchen and fully dressed. Do gorillas even have plaid?

“What the hell did you do to him?” Liam yells.

“Nothing I swear.” Harry screams back. It’s Harry Styles, not Tarzan. Somehow the former actually makes less sense than the latter to Niall. His head hurts and the memories of what happened flood back. Niall has to stay here and work for the man that’s buying his family farm, his heritage, away from him. He has to stay on the farm that took the lives of almost everyone that Niall has ever loved.

“People don’t just become unconscious! So you either hit him in the head or said something and he passed out.” Liam looms large over Harry. They’re about the same height from Niall’s vantage point on the floor, but Liam is an imposing figure. Years of handiwork, tending bar, working as a volunteer fire fighter, and of course farm work have toned Liam’s arms to the point that even hidden under a sheep skin jacket they bulge menacingly.

“Why would I hit him in the head and then call you for help?” Harry’s cowering now, backing towards the mantle to escape the man stepping towards him.

“How did you get his number? You’ve been here for literally like five minutes.” Niall asks, managing to push himself up to a sitting position with his elbows.

“Niall!” Liam cries happily, immediately crouching by his side. He takes the smaller boy up in his arms and carries him to the overstuffed armchair by the fireplace. Niall beats his fists against Liam’s chest weakly, feeling ashamed at how much he misses the way Liam would always carry him around whenever he was sick, regardless of his feigned protests. Liam drops him in the chair and plants a kiss on his cheek. He crouches and runs his rough thumb over the spot where he left the kiss. “Are you okay? How is your head? Are you feeling dizzy or nauseous.”

Niall’s urge to yell at his ex is dulled by the concern glowing in his deep brown eyes. “I’m fine Li. I
Harry has been sitting in the stiff wooden chair, focused entirely on his fingers, recovering from the scare Liam put into him. His head pops up and he looks around nervously. “Well he gave it to me when he brought me here. I was lost on the farm grounds and he found me. Also, I have a small pet peeve when people use the word literally to mean figuratively. I’ve been here a bit longer than five minutes. I mean you were naked for at least twenty remember?”

Liam jumps to his feet and turns on Harry “He was what?”

His voice is a roar and Harry falls out of his chair, scrambling backwards as Liam stomps towards him, shedding his jacket in a gesture Niall recognizes from a few too many bar fights. Niall leaps from the armchair and grabs Liam by the arm. “Li! Stop! I came out here from the bath and I wasn’t actually naked. Well I was when I fell down, but it’s nothing like that.”

Liam stops when Niall grabs his arm. He looks at Niall, expression unreadable, and deflates. “Whatever. It’s not my business anyways. I’m glad you’re alright Niall. Good bye. Have fun wherever you decide to end up.” The pain in Liam’s voice is palpable in the air and Niall’s heart sinks into his stomach.

He grabs tighter onto Liam’s arm, threading his fingers through the calloused ones of his ex. “Wait. I’m going with you.”

“No. I’m coming with you. I don’t care where you’re going. I need to talk to you.” Niall leaves Liam’s hands tingling when he unwraps their hands to grab his jacket. Harry is sitting silently at the table, once again investigating the mysteries of his fingers, ignoring the cloud of tension roiling in the air. Niall returns in his own sheepskin coat, a gift from Liam for his eighteenth birthday. It still fits as snug as the day he unwrapped the clumsy duct taped bundle of butchers paper Liam had used to wrap it because he spent every euro he had on it.

Liam smiles softly and Niall tells Harry “You can stay here. It’s your place. Don’t steal anything or I’ll let Liam have a go at ya. He’s actually stronger than he looks. It’s quite impressive. I’ve even seen him do that Scottish thing where they throw the pole. Apparently you have his number, so call if anything goes awfully wrong.” They’re out the door before Harry can protest, Liam tugged along by the hand as if he wasn’t nearly twice the size of him.

Liam starts to take out his keys, but Niall snatches them from his hands in a shockingly swift motion. He unlocks the door and plops himself heavily in the driver’s seat. The leather feels familiar under his jeans and the key in the palm of his hand is like home. His father taught Liam and he to drive in it when they were fourteen, three years before it was legal. Niall was slow to learn, but Liam helped encourage him until he got things right. He even got Niall a special key chain, the one right in his palm, to celebrate him driving to town and back without a single stall or dramatic swerve. It has an obnoxious smiling face that Niall secretly adores.

He turns the ignition, delighting in the familiar rumble of the engine, as Liam reluctantly gets in on the passenger side of his own pickup. “Where are you supposed to be going?” Niall asks, glancing into the rear view to find a spot to turn around.

“Nowhere. I told people I’m closing shop to help you until you find someone. I even dropped my shifts at the Chair and asked Gareth to drop the lease on my flat. That was until this morning when you told me you’re leaving. I’ve been scrambling trying to get people to take me back. Unfortunately Gareth already has a new renter and now I need to find a new flat by the end of the month.”
Preferably a cheap one because my savings is practically nothing after I had to fix the engine in the truck.” Liam isn’t meeting Niall’s eyes when he says any of this, he’s mimicking Harry Styles’ habit of searching his finger prints for the secrets of the universe.

“Li, why didn’t you say anything before?” Niall asks, pulling to a stop at the gate.

“Because you dropped a bomb on me, and then ignored me until I had to leave to try to pick up the pieces of my life before it’s too late Niall!” Liam screams at him. He wrenches open the door and hops out, using a small flick of the wrist to slam the door shut deafeningly. Niall sits in guilty silence until Liam waves him through the gate. He jumps when Liam slams the gates shut, sounding like metallic thunder.

“Drive.” Liam says when he rejoins Niall in the cab. There’s no wiggle room or invitation for conversation in his tone. Niall complies, choosing to drive into the city towards Liam’s flat. The silence is deafening, Niall’s heartbeat pounding in his ears and tears starting to sting threateningly at the corners of his eyes. They reach Liam’s building in short order and shuffle silently inside. Three flights of stairs later Liam takes his keys back from Niall, snatching them from his small cold hands. He unlocks the door and steps in. Niall walks in behind him and closes the door behind himself.

“Liam-” Niall starts.

“No. It’s my turn to talk now.” Liam finally meets his eyes and Niall thinks it’s the only thing that could be worse than him not doing it. There are tears streaming down his cheeks and his eyes are burning red. He traps Niall against the door and puts his face so close that his hot breaths warm Niall’s stinging cheeks. “You left me. You left me Niall. This morning you used me to make yourself feel better and I let you because I still love you, but I can’t let you do it again. I’m only human Nialler. I’m not strong enough to say goodbye to you for a third time. Or should I say a second time since you never let me say anything when you left me?”

“That’s why I needed to talk to you. I’m not leaving. Not yet.” Niall says quietly. He turns away, ashamed for dragging Liam further into his downward spiral of a life. Liam staggers back as if he’s been shot. He collapses onto his worn out sofa, part of a set that was housewarming gift from Maura and Bobby several years earlier.

“If you aren’t leaving then why did you tell Harry that it’s his house?” Liam’s question is loaded. His mind is still on what Harry said earlier about the clothed condition of his ex. Niall can read it from where he’s still leaning against the door, flushed from Liam’s body heat and embarrassingly hardening in his jeans.

“Because it is. Apparently the contract I signed had a part that said I have to work with him until the end of the year. I have to stay or I won’t get my money and I might go to jail. That part wasn’t really clear.” Niall moves towards the couch. His legs are unsteady from the weight of his confession. “I have to stay.”

“How didn’t you know that when you signed the contract?” Liam scoots over to give Niall room to sit and still keep space between them.

“Because I didn’t hire a solicitor to help with negotiations and I was kind of distracted. Me da kind of just died.” Niall’s response has a bite he hates. None of this is Liam’s fault, and without his help Niall would be breaking down right now. “I’m sorry. I’ve just done so many stupid things lately that dealing with the consequences of them is just making me defensive.”
“Niall—”

“Stay with me. I can’t do this by meself. I need someone to help me get through this. I need you.” Niall moves closer, pinning Liam to the arm of the couch as the muscular lad had done to him with the door. “Please Li.” Niall surges forward, pressing a sloppy kiss to Liam’s lips.

Liam’s eyebrows shoot into his hairline, but his fingers tangle themselves in Niall’s hair and he kisses Niall back. It’s rough, like it’s the first time all over again, when Liam, unable to contain himself anymore used the courage flowing through his veins, in the form of whiskey, and kissed Niall one night under the stars. Niall had kissed him back until they had to break for air. He smirked and said “Finally Li. I’ve been waiting sixteen years for that.”

Liam puts his hands against Niall’s chest and pushes him back. “Stop!” Liam’s voice is barely a squeak. “Stop Niall please. This morning was one thing. I was stupid and I let you use me. I can’t let that happen again. I can’t build this into something it isn’t, because in nine months you’re going to leave and I’m going to go through all the heart ache again.”

“I’m not using you Liam. I—”

“Yes you are Niall. And almost all of me wants to let you, because I’d do anything to have my best friend, the love of my life, back. But I can’t keep putting you above my sense of self preservation, and when you grieve you get particularly destructive. When Greg died you ran away after the funeral for three days and came back blond. When your mother died— When Maura—” Liam struggles with the words.

“I wrapped my car around a tree because I was drunk. I know. I have the scar to remind me every day. Not to mention the surgeries every coupla years. This isn’t that Liam.” Niall backs off the couch, sitting in one of the armchairs that contrast with the sofa in how new they still feel.

“You sold the farm Niall! That place is as much a part of your family as Bobby was and you bloody know it! You’re running away just like you always do. You run away from me, you run away from pain, and you run away from reality. And at the first chance you’ll run away again.” Liam’s roar has quieted, leaving an echoing silence his voice can’t quite fill.

“Then give me a reason to stay Liam. Come back to the farm with me and when I get my money we’ll go away together. Or we’ll buy a place here. I’ll do whatever you want. I- I love you Li. I always have.” Niall is pleading now, doing his best not to drop to his knees and beg flat out.

“Then why did you leave me?” Liam’s question feels like a slap to Niall’s face. His eyes are soft but his face is set in stone. “Why did you just leave me?”

“Because I run when things get hard Liam. You said so yourself. I ran when I realized I’m not good enough for you.” Niall lowers his head, afraid to let Liam’s eyes meet his own.

“That’s not for you to just decide. I love you and I think you’re perfect.” Liam can barely hold back the tide that threatens to unleash itself from behind his brown eyes.

“Then why did I see you kissing Danielle in the Ilia? And it wasn’t some rom-com ‘it’s not what you think’ kiss. You were holding her hand and it wasn’t a small one. After everything you went through with her, you fell back into her arms.” Niall admitting what he saw, admitting that Liam hurt him, doesn’t give him the sense of release he thought it would.

“Niall—”

“It doesn’t matter to me that you like women, Liam, but I can’t give you a family. Don’t tell me you
“I do want kids Niall, but I want you more. And what you saw at that cafe was a mistake. I told her that night that I wouldn’t leave you. I hate myself for what I did then, but I never cheated on you beyond that kiss.” Liam can’t hide his pain or stem the tide any longer.

“But why would you want me? I’m just a farm rat. You’re a gorgeous, sweet, amazing man and I’m just an orphan with bad teeth and a dye job. My nose is too wide and I have the muscle definition of a ten year old. You’re so out of my league that—” Something hits Niall in the face, it doesn’t hurt, but it startles him so bad that he jumps backwards and he and the chair fall down.

Niall raises his hands from his face and they’re covered in red. He’s bleeding and he’s not sure why. Liam is laughing from somewhere beyond his arse and the ceiling has replaced the view he had just a moment ago. Something is poking him in the eye and he picks it up. He stares at the yellow and red stick in his hand until he realizes what it is. He pushes himself up onto his feet and whirls on Liam and shrieks “Chips Liam? You threw chips at me? You’ve got ketchup all over me favorite sweater.”

“Your face!” is all Liam can manage between his barks of laughter. Niall starts laughing too. They’re short bursts, blasting away all the tension that was in the air. When Niall dips the two day old chip in the ketchup smear on his cheek and eats it Liam groans. “That is unbelievably gross.”

“Hey never let good food go to waste. That wasn’t good, terrible actually, but I didn’t know that until I tried it.” Niall laughs.

“You need a shower so bad right now.” Liam stands up and crosses to Niall.

“You gonna join me?” Niall asks. He does this eyebrow wiggle that he used to think was sexy, but has now realized, as of this moment, that it really is not.

“No. We need to talk about some things before anything else happens between us. You are however free to use my shower.” Liam pulls another chip out of Niall’s hair and smacks him on the arse, steering him towards the bathroom.

Niall laughs and wiggles his bum. “I’m gonna rinse my hair then, but that’s all. I already took a bath before I talked to Harry.”

“So that’s why you were naked then. Here I just figured you stripped down as soon as you saw him. You always did fancy him. I remember how excited you were when he came out.” Liam says feigning a casual tone. He’s not very good at it. Niall walks into the bathroom and Liam follows him.

“Liam, he scared the crap out of me in me kitchen and I dropped me towel. It’s not like that with him. Besides, what kind of slut do you take me for?” Niall asks, pulling his jumper over his head. He turns around to turn on the water and then closes the glass doors.

“It’s not you I don’t trust Niall. He’s known for being a serial playboy in the news. And whether you believe it or not you are a gorgeous bloke. Wouldn’t surprise me if he wanted to shag you right on that table. I would have in his situation.” Liam admits, not hiding the way he eyes Niall’s torso. Niall enjoys the attention and unbuttons his trousers, revealing that he’s going without any underwear. He shimmies out of them and revels in how Liam’s bottom lip gets sucked between his teeth.

Niall steps into the shower closing the clear glass doors behind himself. “You already shagged me on the table this morning once. Besides it’s been ages since I’ve had any and I’m rather sore after you. Wouldn’t do to shag a rock star and not enjoy it, now would it? Gotta get the full experience. See
why all those tabloids talk about him like he’s a god.”

When Liam coughs Niall continues with a little white lie. “Liam, please, If I was interested in Harry Styles I wouldn’t have fainted when he said we’d be on the farm together for the next nine months. He’s a gorgeous bloke himself, but it’s you I’m in love with, even if I suck at showing it. Now come help me in the shower. I need you to check if my hair is clear of ketchup, and I have to see just how long you can resist me.”

Harry puts around the kitchen. He’s straightening the knick-knacks that litter the shelves between dishes. He rinses a load of dishes leaving them in the old rack next to the sink to dry. He’s lonely, but that’s nothing new for him. He’s spent the last seven years since winning X-Factor in one level of lonelines or another. Sixty thousand people scream for him in stadiums all over the world and he feels alone.

Harry hums his own songs under his breath while he sits in the armchair by the fireplace. He’s considering starting one himself, but his flat has a gas fireplace and he doesn’t know how to work a wood one. Burning down the place would still be considered arson before the place is officially his. He really can’t afford that with the tabloids always breathing down his neck.

He’s bored out of his mind. His mobile is dead and he was raised too well to go into one of the bedrooms to plug it in. All the sockets in the living room/dining room/kitchen area are taken and Harry is out of luck. He’s picked up an issue of House and Home that’s about eight years old from the magazine caddy and he’s flipping through it, oohing at things that went out of style while he was still a teenager.

He just about jumps out of his skin when the door flies open and Liam and Niall shuffle inside. The giant shaggy dogs that accompanied Liam that morning romp inside and shake, throwing water and dirt everywhere. “Loki, Thor, stop that and go back outside. I’ll be out in a minute with lunch.” Liam commands. Both dogs immediately run back outside and Niall closes the door.

“I swear those dogs listen to you better than they do to me.” Niall laughs, shrugging out of his coat and hanging it.

“You named your dogs Thor and Loki? As in the Marvel movie?” Harry asks.

“Liam did. He made a very convincing case with a slide show.” Niall laughs and walks to the fridge. Liam follows him and says “Actually they’re named for the comic characters. They’re a few years older than that movie. Niall, I meant to ask earlier, why is there almost only beer in your fridge?”

“Grocery shopping was one of me Da’s chores. I’m not so good at it.” Niall shrugs and grabs another Guiness for the man behind him. He passes it to Liam who sits down at the table. "Guiness Harry? God it is so weird that you’re sitting in me living room.”

“Not as weird as this day has been for me, I can promise you. No beer thanks. I wouldn’t mind making myself some tea though, if you’re okay with it.” Harry’s smile is so sweet it might give the other two boys diabetes.

“Yer never gonna make in Ireland mate. Kettle’s on the stove. Should still be water in it I think. Cups are in the left cabinet by the sink.” Niall sits at the table across from Liam and takes a drink from his beer. His hair is all messy when he takes off his wool cap and Harry fights the urge to smooth it out because he just met the lad.
“Thank you.” Harry says as he climbs out of his chair and walks to the stove. He checks the water level and deems it acceptable. He sets the stove, adjusting the flame to a low level. He doesn’t actually like his tea boiling, but just a little more than warm. He crosses to the table and picks up the small bag he brought with him, a tan attache. There are a few tea bags sealed in a linen pouch, Harry fishes one out and asks “Would either of you like some? It’s a special blend.” Both boys shake their heads and point to their beers in a synchronized way that could only come from years of spending time together.

“Tea is a morning drink for me. The rest of the day is milk, beer, or water if I’m sick.” Niall says it simply, as if he hadn’t just insulted the heritage of everyone on the British isles. “I’m not one for hot drinks.”

Harry can actually understand that point and forgives the cute lad in front of him. He’s disturbed by how attractive he finds him actually. He had expected to come here and find some ugly brute with overalls and a fat girlfriend. Instead the lad is just his type and the hunk sitting across from him is some sort of demigod. He should have moved to the country sooner.

“You wanna say somethin mate? You’re staring.” Niall cocks an eyebrow and Liam’s furrow.

“You two just aren’t what I expected when I decided to buy a farm. American farmers are all so-so.” Harry tries to put it gracefully.

“Fat? Yeah we know. It’s an American thing. Me mum used to say the same thing. We’re right supermodels compared to those blokes.” Niall laughs and Liam joins in. Harry lets out a nervous chuckle and turns around to go grab a tea cup. Everything is mismatched and there are no saucers, Harry sighs and grabs the least offensive one. It has a clover on it, but nothing else at least.

The kettle starts to whistle and Harry pours the water into the cup with one hand and switches off the stove with the other. His tea steeps, brown fingers snaking in ribbons through the water. It’s always been so pretty to Harry. When the entire cup is filled with brown he begins to stir with a spoon he finds after Niall tells him which drawer they’re in. He sits at the far end of the table from the other two and says “I think we should talk about a few things.”

“Alright, but me first. I’ll teach you what you need to know on this farm. I’ve resigned myself to that, but I need a proper farm hand too. Liam here has agreed to take up the job for room, board, and the price of a storage locker for the things from his flat. He’s been around this farm his entire life and I wouldn’t even consider another candidate. It is your choice though I guess. I do think things will go smoother for all of us if you hire him though. Regardless I’d like him to stay here.” Niall is so stern and serious that Liam’s jaw falls open and he waits a few seconds to apologize.

“I’m so sorry Mr. Styles. I don’t want to inconvenience-“

“I think it’s a great idea. Liam is more than welcome to stay, especially at that rate. There is one small thing though. I need to know you’re both okay living in the house with a gay man. I understand it makes some people uncomfortable and Ireland is like the second most catholic country out there.” Harry finishes quickly and looks down embarrassed.

Liam and Niall are both silent for about two seconds before they erupt into laughter. Harry looks up confused and sees Liam reaching out to catch Niall’s wrist before he can fall backwards in the chair. The gesture looks almost rehearsed it goes so perfectly. Liam never even has to stop laughing.

“Well Styles let’s put it this way. This morning Liam shagged me in the chair you’re using right now. Of course that was after he ate me out on the table where your mug is.” Niall raises a cocky eyebrow and Harry blushes so dark and hot he’s afraid he’ll sunburn from the inside out.
“Niall! You could have just said yes for God’s sake! I cleaned it after this morning’s events sir, after all the broken dishes.” Liam is clearly mortified and blushes almost as much as Harry.

“Yeah, but then I wouldn’t have been able to make People Magazine’s ‘Sexiest Man Alive 2015 and 2016’ look like a tomato. He had to clean up the dishes by the way because I pushed them off the counter so he could shag me there too.” Niall’s eyes are focused on Harry. He’s goading him for a reaction and just blushing apparently isn’t that satisfying.

“I um- I hadn’t realized you two were dating. I’m sorry if I offended you.” Harry has to choke out the words because all of the blood has rushed out of his body and into his wildly twitching cock.

“Actually we’re not.” Liam says quietly. His guilt is almost tangible in the air. “It’s complicated, but we broke up last year. This morning was a one time thing and I assure you that you won’t walk in on anything like that if you let me stay here.” He’s not exactly begging, but it’s close enough that it really isn’t helping the situation in his suffocatingly skinny jeans.

“I told you already, you’re welcome to stay. If you’ll both excuse me for just a second.” Harry grabs his bag and flees from the room.

As he runs down the hall he hears Niall roar with laughter and say “Bigger than I thought, but smaller than I fantasized about.”

If Niall hadn’t left the bathroom door open earlier Harry realizes he wouldn’t even know where to go. He closes the door behind him, careful not to slam it. He turns on the sink and splashes some cold water on his face. It doesn’t help at all. He’s tempted, so tempted to just pull himself out of his jeans and release all his sexual frustration right here and now, but he doesn’t.

It’s hardly appropriate and the two lads in the kitchen would know what was happening. Instead he chooses to conjure up the worst most horrifying images he can to try and get rid of his throbbing erection. He settles on something he saw on American TV while flipping through channels. It was a corpse with brown liquefied flesh from a show called Bones. He almost threw up when he watched it.

It has the desired effect and he feels himself growing softer. His breathing slows with his heart beat until finally he’s down to normal. He turns off the faucet and walks out of the bathroom to a chorus of laughter. He walks into the kitchen and all eyes are on him, though they’ve migrated to the sitting area around the modest television.

“Two minutes thirty six seconds.” Niall says checking his watch. “That was right quick. Has it been that long or did I just get you that excited?” He wiggles his eyebrows in a way that has Harry blushing, but he can pass it off as embarrassment at Niall’s question.

“I didn’t- I wasn’t doing that. I just needed to take a second because I’ve realized how monumentally crazy this all is.” It isn’t a complete lie. It’s just dawned on him how impulsive this whole thing is.

“Buying a farm out of nowhere or living with two ex boyfriends, one of whom is a tantalizingly attractive Hercules and the other of which has decided his sole purpose in life is to make you blush so much that your skin decides to stay red for convenience’s sake?” Niall laughs as he says all this but he doesn’t realize how close he is to the truth.

“Niall He’s our boss now. Maybe it’s best not to embarrass him. And don’t call me Hercules. That’s ridiculous.” Liam’s stern and it’s evident that he’s always been the responsible one.

“I didn’t. Obviously I’m the Hercules Li. Can’t you tell by all my rippling muscles?” He curls up his
arm, completely hidden by his woolen jumper which hugs tight to the small amount of definition he has.

“Is that blood?” Harry asks, focusing immediately on the red spot beneath Niall’s collar. “Why do you have blood on you? You didn’t have any blood on you before you left.”

“It’s ketchup.” Liam says quickly. “I threw a container of chips at him because he was being a right prat.”

“Do I need to remind you that me father just died. Being a prat is well within my rights at the moment.” Niall’s tone is serious. It’s almost eerie from the boy that had told him where the valuables were this morning in nothing but a towel.

“Not like that it isn’t. Don’t contest me on this or I won’t go shopping for food so you can have a breakfast that doesn’t consist of beer and stale biscuits from the cupboard.” Liam smiles fondly at Niall and even from the outside Harry can tell that he cares deeply about the blond.

“Will you-” Niall starts.

“I will get the supplies for Nialler-cakes yes. But first you have to apologize.” Liam sits back in his chair and his muscles relax in anticipation of the outpouring of affection he knows is about to come. Niall leaps out of his chair and tackles him. Kisses are pressed over every inch of Liam’s exposed skin in a level of excitement Harry has never seen outside of a concert.

“I was an arse! I beg your forgiveness! Please Liam, let me back into your good graces!” Niall dramatically throws himself at Liam’s feet and Harry smiles even though he feels so confused.

“Um what are Nialler-cakes?” Harry asks, interrupting the deep rumble of Liam’s laughs.

“They’re perfection on a plate!” Niall yells in his excitement, looking up at Harry from the spot he took on Liam’s lap.

“They’re pancakes with blueberries and caramel, to match his eyes and hair respectively. I made them for Niall after his brother died and they became his favorite. They became a special treat just for Niall after Maura passed, because I think they’re too sweet and Bobby never liked a heavy breakfast.” Liam beams as he talks about his innovation. “You’re welcome to have some too. I always make a couple dozen because Nialler can pack them away like you would not believe.”

“He forgot to mention that he makes them in the shape of guitars because he’s amazing.” Niall says while he nuzzles into Liam’s neck.

“Are you sure you’re exes? You two act like a married couple.” Harry’s nervous when he asks, but he has to know if Niall is available. He’s a masochist that way.

“Why? You interested in Liam here? He is a hot piece of arse so I get it. His abs are out of this world.” Niall asks and then he lifts Liam’s shirt up, exposing the aforementioned abs.

“Why? You interested in Liam here? He is a hot piece of arse so I get it. His abs are out of this world.” Niall asks and then he lifts Liam’s shirt up, exposing the aforementioned abs.

Liam blushes and pushes his shirt back down. “Yes we’re sure. We were best friends since I moved here when I was five. We dated for three years and then we broke up. We reconnected just this morning because Bobby was like a father to me too and I wanted to help Niall through this time. Niall just falls back into old patterns easily.”

“I didn’t hear you complaining this morning.” Niall laughs, climbing off Liam’s lap and walking over to Harry. “Of course if it makes you uncomfortable I could always split my flirting up to include you too. There’s enough of me to go around and I’m usually pretty harmless.”
“No! That’s um- that’s quite alright. I’m fine being the awkward third wheel for now. You just go back and do whatever you were doing with Liam. I really need to make a phone call. Do you mind if I use one of the bedrooms though? My mobile is dead and I need to charge it.” Harry grabs his bag off the table, stepping around the blond lad to do it.

“Yeah that’s fine. Liam can you show him to my parents’ room? I um- I haven’t gone in there since I found him. It’s a little messy, but I changed the linens when the coroner took him. They aren’t all corpsey and gross I promise.” Niall laughs but Harry can tell he’s shaken. His eyes are dull and far away and the light coloring his cheeks seem to always have is paling.

“Sure Nialler. Come this way if you will Mr. Styles.” Liam leads him to the big bedroom at the end of the hall. It’s filthy compared to how Harry normally keeps his house, but over all it isn’t really that bad. “There’s a socket by the bed and another by the chair over there.” Liam leaves after that, closing the door behind him.

Harry plugs in his phone and sits in the chair. He isn’t grossed out by the bed, but with the way this day has gone he’s afraid he’ll fall asleep and it’s not even five o’clock. When his phone lights up he’s immediately bombarded with dozens of notifications. Missed calls, voice mails, text messages and e-mails all come through at once. Harry chooses to read the texts first. Most of them are little messages from the people he normally sees daily. His mom sent him one to show her husband Robin dressed up in swim trunks and a snorkel holding suitcases. Apparently they’re going on a cruise to escape the last few weeks of winter.

Harry smiles and fires off a response to the people he deems important enough right now. He opens the thread from Zayn and immediately closes it back up again. It’s filled with dozens of messages. He looks through his missed calls and they’re all from him. Each voice mail is a variation of “Call me.” continually increasing in urgency. He almost entertains the thought of not calling him back until his face shows up on the screen again.

“What’s up Zayn?” Harry asks casually.

“Oh the queen answers her phone! I’m glad I could finally gain an audience.” Zayn’s tone is venomous and Harry is in no mood for it.

“Zayn you are one of the only people in the world who knows I’m retiring. Which means I don’t necessarily need an agent anymore now that my farm is purchased. Don’t test me today.” Harry feels almost guilty threatening Zayn’s job, but his stress levels are reaching maximum.

“I’m sorry Harry. I’ve been trying to get ahold of you for hours. We need to talk about your trip tomorrow. Are you all packed up? I can send someone to the flat to do it if you’re busy.” The sweet demeanor that only Harry seems to get to see comes back and Harry can’t help but smile.

“About that Zayn. I packed yesterday. I’m already at the farm. The rest of my things are on their way and should be here tomorrow.” Harry’s sheepish and just waiting to be scolded.

“Of course you are. Perrie owes me twenty quid now.” Zayn’s tone is resigned.

“You bet that I’d leave a day early?” Harry can’t believe that he’s that predictable.

“Actually I bet that you would make a complete arse out of yourself within a week. It’s been one day and I’m going to collect. Thanks for that.” Zayn’s tells him dryly.

“I’m down here to apologize about the circumstances of the property purchase Zayn. Did you know he didn’t read the employment clause? I had to tell him myself that he has to stay.” Harry fumes.
“He didn’t bring along a solicitor and honestly? It isn’t my job to hold his hand. My job was to get you what you wanted and I’m not sure he would have signed if he knew that part was there. He should have read it more carefully.” Zayn answers him cautiously.

“Zayn Malik! I know you better than that. You are not that kind of person.” Harry whisper yells.

“You want the truth? Fine. He’s cute, gay, and single. He’s almost exactly your type and you haven’t had a date in half a millennium. I thought he’d be good for you.” Zayn says in a biting tone.

“Well that’s really not going to happen. We hired a farm hand today and he just so happens to be Niall’s ex boyfriend and some sort of god. They’re actually sickeningly perfect together. So thanks for that.” Harry sighs.

“Exes are exes for a reason Harry. You have a fighting chance. You’re not exactly lacking in the looks department and you’re a multimillionaire with a heart of gold. He’s yours already. Kick the ex out and have your way with him.” Zayn says cockily.

“I’m not going to get in between them Zayn. They have special pancakes and they had sex this morning before I got here. And the ex, Liam? He’s built like Rambo and he’s a obviously still in love with Niall. When he heard that I saw Niall naked I thought he was going to kill me.” Harry explains.

“You saw him naked already? Good lord you work fast. Almost makes me glad you turned me down, Pez wouldn’t have stood a chance.” Zayn chuckles on the other end of the line.

“Wish I’d known that before I moved into this drama circus Zee. Breaking up an engagement sounds easier than living here.” Harry laughs.

“With that I’m going to go. Can’t have you flirting with me while Perrie is in the other room. She gets jealous so easily.” Zayn laughs and then he hangs up.

Harry sighs and puts down his phone. His e-mails can wait. He slowly pushes himself out of the chair and opens the door. The air is knocked out of him when Niall and Liam tumble through and knock him on his arse. Niall looks up at him with a sheepish grin and says “We weren’t eavesdropping. We came to see if you were asleep and then you opened the door with my hand on the handle.”

“Sure. And my ass isn’t throbbing because the floor is actually made of macaroons.” Harry responds dryly. “How much did you hear?”

“Not much.” Liam tells him, disentangling himself from the other two boys. “These doors are really thick. I heard something about a circus. That’s all I could really make out.”

“I don’t know what he’s talking about.” Niall says grinning from his spot on Harry’s lap. “I was just here to check if you were still awake. He’s malicious ya know. Always pokin around in other people’s business.”

Liam hoists Niall up off of Harry and says “Don’t believe a word he says. I’m the good one. He’s a mischievous little leprechaun.” He offers a sweet smile and his hand to pull Harry up. Harry takes his hand and is shocked by how little effort Liam seems to exert in lifting him off the floor.

“Thanks. I don’t want to be rude at all, but I would appreciate some privacy when I make phone calls. I have a lot of private business I’ll need to attend to, especially over the next few weeks.” Harry blushes when he says this. He knows he’s not in the wrong, but he still feels guilty while he’s a guest.
“It won’t happen again.” Liam promises. “We got bored and things got awkward so we were looking for you to help ease the tension. It was either this or Niall would have done it alone while I went food shopping. I figured I should be here to apologize for it.”

“I can’t even argue with that.” Niall says laughing. “I am sorry Harry. It’s just not everyday a rock star is in your house. Well I guess it is for me now, so I think the novelty will wear off pretty quickly.”

“I can deal with that. From now on I just want you to consider me another one of the boys. I’m a farmer now, not a rock star. And to be fair I’m more of a pop star than a rock star. I can’t play any instruments.” Harry laughs.

“Well I can teach you guitar and Liam wouldn’t admit it but he’s fairly good at piano even if he can’t match my sweet Santana-like guitar skills.” Niall offers.

“Won’t really do me much good actually. I’m swearing you two to secrecy on this,” Harry says, retaking his seat from before. “I’m retiring. My contract is up with my label and I’m not re-upping. It’s why I bought this farm, to escape the public spotlight. I meant to tell you earlier because there’s a good chance that paps will show up when I fly back to London next week and announce it.”

“I’m sorry what? You’re retiring? That’s horrible!” Niall yells, collapsing on the bed face first.

“Can I ask why? Or is that too personal for practical strangers?” Liam asks gently, sitting on the bed next to Niall’s dramatically stretched out form.

“No I might as well tell you. We won’t be strangers for long under this roof and it’s bound to affect your lives too. I assume you both know I won X-Factor in 2010?” Liam nods and the rustling from around Niall’s head indicates he does too. “Well since then I’ve had a lot of fun and made more money than I could ever actually need. But I haven’t been happy. I’ve had a string of romances, half of them with women for publicity, and they’ve all ended poorly. I’m tired of being alone.”

“Well while we’re here you’ll have us.” Liam says sweetly.

“Yeah!” Niall yells into the bed. It’s muffled but Harry laughs at the enthusiasm he expresses.

“Thanks you guys. Does that mean I can call you guys my friends? Because I really need some real friends.” Harry asks quietly.

Liam drags Niall up and they both walk over to Harry. Liam scoops Harry up in a bear hug and says “Of course you can. I should warn you though. We’re very awkward friends to have.”

“Oh dear god please let go.” Harry struggles uselessly from where his arms are pinned to his side. “You’re crushing me you giant!”

Liam laughs and lets go, Niall however is another story. He’s draped across Harry’s back and laughing. “There’s not much chance I could do that. You could probably bench press me.”

“Don’t tempt me to try. I’m kind of clumsy and I’ll probably drop you on your face.” Harry laughs, lowering Niall to the floor and then removing his arms from around his shoulders.

“Oh goody. A clumsy farmer. I don’t suppose that nondisclosure agreement you made me sign counts if I tell bar tales about you does it?” Niall asks.

“Nothing that ends in me covered in an animal’s bodily fluid or mangled by farm machinery okay?” Harry bargains.
“Deal!” Niall laughs and then he runs out of the room, tugging along a fondly smiling Liam by the wrist. “Come on Harry, I’ll order pizza for dinner.”

Harry sighs and follows the other two boys into the kitchen. This is going to be an interesting year for all three of them.

Liam wakes up early, close to five in the morning and scoots out of the bed as quietly as possible to avoid waking Niall up. He shouldn’t have slept in the same bed as him, but when Harry had gone off to sleep Niall had quietly pulled Liam aside and begged him. He couldn’t resist when it came to Niall.

He shrugs on the clothes he changed into after his shower with Niall yesterday and smiles fondly at the memory. They didn’t have sex. He’s adamant that they need to work through their personal issues before that happens again. They did however kiss lazily until Liam’s hot water heater gave up. They shivered as they soaped each other up, laughing the whole time.

He slips out of the room and goes into the kitchen. He grabs his keys off the table from where he set them next to the empty pizza boxes from last night. He turns on the coffee maker and pours himself a cup before he scribbles a note to Niall and Harry letting them know he’s going out to the market.

“You going somewhere?” a groggy voice asks from behind him. He jumps and turns around to find Harry dressed in nothing but his exceedingly tight underwear stretched over a very obvious erection.

Liam averts his eyes after a few seconds while Harry stretches, revealing every taught muscle lining his torso. “Yeah um- I’m going to hit the market before Niall wakes up. Sorry if I made too much noise.”

“Nah I’m used to waking up early for work outs.” Harry says. He’s still standing there with his eyes half closed and apparently unaware of his cock twitching in his briefs.

“Can you um- cover up maybe?” Liam asks quietly, turning his back so he can focus on his coffee.

“Oh dear god!” Harry shrieks. Liam isn’t afraid that the yell will wake Niall up, the boy could sleep through the apocalypse. He is worried though that he’s going to laugh and embarrass Harry.

“It’s alright. Nothing I haven’t seen before.” Liam says. When he turns around Harry is swaddled in a blanket he pulled off the couch and beating his forehead against the fireplace mantle. “Seriously it’s fine Harry. It was a lot worse when it happened with Bobby. He wasn’t nearly as attractive and Maura would scream at him.”

“Don’t try to make me feel better about it Liam. I’m just glad it wasn’t Niall. This fits within the bounds of embarrassing pub tales he can tell about me.” Harry moans as he continues to beat his head against the grained wood.

Liam walks over and catches Harry by the face before he can do any permanent brain damage. His rough fingers brush Harry’s cheeks with an unexpected softness and Harry feels warmth rushing into his cheeks. Liam is so close that Harry can feel his breath on his face. “Harry, this can be our little secret. I promise I won’t tell him. Now would you like some coffee? It’s for shite, but it always help me wake up.”

Harry smiles “Nah. I’m pretty sure mortification is the best morning stimulant there is. How is it your morning breath smells like cinnamon and vanilla?” Harry asks, immediately embarrassed as the words leave his mouth.
Liam laughs and tells him “I’m not sure. Niall always said it was his favorite thing about me. It’s just another weird thing of mine I guess.” He walks back over to the counter and takes a long gulp out of his mug.

“More like another perfect thing.” Harry mutters under his breath. Liam glances in his direction and he smiles to cover his words.

“Well I’m off. Gotta hit the market and get back before Nialler wakes up or he’ll assault you for lack of food. For a farmer’s boy he’s definitely not a morning person.” Liam says while he pulls on his jacket. He gives Harry one last kind smile before he walks out the door.

Harry sits down at the table and lets his forehead hit the table with a loud echoing “Smack!”! He groans more at his embarrassment than his pain. There’s a loud whooshing sound somewhere in the background, but he ignores it in favor of coddling his embarrassment with self deprecating muttering.

“I’m not a morning person, he was right about that. But I wouldn’t assault you. Takes too much energy.” Niall sounds groggy and his gravelly voice doesn’t help Harry’s not so little problem. He pulls out the chair across from Harry and sits, but not before Harry can notice that he’s not wearing any more than Harry is. Harry blushes and groans into the blanket he pulls up to his face.

“What’s the matter?” Niall asks. He’s scratching at the small amount of stubble growing on his cheeks and his eyes are fiercely blue in the morning light beginning to creep it’s fingers through the window.

“I haven’t gotten off with anybody in two months and there’s a throbbing reminder that won’t go away.” Harry says, groaning once again at his own honesty. “I’m sorry that was inappropriate. I’m just not used to anyone else being around in the morning and it’s a bit awkward.”

“If you need to go wank in the bedroom that’s fine. It’s your business. Hell I can go back to bed if you want to do it right here. Just clean up afterwards.” Niall laughs, getting up from his chair.

“Wait.” Harry says. “It’s fine. It’s more the loneliness part that’s bothering me. You and Liam aren’t making things easy for me.”

“Oh.” Niall says cautiously. “I’m sorry about that. I’ll go put on some trousers.” He leaves and Harry sighs, guilty for the way he’s thinking about both of them.

Niall returns a moment later in a worn pair of joggers and a shirt that must have started out black but has faded in several places. He looks exceptional, even with his hair poking up in every direction and Harry feels himself blushing again. “Oh please.” Niall sighs. “I’m a mess right now. You’re just a horny devil.”

“Two months!” Harry cries. “Every magazine on the planet calls me a sex symbol and I never have sex. It was six months before the last time.”

“I got ya beat there.” Niall says. “Before yesterday, I hadn’t had sex once since Liam and I broke up eleven months ago. That’s a hell of a dry spell.”

Harry’s jaw drops. “Eleven months? How did you manage?”

“Mostly I just ignored how horny I was and had a few wanks when I really needed to. Toys and hook ups don’t really compare when you’ve had a guy like Li. Eventually I just forgot how much I wanted it.” Niall admits. He shrugs his shoulders and a loud growl rumbles out of his stomach.
“You ate ten pieces of pizza last night. How are you hungry again? How do you stay that thin when you eat so much?” Harry pulls an incredulous face and Niall just laughs.

“Oh you haven’t seen anything yet. When Li makes the Nialler cakes I’ll probably eat twenty of them. My metabolism is insane.” Niall pulls a sheepish grin. “And I may not look like Liam, but I do a lot around here. It’s not a bow flex, but it’s a pretty good workout.”

“Oh you haven’t seen anything yet. When Li makes the Nialler cakes I’ll probably eat twenty of them. My metabolism is insane.” Niall pulls a sheepish grin. “And I may not look like Liam, but I do a lot around here. It’s not a bow flex, but it’s a pretty good workout.”

“Of course. I completely forgot where I was for a minute. Everything is so different here from in London. Why did I think that I could do this?” Harry pouts.

“Because you can. Probably.” Niall says, He cups his hand over Harry’s and the curly haired lad smiles at the warmth. “You were strong enough to leave the world of celebrity instead of getting strung out and becoming a wreck. Hell you could have pulled a full Lindsey Lohan, but you didn’t. A farm is nothing compared to that.”

“That’s not really my scene. Zayn and I have shared a few joints before, but I didn’t really like it. I probably would have been like Mariah Carey on TRL instead, just completely bat shit. Throwing ice cream at people and only wearing a t-shirt.” Harry laughs.

“Upon further consideration of your options I think you should definitely go back to be a celebrity. I would pay to watch that mental breakdown.” Niall laughs. It’s bright and tinkling and it brings a smile to Harry’s face.

“Well, unfortunately for you, as of two minutes ago at six I own this farm. You should go check your bank account. The first payment of twenty five percent should already be there. Zayn is terrifyingly punctual.” Harry tells him.

Niall pulls his mobile out of the pocket of his joggers and opens up his bank’s app. “Holy shite! That’s a fuckload of money!” Niall jumps out of his chair and runs around the table. He pulls Harry’s face up and plants a kiss on each of his cheeks before kissing him full on the lips.

“I’ve been gone for half an hour and already you’re kissing him? Should I be worried?” Liam asks from the suddenly opened door.

“Liam look at all this money!” Niall yells, running from a shocked Harry and shoving his mobile in Liam’s face. Liam laughs and pushes past the blond lad to put his bags down on the counter. He walks over and plants a big kiss on Harry’s lips too.

“Everybody needs to stop kissing me. It’s very confusing.” Harry laughs. It’s the honest truth, but he laughs like it’s a joke.

“Well a kiss is the least you deserve for that kind of money.” Niall laughs. “Hell I’d let you bend Liam over right here for that. Have at it.” Niall pushes Liam so that he’s over the table. Liam takes it well. He laughs and wiggles his bum, winking at Harry.

“I’m good, maybe later. Thanks though.” Harry laughs. He gets out of the chair and walks over to the counter with the groceries.

“That’s good. I’m more of a top anyways.” Liam laughs. Niall tugs at his sleeve and he laughs again. “Yes, Niall, I got all the supplies. I’ll get started right away.” He plants a fond kiss on the crinkles by Niall’s eyes and joins Harry at the counter.

“Can I help?” Harry asks. He’s tired of feeling useless around here.

“Actually the recipe is secret.” Liam tells the curly haired boy. “I always kept it secret so that Niall
needed me around to have them.”

“It was cruel!” Niall yells from his place at the table.

“You can’t cook to save your life anyways.” Liam scoffs. “You’d have ended up hating them because you couldn’t make them right.”

“There’s a chance!” Niall pouts. Liam walks over and crouches in front of him. Both of his hands circle the small wrists and he smiles softly.

“Babe this is one of the few things I have ever been able to give you. And now that I’m living here you can have them as often as you like. It’ll only cost you a kiss a piece.” Liam is unprepared for the tidal wave of Niall that flies out of the chair into him. Kisses are planted without mercy on Liam’s face and Harry laughs at them rolling around on the floor.

“I’m not sure he has enough ingredients for that many Nialler-cakes.” Harry laughs.

“That’s okay. I’m paying off my massive tab.” Niall says in between kisses. Liam beams so bright it could blind Niall being that close, but he hardly notices, ending his barrage with a deep kiss planted right on Liam’s lips.

“Well I’m excited to try these Nialler-cakes so I think he should get started.” Harry says pointedly. Honestly he’s more than a little jealous, though he’s not sure of whom.

“Yes!” Niall yells. He climbs off of Liam and pulls him up. His shoves are gentle but Liam moves quickly to avoid any more. He pulls the ingredients out of the bag and shoos the other two boys out of the kitchen.

“Harry go get dressed. Niall go find something to distract yourself with after you pull out the pan I need.” Liam orders. Harry slinks out of the room smiling, but Niall stands his ground.

“Slave driver. You know I am technically your boss now. I’ve decided my title is Supreme Styles Farm Overlord. You’re First Hand, a respectable enough title, but definitely not in a position to give orders.” His smile is cocky and Liam can’t help himself. He pins Niall against the counter top and kisses him deeply. His fingers tangle themselves in the dyed locks of his ex and Niall surrenders immediately. Their tongues don’t battle as much as lock in an embrace. Liam braces his hand on Niall’s hips before he turns him around roughly.

“I seem to remember you liking when I gave orders.” Liam breathes in Niall’s ear. He bites at Niall’s earlobe and slips a hand up Niall’s shirt.

“Mm yes sir.” Niall moans. He pushes his arse back into Liam’s hips and moans loudly.

Liam pulls his hips back and brings his hand down with a thundering smack on Niall’s arse. Niall yelps and Liam says “Then get me the damn pan Supreme Overlord. Nialler-cakes require a pan and it’s your kitchen. Well it’s technically Harry’s, but you know where everything is.”

Niall takes the whole thing with good spirits and walks off laughing to grab the pan. Liam turns around and pulls the blueberries out of the bag. They’re canned since the season is so far off but that doesn’t really matter. Suddenly his bum feels like it’s on fire and Niall is cackling. When Liam turns around Niall is holding the skillet and his head is thrown back in a laugh. He looks beautiful and Liam can’t help the smile that grows on his face.
“Go turn on the tv Nialler. And leave the skillet.” Liam laughs out. Niall skips off, dropping the skillet on the stove top when he passes it. His laugh rings through the room and Harry enters with a very confused look on his face.

“Did I miss something?” He asks cautiously.

“Nothing.” Niall says with a smile. “Just Liam being good at being in charge. He’s very good at giving orders.”

Breakfast is perfect. Niall has scarfed down over a dozen Nialler-cakes so far and there’s no signs that he’ll stop soon. Harry has eaten four which is respectable and after a chorus of begging from both other boys Liam has eaten one himself. It’s not as sweet as he remembers, but it’s still too much for him early in the morning.

“Li these are fantastic! Even better than I remember and that’s a bar set pretty high.” Niall says. His mouth is full of pancake, and if Liam wasn’t so far gone for him he’d find it disgusting. As it is though he thinks it’s perfect.

“I’m glad Nialler, even if you are exaggerating. What about you Harry?” Liam asks.

“They’re great. I’m going to need to do some serious work to get them off my stomach though. I don’t have Niall’s magic metabolism.” Harry rubs his stomach.

Liam looks back over at Niall who has cheeks that are puffed out to their maximum capacity and is still managing to pout. A laugh erupts out of him before he asks “What’s wrong Ni?”

“mnot efndnsf” Niall says.

“Maura would beat your arse red for talking like that at the table. Swallow your food you loon.” Liam laughs and shakes his head.

“I said I’m not exaggerating. These are the best ones you’ve ever made.” Niall is still wearing a pout and Liam is tempted to kiss it right off his face.

“Well then thank you. I didn’t do anything different though. In fact I was afraid I wouldn’t be able to make them quite right after so long.” Liam admits. He rubs the back of his head and sports a flustered grin.

“Well you did spectacularly so just take a damn compliment.” Niall mutters. “I’m sorry. I um- I’m going to go take a shower.”

“Niall-” Liam starts, but Niall is already out of the room. “Damn it.” He drops his fork on the table and cups his face in his hands.

“Liam are you alright?” Harry asks after a minute. He was silent during the whole exchange and now that Liam’s remembered he’s there it’s awkward.

“I’m fine.” Liam snaps. “I’m sorry. He can get like this sometimes. He has a tendency to run whenever any complications show up and it’s always an even bigger problem than whatever we fought about. I just hate feeling him pull away from me.”

“I know I’m going to regret asking this, but aren’t you two broken up? It’s just that you don’t act like he’s your ex as much as your current boyfriend. I’m not even sure how you two can be around each other. I’ve never been friends with an ex and not regretted it.” Harry asks. He seems to brace himself, probably in case Liam is angry at the question.
“I’m still in love with him.” Liam says quietly. “I love him and I will fight through every moment of his fight or flight response until he trusts me again. He means more to me than anything in the world and once he felt the same way about me. He’s been through so much and I can’t just let him be alone.”

“Then go after him you fool!” Harry almost yells.

“I can’t. He yells and throws things. He need to be alone.” Liam says.

“Have you ever thought that he need to yell? That maybe he needs to let it all out instead of sucking it all back inside and pushing it down? The Irish have a very unhealthy history of repression, and coming from a Brit, that’s impressive.” Harry laughs.

“I hadn’t actually. He always gets so mad that I never thought it might actually be the best thing for him. Are you like a pop star slash psychologist or something?” Liam asks.

“Stop wasting time asking questions and go help Niall.” Harry says, sitting back with a smug smile.

Liam walks around the table and wraps Harry’s shoulders up in a hug. “Thank you Harry.” Before the curly haired boy can respond Liam leaves him and runs out of the room. He jogs down the hallway and opens up Niall’s door. The small boy is wrapped in a mound of blankets and his face is red and puffy.

“Go away Liam.” Niall says. His voice is trying desperately to be hard, and instead it comes out as a choked sob. He wipes at his running nose with a hand completely bundled in blanket.

“No. I’m not letting you run away from me anymore Niall. I will fight through whatever you throw at me until you trust me again.” Liam settles himself on the bed and drapes his arms around Niall’s shoulders. Niall struggles, but it’s halfhearted at best. Eventually he lays his face down on Liam’s shoulder and cries freely.

“He’s gone Li! My father is gone! I have no family left.” Niall’s words are punctuated by sobs that wrack his whole body, leaving him weak and vulnerable. Liam pulls the small boy onto his lap and holds him tight. His fingers rub through Niall’s hair in the most soothing way he can manage.

“You have me Nialler. You always will, whether you want me or not. Cry, yell, do whatever you need to do because I’ll take it all.” Liam’s voice is soft and that just makes Niall cry harder.

“I’ve been so horrible to you though.” Niall pushes back from Liam’s chest and looks him in the eyes. “Why are you trying to get me back after everything I’ve said and done? And don’t say because you love me. You had plenty of time to move on.”

“Niall I could never move on from you. If you left today and never came back, if you never spoke a word to me until we died, I could never really get over you. Even if I got married and lived to be one hundred and fifty, I would miss you every day of my life. You are the best friend I’ve ever had and the only person I’ve ever really loved.” Liam is so honest and so vulnerable right now he’s afraid he’ll start crying himself.

“Oh god Li! I don’t deserve you. You cannot keep being so perfect and expect me to just accept that you love me. You have to have a flaw.” Niall somehow manages a combination of a laugh and a sob that makes his nose explode in a very unflattering way. He wipes it on the blankets, not caring how gross it looks.

“I have plenty of flaws Niall and you know them all. I snore, I can’t sleep past six even if I try, and I cry at any sad Disney movie. My bank account is negative more often than not, I never buy new
clothes until the old ones are completely trashed, and I’m so impossibly in love with you that sometimes I can’t even think of anything else. It’s terrible for business when I tend down at the Chair.” Liam tries to keep it lighthearted but he can’t quite manage.

“What the hell did I ever do to deserve you?” Niall asks, cuddling back into the crook of Liam’s neck.

“You’re perfect to me Niall. All you ever had to do was be yourself and I was gone for you. Even if it took me way too long to realize it.” Liam’s hand is gently stroking Niall’s hair and when he hears Niall whimpers subside and light snores start to take their place he isn’t surprised. He lays Niall’s sleeping body down and backs quietly away after pressing a sweet kiss to Niall’s tear stained cheek.

Upon reentering the living room he is shocked to find Harry surrounded by boxes and boxes. He’s wearing a hopeless look and is obviously on the brink of tears. “It didn’t look like this much when I packed it!” He cries. “I don’t even know what I’m going to do with all of it!”

“Harry, mate, calm down. We’ll figure something out yeah? If necessary you can share the storage unit I’m getting the stuff from my flat. It’ll all work out.” Liam tries to sound soothing, but Harry is beginning to lose it.

“He’s going to think I’m trying to just take over! I don’t want him to hate me Liam! I can’t live with someone who hates me for the next nine months. I don’t handle that kind of pressure well.” Harry is tugging at a strand of hair so hard that Liam is afraid it’s going to tear. He does the only thing he knows how and scoops Harry Styles up into yet another hug.

“Shush now. This farm is yours and you can do what you like. Niall may want to keep a few things around to transition, but he isn’t going to hate you. He wouldn’t say this, but he’s always fancied you. He even has all your albums. In fact I’d bet my last euro that it was your music he was listening to in the tub yesterday.” Liam holds the skinny lad tight and smiles when Harry doesn’t struggle like Niall did, instead choosing to wrap his arms around Liam’s chest.

“If you keep hugging me Liam I’m going to start liking it and that’ll be a problem. I’ve never been a hugger and my mum will get quite jealous.” Harry snuggles into Liam, reveling in the warmth of his embrace.

“Well we can’t have that can we? I’ve always prided myself on how much mothers like me.” Liam laughs. He releases Harry and the curly haired boy feels a sense of loss when he lets go. “Alright so what’s what?”

“Books or music are in the small boxes, clothes in the large ones, and the rest is things like my television and photo albums.” Harry sighs, pointing to each area in turn.

“One quick question?” Liam asks. Harry looks at him, desperation filling his eyes. He nods curtly and Liam continues. “Is there more? Like furniture or something?”

“No. I left that in my flat. I’m not ready to sell it yet, in case I fail as badly here as everyone thinks I will. For the most part I left my things there. I just brought the stuff I thought I’d either need or that would make this feel like home for me.” Harry tells him quietly.

“I’m not going to let you fail Harry, and neither is Niall. I know we haven’t known each other long, and most of that time has been wrapped in drama, but we consider you a friend already. We take care of our friends. By the end of the year, this farm will be a part of you.” Liam’s natural parental role is coming out. He’s not sure if what he’s saying is true, but he knows it’s right to say.
“Promise?” Harry’s eyes are brimming with tears that threaten to fall any second and Liam can’t stand seeing his new friend this way.

“I promise. Now let’s get started moving this to whichever rooms you want them in. It looks like we’ve got a while before Niall wakes back up, so it’ll just be us.” Liam grabs the box closest to him and picks it up, reading the neat scrawl on the side. It says, ‘books-novels-classics-mostly Dickens’.

“You’re this organized? I feel a little ashamed now.”

“Nobody ever believes me when I tell them organizing is one of my favorite things!” Harry groans.

“Why does everybody think I’m so messy?”

“Well I have to admit I don’t follow celebrity news that often, but didn’t you wear the same shirt for like a month and just cut parts off of it until it was just a bandanna?” Liam laughs, remembering how Niall would exclaim every time he saw new pictures of the same outfit.

“Alright yes, I had a hipster phase. I still do to some extent, but that was like twenty-thirteen and I’ve grown up since then.” Harry huffs. He falls to the floor and pulls his legs under himself, crossing them in front of himself.

“Says the man sitting like he’s in primary school.” Liam laughs at his own joke and the way it brings a small pout to Harry’s lips. “Relax. What I was trying to say is that I wish I was that organized. I try so hard sometimes, but I still lose my keys at least once a week, and don’t get me started on socks.”

“Wash them in pairs. Stuff one of the long parts into the other and they’ll generally stay together.” Harry offers, like he hasn’t just solved a problem that’s plagued Liam for close to a decade. “Also Tescos sells sock wash bags and clips for exactly that problem. I can pick you up some next time I’m there.”

“Um- thanks Harry. I could kiss you for that, but that’d require being able to get around all these boxes.” Liam smiles kindly and Harry blushes a deep red.

“Yeah, I’m fine thanks. You people have like no boundaries here do you?” Harry laughs, trying to dispel the heat in his cheeks. “I’m not as repressed as most Brits, in fact I can be downright clingy, and I still don’t hug and kiss people as much as you lot.”

“It’s Niall’s influence honestly. Even as a child he was affectionate. It’ll rub off on you in time, I can promise you that.” Liam laughs and starts stacking the boxes that say books in a neat pile.

“Lunatics you lot. Do you think Niall will mind if I put my telly out here and move that one?” Harry asks, pointing to the modest box set that Niall’s parents have had forever.

“Not if you’ll let us watch footy on it. It can get rather loud though. Niall is a crazy person when Derby is playing. I always used to lay down towels down to soak up the beer because he jumps up and it spills everywhere.” Liam smiles, but his eyes are far away, remembering times that seem so far away and yet so near at hand again.

“So no leather or linen furniture then. I’ll keep that in mind if I redecorate. Footy is fine though, I enjoy watching. Even if I can’t really play worth a damn.” Harry laughs. It draws Liam back, but he didn’t hear what was said so he just offers a crooked smile.

They start organizing the boxes based on what’s inside, since the men who brought them in while Liam was outside apparently just put them down without any concern to for the people who had to
unpack them. Harry sets up the new television along with his various media players and a sound system.

“Would Niall mind if I upgraded the cable? I’d pay for it of course.” Harry asks from behind the huge new telly he’s setting up.

“Why would he mind? If anything he’ll be ecstatic.” Liam laughs. “I’m going to open this box all right? It’s not marked very specifically.”

“I’m afraid he’ll think that I’m just another rich bitch throwing money around in an attempt to show off. I just don’t want to put him off of me so early.” Harry calls back. He hears the sound of tape tearing off of cardboard and puts together the last thing Liam said. “Wait! What does the box say Liam? You don’t need to—” He’s interrupted by a loud bark of laughter and his face floods with warmth and embarrassment.

“Christ Harry! I’ve never seen this many dildos in my life! You run a sex shop on the side or something?” Liam is doubled over and bracing himself on the couch. He’s laughing so hard he can’t breathe properly and if Harry wasn’t so mortified he’d be laughing right alongside him. His laughter is loud and deep, but somehow it doesn’t seem disparaging and that takes the sting out of it.

“I don’t get to date a lot anymore Liam. Please pack that back up and stop laughing before you wake Niall up. He’d never let me live this down.” He’s sequestered himself entirely behind the entertainment console and is holding the blu-ray player instructions up in front of his face, as if they could shield him from the world.

“I’m not going to make fun of you Haz. I understand better than Liam does about these things.” Niall’s voice is right in front of Harry and no matter how much he shrinks behind his paper aegis, the bare feet poking into his view underneath it aren’t going away. “Liam won’t say another word about it either. I promise.” A pale hand circles around his wrist and Harry’s skin feels like it’s on fire. He stands silently and his shield flutters slowly to his feet.

“You two weren’t supposed to see those. It’s going to be awkward now.” Harry mumbles. Niall pulls him in for a hug even though he’s much smaller and Harry rests his cheek on the blond hair messily poking out all over Niall’s head.

“Harry, it’s not as if we expected you to be chaste. Especially with yourself.” Niall mumbles into his shoulder. His warm breath bleeds through the fabric onto Harry’s already overheated skin. He shivers against Niall, who holds him tighter, probably thinking it was a chill. It doesn’t help his embarrassment, but it does help fill the lonely place inside of him just a little bit.

“Harry mate, I’m sorry. I just wasn’t expecting anything like this. Fit bloke like you an all. Didn’t really think you’d be the type to own a bunch of these.” Liam is apologetic, but venom seeps from Niall’s pores.

“That’s because you don’t really know what it’s like to go without Liam. He hasn’t been with anyone in months, just like me. Being lonely is harder than you can imagine.” Niall’s eyes are dripping with rage at Liam and Harry isn’t sure why his reaction is this strong.

“Niall I—” Liam stutters out before Niall silences him with a sharper glare than Harry knew was possible.

“You’ve been having sex regularly, Liam. People in this town talk and things get back to me. Would you have had casual sex with Sophia last month if you knew I’d find out? What about the date you had with Josh? Because any time Harry tries to do anything there are paps camped out to watch it,
not to mention the ever present risk of someone taping it to sell.” Niall has positioned himself between Liam and Harry now, acting as a shield even though it isn’t necessary.

“Niall it’s fine. He didn’t mean anything by it.” Harry tries to reassure the smaller boy. It doesn’t have it’s desired effect and Niall whirls on him so fast he barely sees it.

“It is not okay! He doesn’t get to make fun of you for being lonely. Not when he doesn’t understand what it’s like! Not when he’s been getting it every which way while I haven’t had anyone since I left him!” Niall claps his hand over his mouth and his eyes widen so they appear to take over his entire face.

“Niall-” Liam bounds up to Niall’s side, crossing the large distance between them in only a few steps. “I had no idea-”

“That I’d find out? Josh was one of my friends Liam! I haven’t even been able to look at him since.” Niall is in tears now, but you wouldn’t know it by how fierce his face is.

“I didn’t know it would hurt you this much. You left me Niall, not the other way around. I tried for months to get you to talk to me, but you wouldn’t ever talk back. Did you expect me to be alone forever?” Liam is taking the defensive, a tactic that Harry would not recommend at the moment.

“No! I just expect you to understand that being single isn’t as easy for everyone as it is for you!” Niall’s shoulders are starting to fall from the strong position they’ve been holding since the argument began. “I expect you to understand that sex is a sensitive subject for some of us and you have no right to judge.”

“I’m not even sure who I should be apologizing to at this point.” His voice is shaky and all his muscles feel weak, like they can’t quite hold him up. “I’m sorry Harry. I didn’t mean to be cruel. And Niall, I can’t apologize enough. I never meant to hurt you. Can we talk about this?”

“It’s fine Liam.” Harry squeaks out from behind Niall. “I’ll um- I’ll leave you two alone now.” He grabs as many boxes of books as he can carry and flees out of the room.

“There’s nothing to talk about Liam.” Niall mutters, dropping onto a chair that isn’t covered in boxes.

“Don’t lie to me Niall. Why didn’t you tell me how much this had bothered you yesterday? Or even in the bedroom a little while ago?” Liam crouches in front of Niall, his knees bracketing around Niall’s feet.

“Because I didn’t realize how much it bothered me alright?” Niall covers his face with his hands and lets out a muffled sob. “Nothing used to get to me when we were young. I could be completely unphased, and that disappeared when we broke up.”

“I didn’t know.” Liam’s voice is soft, like his hands that are rubbing Niall’s knees soothingly.

“The last thing I said to my father was that he should butt out.” Niall’s confession is little more than a whisper, but it knocks the air out of Liam’s lungs. “We fought for the last night of his life, because I wouldn’t take you back.”

“Nialler you can’t carry around that kind of guilt. What happened to Bobby wasn’t your fault.” Liam wants to hold the boy in front of him, but he doesn’t know if that’s the right thing for the blond boy right now.
“I know that Liam. I’m not ten. It was an aneurysm. He could have died at any time. I just wish that we hadn’t been fighting, that he hadn’t urged me to take you back because I haven’t been happy in almost a year. All he wanted was to see you and I live happily ever after and now there’s a chance that’ll happen and he won’t be here to say ‘I told you so!’ like he loved to do.” Niall leans forward, wrapping his arms around Liam’s broad shoulders and weeps freely.

Liam doesn’t say anything yet, just reciprocates Niall’s embrace. Minutes pass and there’s no noise except for Niall’s muffled cries. “Do you really want to live happily ever after with me?” Liam finally asks. The question has been clawing in his throat ever since Niall said those words. He can’t help it when they finally rip themselves out of his mouth.

Niall lashes out, a hand striking the back of Liam’s head even as the other holds him tight. “Course I do you knob. I’m sorry I exploded at you. I’m not really mad that you slept with Sophia. I’m not happy about Josh, but I can understand it. I just hate that you had people when I was so alone.”

“Does it help if I tell you I never slept with Josh?” Liam questions. “We didn’t even make it through the date before I realized that it was wrong. And Sophia was a one night stand. I couldn’t stand her anymore. Nobody came close to you.”

“Really?” The question is little more than a mumble into Liam’s shoulder.

“Really. I’ve had sex exactly one time since we broke up, and that’s only because I thought I’d never see you again. And it wasn’t good.” Liam smiles.

“Really?” The question is little more than a mumble into Liam’s shoulder. Niall says, releasing his grip on Liam in favor of falling back against the chair.

“I know.” Liam sighs. “It’s just this talk was heavier than all of Harry’s boxes of novels combined, and I wanted to lighten the mood.”

“No. I’m the funny one. You’re the perfect one. Stay in your assigned role.” Niall’s laughter fills the room.

“Fine. And from now on you stay in yours. This angry Nialler is more than I know how to handle.” Liam giggles at the fake offended look Niall pulls. “Don’t give me that. I can only take so much at a time as a punching bag. I need time to recharge before I take another assault like that. Time and maybe a little affection.”

Niall laughs and says “Well then ask Harry if you can borrow one of his friends there. That’s all the affection you need.”

“I said a little. Those are not little.” Liam laughs. Niall laughs too until Harry’s voice sounds in the room.

“You two are going to force me to move out of here within a week aren’t you?” Harry sighs.

“And let go of that arsenal? No way in hell.” Niall hops out of his chair and skips to Harry. “You wanna go show me how you use them? I bet it’s quite a show.”

When Niall winks Harry’s cheeks explode and his knees nearly buckle. His tongue swells in his mouth and his cock mimics that in his pants. He can’t seem to get enough oxygen to his brain and he’s afraid this beautiful boy who is wrapping thin arms around his neck is going to be the death of him. “I- uh- Liam- you- um-” Harry whimpers.
“Relax Haz. I was jus kiddin.” Niall laughs. His arms retract from Harry’s neck and the tall boy almost groans at the loss of warmth “No need to pop a gasket. Take yer toys back to your room and that’s the last we’ll mention them unless you ever want to have a play date.” Definitely the death of Harry.

“Why do you keep calling me that?” Harry asks once his vision clear up and the pounding in his ears quiets to a dull roar.

“What? Haz? I’m not sure. I always call people by nicknames and that’s the one that came to mind when I talked to you. Do you not like it? Crafty dodging of my last comment by the way.” Niall laughs

“I like it just fine. It’s so much better than Curly or just Styles. And I’m consciously choosing to ignore the flirting from now on. Especially when Liam is around.” Harry admits shyly. “I doubt he appreciates it.”

“Actually I think it’s kind of hot.” Liam confesses. “Like I said, you’re a right fit bloke.” Harry’s heart is not strong enough to take this.

“I’m going to my room now. Do not stand outside my door or I’ll make you both sleep in the barn.” Harry says.

He grabs his private box off the floor and scurries down the hall ignoring Niall’s laughing and Liam’s shout of “We don’t have a proper barn!”

He slams the door behind him and stuffs a blanket at the crack in the bottom of the door. He drops the box on the end of his bed and tears his trousers off. He’s almost ashamed at how turned on he is right now, but he sheds that with his shirt. Niall and Liam have been riling him up on purpose and he can’t take it anymore. He’s down to his underwear now and he’s rubbing himself through them.

His lip is beginning to tear from how hard his teeth are chewing on it, but the stinging just turns him on more. He falls down on the bed and scoots up to the pillows, not quite sitting up. His hand gently works his member through his underwear and it feels so good he may explode any second. He’s so absorbed in it he doesn’t hear the door click open.

“Christ that’s hot.” Niall moans. Liam and he are standing there, completely naked and their eyes are fixed on his body. He’s almost stops, almost shouts at them to leave him alone, almost covers himself up, but he can’t. The way their tongues dart out, wetting their lips just gets him going more. He pulls himself out of his underwear, reveling in the hisses of air sucked in through the teeth of his audience. He jerks his head in a silent question and both the other boys rush to the bed, Liam on his right and Niall on his left.

Two mouths start working on his neck and he gasps. Liam’s rough hands brush over his chest, his fingers twisting at Harry’s nipples. Niall takes a much more direct tactic and wraps his fingers, his surprisingly soft fingers, wrap themselves along Harry’s length. A swift tug has Harry moaning and he can feel Niall’s smile against the skin of his neck.

“Like it when I touch your cock Haz?” Niall asks. Harry moans and nods. “What about this?” Niall strokes slowly, so slowly, and Harry writhes underneath him.

“I can’t let Niall be the only one that lets you make that noise. Too fucking hot for that.” Liam says. He crawls down the bed and positions himself between Harry’s legs. He pulls Harry’s underwear down and off his legs and then mouths his way back up. His lips massage Harry’s long legs and Harry can barely contain himself. When Liam reaches his groin he licks at Harry’s hips. It sends
shudders through the curly haired boy’s body and an unearthly moan flies from his lips.

Harry can’t contain himself, he pull’s Niall’s face to his. Their lips lock and nothing in the world could feel better. Sparks fly across his skin. His muscles spasm across his body and his toes curl. Niall moans into his mouth and he feels like his chest is going to explode. Liam moves from his hips to his balls, sucking one into his mouth and massaging at Harry’s hips which are now bucking wildly.

“He’s a master at that yeah?” Niall laughs when he pulls away.

“Fuck yes!” Harry moans.

“Just wait. It’ll get better in a minute.” Niall says, resuming his former position at Harry’s neck. He bites Harry’s earlobe gently and continues his slow deliberate pulls on Harry’s cock. Liam hooks his hands under Harry’s knees and lifts them. His mouth pulls off Harry’s balls with an audible pop and he kisses down the length between them and Harry’s arse. He tongues, cautiously at first at Harry’s entrance, waiting to see a reaction. Harry’s fists clench at the sheets and his head jerks back. “Told ya.” Niall says with a smile.

Harry’s moaning reply is all the approval Liam needs before he licks fully at Harry’s pink hole. He tastes like sweat and man and it drives Liam wild. His tongue presses flat against Harry, licking slowly in time with the tugs Niall is making.

“Want me to suck it now?” Niall asks greedily.

“I’d rather you ride it, but that’s a good place to start.” Harry responds. All pretense of the shy fool drops away from him.

“All in good time Haz.” Niall laughs. He mouths down Harry’s chest before licking Harry’s head. The angle of his hips doesn’t allow for Niall to take all of him into his mouth, but he tries valiantly. Harry gasps when he feels Niall’s mouth, warm and wet closing tight around him. His head bobs back and forth, as slow and deliberate as his hand did.

Harry doesn’t know how he’s lasting this long. He feels like he’s been on the edge of orgasm the entire time they’ve been here, but somehow he’s keeping it together. “Fuck me.”

“Already Harry? Damn.” Liam mutters from beyond Niall’s head. “Lube in the box?”

“Yes. Fuck. Me.” Harry breathes out desperately. Liam pops open the cap on the lube he grabs out of Harry’s box of toys. He slicks up a finger and circles it around Harry’s entrance before slipping it in. Harry throws back his head and moans. It’s only a minute before he gasps “Another!”

Niall hums around his cock and then pulls off. He reaches out a hand in Liam’s direction and Liam passes him the lube. “Want to get me ready Haz?” He brackets his knees around Harry’s chest and bends over, prostrating himself in front of Harry and passing the bottle through his legs. Harry can’t get the cap off fast enough and dumps too much lube into the palm of his hand. He coats a finger and puts it up to Niall’s entrance. “Only two fingers though. I like it tight.” Niall says and Harry’s heart feels like it stops for a minute.

He pushes his finger into Niall as Liam pushes another into him. His hips are fucking down onto Liam’s hand and his finger is working in time with them in Niall. He quickly adds another finger, pushing into Niall with maybe a bit more force than is necessary. Niall moans though and pushes his hips back onto Harry’s fingers like a champ. Liam withdraws his hand and coats himself. Niall pushes himself up, giving Liam room to lift Harry’s knees and get a proper angle. His cock is
massive, the biggest Harry has ever seen in person by far, and he’s practically drooling at the prospect of having it inside him.

Liam’s head pushes in just the tiniest bit and Harry is a panting mess already, coming apart at the seams. Liam pushes himself inside slowly, letting Harry adjust around him as he goes. When he bottoms out he moans. “Fuck Haz. So fucking great.” Harry can’t keep up with pushing into Niall and pulls his fingers out. The small boy moans and rearranges his body, positioning himself above Harry’s leaking cock.

“You just climb on. I’ll keep him steady for you.” Liam says. Niall nods and grabs the lube from Harry’s side. He coats his hand in it before grabbing Harry’s cock, slicking it only a few times before he lowers his hips. When Harry’s head pushes into Niall he feels stars explode beneath his skin. Niall slides down slowly, flexing along the way and stretching barely enough to accommodate Harry’s rather impressive member.

He sits up, arching his back to curve against Liam’s glistening torso. They all fit together like puzzle pieces and Harry is sure he’s going to explode any second. Liam pulls back a bit and then snaps his hips forward. He’s hitting all the right spots and Harry’s hips buck, pushing further into Niall. The bond wraps his arm backwards around Liam’s neck and he pulls the muscular boy in for a kiss. Liam’s shoulders brace Niall and they fall into a fast rhythm, Niall dropping his hips as Liam thrusts forward.

Harry can’t hold himself back anymore. His lube covered hand springs forward and grabs ahold of Niall’s prick. He tugs quickly, trying to match the pace Liam and Niall are setting. Niall moans into Liam’s mouth and Harry can feel his orgasm coming up on him. His hips jerk up and down, fucking himself into Niall and onto Liam and before he knows it he’s coming. Niall spills onto his stomach and Liam’s hips stutter with the force of his orgasm.

Harry can’t breathe and he doesn’t care. All that matters at this moment is letting the pure ecstasy he’s feeling flood through every nerve in his skin.

A humming brings Harry back from his fantasy. The vibrator he pulled out of the box is still humming in his arse and his cum is growing cold on his stomach. Niall’s warm hips aren’t squeezing along his sides, and Liam’s not in between his legs. His door is still closed and he can hear shouting from the living room. He flips the switch on the end of the fake cock inside him and then pulls it out, wincing at how rough the plastic seam feels on the way out.

Harry roots around with his foot in the box, trying not to move so much that his ejaculate drips onto the sheets. His monkey toes eventually catch something cloth and he flicks it up towards his face. The small towel lands in the puddle of cum resting on his stomach and he wipes it off with a grimace. He’s got to stop doing this to himself, not the masturbating, the fantasies. Nothing that perfect could ever happen to him.

“Haz!” Niall shouts with unbridled joy when the curly haired boy emerges from the bedroom. “You get off all right? All settled?” Harry nods but doesn’t say anything. “Good. I need you to fire Liam. He keeps cheering every time Leeds United scores just to take the piss. He’s being mean to my Derby and I know you wouldn’t stand for that.”
“Niall this game happened last year. It’s a recording for Christ’s sake! You already know Derby pulls it out in the second half.” Liam sighs.

“Haz um- You’ve got a little-” Niall wipes at his chin, trying to indicate to Harry. Harry keeps trying to find it, but he can’t until Niall walks over and wipes his thumb across Harry’s chin, pulling it away with a thick globule of white. Harry’s eyes about pop out of his head when Niall sticks the thumb in his mouth and sucks it clean. “You need more fruit Haz. That’s a little bitter.”

Liam’s eyes turn stormy but his mouth remains sealed shut. Harry can’t seem to find any words and kind of just croaks. Niall plops down on Liam’s lap and shoves their mouths together. “What do you think Li? Haz tastes all right, but I think he should drink more pineapple juice.” Niall asks after Liam’s muscles relax in to the kiss.

“Couldn’t taste anything but you babe. He can’t be that bad then.” Liam says calmly. He won’t meet Harry’s eyes, but he doesn’t appear as angry as he was before.

“You’ll just have to try it next time.” Niall laughs. He wiggles down Liam’s hips and reaches for his beer. “Maybe it’s better fresh.”

“Jesus Christ Superstar stop!” Harry yells. “It’s not fair to Liam or me to do that Niall. Just leave it alone!” He stomps back to his room and slams the door. The clicking of the lock is audible from the living room.

“What was that?” Niall asks. His voice is timid because he’s afraid Liam will yell.

“Don’t play dumb Nialler. That was so far over the line that I don’t know how to react.” Liam says sternly. “You can’t keep playing us off each other like this. It’s just another form of you pulling away from me.”

“I- I didn’t think of it that way. I’m sorry. It’s just so crazy having him around here. I mean I’ve wanked to him more times than I can count and now he’s doing the same thing right down the hall.”

“I know Babe, but you’re coming on a little strong. Maybe some time we can all sit down and talk about hooking up all right? But until then, you need to cool it a little bit. For me?” Liam asks the question even though he’s afraid of the answer.

“Anything for you hon.” Niall promises. His fingers lace themselves between Liam’s and he nestles his head against the broad chest underneath him.

Harry finally emerges from his self imposed exile the next morning when a gentle knocking wakes him up. He pokes his head out the door making sure his morning wood is fully contained within joggers before he answers. Niall is standing there with a small smile on his face and soft eyes.

“I made breakfast for you. I don’t know if it’s any good, I can’t really cook, but it’s my way of saying I’m sorry for being a twat.” Niall mutters the last part, his cheeks tinting pink.

“Will you stop the flirting?” Harry croaks out. He rubs the sleep from his eyes and opens the door.

“If you put on a shirt and cover up those tattoos. They’re obscenely attractive.” Niall says, trying his damnedest not to ogle Harry’s olive branches.

“Deal. What’s for breakfast?” Harry says grabbing a random shirt out of a box when they walk into
the kitchen. It’s silk and completely sheer. He laughs and shrugs it on anyways. Niall groans but doesn’t say anything about it.

“A full Irish. Liam makes it better than I do, but I’m pretty sure everything is fully cooked.” Niall tells him, setting down a veritable platter of food in front of Harry.

“Oh lord. You do realize that if I get food poisoning and die You won’t get your farm back right? My mother would inherit it.” Harry asks cautiously.

“I’m not risking losing the rest of my pay day to some contract Haz. You won’t die.” Niall laughs and sits down across from Harry. “You already screwed me enough wit that thing.”

“Do you really hate the idea of staying here with me that bad?” Harry asks. He’s more hurt by Niall’s words than he wants to let on, but his eyes are giving it away.

“NO! That’s not- fuck I’m sorry Haz. I guess I can’t keep my foot out of my mouth lately.” Niall tries to get his point across.

“I’ll call Zayn. He’ll wire you the rest of your money by tomorrow and I’ll find a new manager to help me here.” Harry drops his fork on his plate and gets up from the table.

“Harry please sit down. Just let me explain myself. Please?” He’s jumped out of his own chair and is standing between Harry and the exit. Harry sighs and sits back down. Niall takes the seat next to him and says? “This whole situation is confusing for me. My dad just died and he’s not the first member of my family to die in this house. My mum died here too, and my older brother died right outside the gate. This place feels almost cursed for me. I like you though, I’m glad that if I’m going to stay that it’s with you and Liam.”

“But you still want to leave?” Harry asks quietly.

“Once you know how to run this place there’ll be no reason for me to stay Haz. You’re the one who stipulated the terms of the contract.” Niall says back.

“That was before I knew I’d like you two this much.” Harry says under his breath. He’s afraid Niall heard him, but the small boy is trying desperately to reach across the table to grab his plate. “What would you have done if I had said you had to stay for two years? Or five?” He asks, trying to cover his own admission.

“Probably told you to fuck off and called a solicitor to overturn my contract.” He’s still trying to reach across the table to no avail.

“What about now? What if I said I wanted you two to stay with me and help me run this farm forever?” Harry asks, taking pity on the blond and grabbing his plate for him. He slides it across the table and is rewarded with a brilliant smile that is immediately filled with bacon.

“M not sure.” Niall says around his mouthful of food.

“That’s it? You’re not sure?” Harry is hurt again and he hates himself for it. Why would Niall have changed his mind? It’s been two days and they’ve each had a dramatic storm off in those. They may have told Harry they’d be friends, but that’s never held true for him before, so why should it now?

Niall swallows. “Not really. I like you a lot Harry, but I’m not sure that a friendship is worth staying in the place that took my family from me. It’s not like we’ll never see each other again when I leave. If you want to see me that is. I’ll probably come back every Christmas and make an absolute drunken arse out of myself in front of whatever gorgeous bloke you end up with.”
“If I offered you the chance, would you cut and run?” Harry can barely speak above a whisper now. His voice is trembling in his throat and he’s afraid he’s on the verge of tears.

“Course not.” Niall shoves another forkful of food in his mouth and continues. “I’m not leaving until I decide you can handle this place on your own, contract deadline be damned. Can’t let my family’s memories be disgraced now can I?”

Harry breaks into a broad smile and giggles. “I guess not. So what if I’m just really really shite at this? What if I’m so awful that you have to stay for years?”

“Well I guess I’ll have to stay then. I kind of backed myself into a corner there.” Niall laughs and munches down on his eggs. He doesn’t see the relief that floods Harry’s eyes, the small smile that stretches his lips. He doesn’t see how happy Harry truly is when Niall says he’d stay with him. He also doesn’t see the spark leave Harry’s eyes when he realizes that he’s growing too attached too fast.

“Alright, one more question and then I’ll end the Spanish Inquisition.” Harry turns his body towards Niall and continues when Niall nods because his mouth is too full to say anything. “What happened between you and Liam? You two don’t really seem like you ever broke up. He’s so protective of you and you’re so clingy with him.”

“It’s always been that way. Liam didn’t really accept that he was interested in blokes until we were already in our twenties, but people thought that we were dating long before that. I came out when I was fourteen and it never bothered him. He was still the best mate I’d had since I was five years old. For years, like fucking years, I kept my crush on him to myself and then one night he kissed me.

“We were inseparable for three years, and then I saw him kissing a girl in a cafe in town. She was his ex girlfriend and I absolutely hated her. I left him that night. I never even gave him the chance to explain, because I thought he’d be happier with her. He wants kids you know.” Niall explains.

Harry sits in stunned silence. He never expected Liam of all people to cheat. Not the Liam that he knows. Not the Liam that’s so indescribably in love with the beautiful blond boy sitting in front of him. “Liam cheated on you? Perfect sweet Liam?”

“Not really no. He kissed her, but that’s as far as it went. I would’ve known that if I’d bothered to talk to him about it, but I have a history of running away whenever things get rough.” Niall seems oddly tranquil while telling Harry this story. He’s still eating and he doesn’t really sound that hurt.

“Oh.” It’s all Harry can manage. He’s not quite sure how to feel at the moment. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have asked you about that. It’s none of my business.”

“Don’t be sorry. You’re the only person I’ve ever talked to about it outside me da and Josh. It feels kind of good to have someone that I trust enough to tell all this to.” Niall smiles and cups his hand over Harry’s. “Now eat your breakfast or you’ll hurt my feelings.”

Harry smiles. He doesn’t take his hand out from under where Niall is holding it, choosing instead to eat the rest of his breakfast with one hand because he doesn’t want this tingling feeling to end. They sit in prefect serenity, eating the surprisingly good breakfast that Niall made, that is until one more question pops into Harry’s head. “Um I know I said no more questions, but where’s Liam?”

Niall takes his hand off of Harry’s at the mention of Liam and Harry can’t help the small whine that escapes his lips at the loss of comfort. “He’s driven back to his flat for the day to pack up his things. He probably won’t be around as much for the next couple of days, but he’ll be back at night.”
“So what does that mean for us?” Harry asks. “For teaching me the ropes I mean. I didn’t mean that there is an us. I just.”

“I know what you meant Haz. Today I’m going to take you on a proper tour of the farm and get you acquainted with Thor and Loki. That sound good?” Niall smiles again and Harry feels a warmth tint his cheeks.

“Sounds like a perfect day. What should I wear out there?” The question seems pretty standard to Harry, but Niall’s roar of laughter makes him reconsider.

“Well not that thing for sure.” Niall laughs, pointing to the sheer shirt Harry forgot he’s still wearing. “Let’s go through your clothes and I’ll help you pick something out alright?”

“That could take a while. I have a lot of clothes.” Harry laughs and scoops up the last bit of his breakfast. He pops it into his mouth and smiles when Niall beams at him.

“Alright let’s go get started then.” Niall laughs. He pops up out of his chair and takes their dirty dishes to the sink. After rinsing them he walks back and takes Harry by the wrist. He drags the taller boy over to the stacks of boxes that Liam put together. They each pick up ones that are marked ‘clothing-winter’ and carry them back to Harry’s room.

Niall makes several return trips, grabbing all the boxes of clothes while Harry lays out his favorite choices on the bed. Niall goes through them, sighing at how unprepared Harry is for farm life. Eventually he picks out a plaid flannel shirt that Harry bought for a theme party in Portland last year and a steel gray cashmere cardigan. He pairs it with one of the only pairs of non-skinny jeans Harry owns, some dark Levi’s and a pair of boots that are several years old.

Niall almost has a heart attack when Harry tears off his shirt and joggers, standing stark naked with his back to the blond boy. He tugs on a pair of Liam’s long underwear that Niall brought in and Niall laughs. “You need regular underwear on under those Haz. Otherwise you’ll chafe pretty badly.”

Harry jumps. “I thought you left! Oh dear god I can’t help embarrassing myself around you can I?”

“Well would I have left? I would’ve missed a show and you wouldn’t have any balls left by the end of our walk.” Niall laughs. “‘Sides, turnabout is fair play and you’ve seen me naked already.”

He plops himself down in the armchair across from the bed, making it clear he has no intention of leaving. Harry blushes but doesn’t ask Niall to leave. Harry turns around letting his back face Niall and tugs the long johns back off.

Harry pulls on the closest pair of underwear he can grab, a pair of too tight briefs that cup every curve and leave nothing to the imagination. He regrets it immediately when he realizes he’s growing hard from the show he’s putting on for Niall. He quickly pulls on the rest of his clothes, praying his heartbeat will slow down. He grabs a hair tie off the table and pulls his hair up in a loose bun. Niall licks his lips but manages to keep any randy comments to himself.

“Fuck Haz. You look almost at home here now. Proper farm gentleman.” Niall laughs and walks out of the room. Harry follows him out like a lost puppy, desperate to reclaim Niall’s attention. He’s padding along behind Niall when it hits him how hard he’s falling for a man who’s already taken. He flipped out last night because he felt like he was being teased for his infatuation.
“So what should we do first? Play with puppies or walk around the farm?” Harry asks, trying to shake the impending feeling of disappointment looming in his chest. He won’t let himself fall for this man in front of him. He’ll pull back these feelings before it’s too late, before he goes over the edge.

“I thought Liam said you guys don’t have a barn?” Harry questions when they approach a large wooden structure a little bit away from the house.

“This isn’t a barn. We store silage here, but not animals unless they’re in emergency status. Come on in.” Niall flips a latch and slides back the door revealing the impressive size of the silage shed. There’s a loft that Harry only notices once Niall’s bum pokes in his face as he shimmies up a ladder. Once he reaches the top he shouts down “Come on up Haz, it’s my favorite spot!”

Harry gulps nervously and then resigns himself to slowly climbing the ladder. He’s not scared of heights per se, but he is uncomfortable with them. When he reaches the top Niall offers a hand to get him up to his feet. The loft is dark, Harry can’t see much other that Niall shuffling around in front of him, pushing at the slope of the roof. Light floods into Harry’s eyes as a white wasteland unfurls itself below him. Niall has lifted the a section of the roof away to reveal a widow’s walk of sorts.

They climb onto the small ledge and Harry feels his fear slip away. It’s replaced by an overwhelming sense of wonder and he beams at Niall who is rooting around in an old crate. Finally he pulls out an amber bottle that’s only half full. “After me mum died me dad told me about this stash. He used to come up here when the world was too much for him and have exactly one drink. It always helped him see things in the way he needed to in order to move forward. Me? I just like drinking from his expensive whiskey.”

He takes the place next to Harry and sits just a little too close. Harry tries to make himself scoot away, instead he takes the bottle when Niall offers it and lets his fingers linger on Niall’s for just a second too long. He lifts the bottle to his lips and takes one gulp. The whiskey stings in his throat before sliding down like smoke. A warmth tints his cheeks and he feels like he’s sixteen again and sneaking a beer from the fridge during one of his parents’ parties.

“What’s that smile for Haz? You look positively giddy.” Niall laughs when he takes the bottle back from Harry.

“Just remembering simpler times and enjoying the view. This place is amazing. I can’t wait to see it when it’s green. I bet it’s the best view in Ireland.” Harry’s eyes are flashing with excitement at the prospect of this whole world he sees being his.

“One of em yeah.” Niall says. He’s looking at Harry, but the taller boy doesn’t really notice for the wonder of the view. The herd of cows is milling about, they seem unphased by the snowfall dumped on them last night. There’s a flock of sheep moving around in the distance, but it takes Harry a while to notice them because they’re so white.

“Look at that!” Harry exclaims cheerfully when he finally sees the Galways. “They look like a little cloud!”

No other buildings are visible from this vantage and it feels like the whole world is laid out beneath him. Grey clouds float lazily in the sky, threatening to blanket the landscape in another sheet of snow in it’s own time. “I must seem like a complete spaz to you.” Harry murmurs. “Do you think I can do this?” His eyes are soft, vulnerable.

“I’m pretty sure there’s nothing you can’t do Harry.” Niall says, bumping shoulders with the taller
“Don’t flatter me Niall. I’m a city bloke, have been my whole life. I’m not sure I’m cut out for a life like this.” Harry can’t help the melancholy seeping into his voice.

“Shut up Harry. You were born to be amazing. You’ll be amazing at this too.” Niall takes another drink out of the bottle before he passes it back to Harry. He doesn’t take it though, Niall’s words lift him up more than any drink could.

“Now I know you’re just being nice to your new boss.” Harry laughs, trying to diffuse this new energy into the air. “So how big is this place again?”

“Forty hectares now that you bought back the old land. That’s just under a hundred acres.” Niall tells him quickly. “We’re a little bigger than an average farm in Ireland, but not by much. It’s actually a bit big for our current flock. If I were you, I wouldn’t sell many this year. It’s not like you need the money.”

“Why would I sell the sheep? I thought you shear sheep?” Harry asks. His eyebrow is cocked and Niall looks almost afraid to tell him.

“Harry Galways aren’t wool sheep. They’re meat sheep. We shear them every year but their wool isn’t why we raise them. At the end of the summer we sell around a third of the flock to slaughterhouses.” Niall tries to break the news comfortingly. He rests his hand on Harry’s knee and speaks softly. None of it works properly.

Harry jumps up, in retrospect it was a really bad idea to do it so quickly. “You kill them?” he screams. “Why would you just-” and then he slips. His world moves in slow motion as his back foot slips off the small overhang. His arms windmill through the air, clawing desperately for anything to stop his inevitable fall. Nothing does.

Harry feels his back plummet towards the ground so he twists his torso, hoping he can use his arms to soften the blow. There’s a sudden weight on his back. He hears Niall screaming his name, but it sounds like he’s yelling from a mile away. His body turns involuntarily, his vision filling with the sky, which as far as last sights go is not that bad. Something tugs at his waist, fear, remorse, pain maybe, and that’s the last thing he remembers before the world goes black.

The world is trying to shift under Harry Styles and he’s not having any of it. He tries desperately to cling to unconsciousness. Underneath him the ground lurches again and Harry resigns himself to life. He opens his eyes and flexes his muscles, trying to see if anything is broken. His back is pretty sore, but he can move his legs so that seems like a pretty good trade off. Suddenly he hears Niall calling his name, it’s muffled, like it’s far away.

Only after a searing pain spreads through his shoulder does he realize it’s not the earth moving under him. He turns around and his heart sinks through his stomach. Niall is a crumpled mess beneath him. Harry jumps to his feet, wincing at the pain in his spine, and looks Niall over. His leg is bent at an unnatural angle and his lip is swollen and bleeding. Harry kneels at his side and cradles Niall’s head in his hand. He cries and lets loose hundreds of choked “I’m sorry”s.

“Is the whiskey all right?” is all Niall asks before his head falls heavy on Harry’s hands. Harry pulls out his and dials one one two. He rushes through the conversation with the technician on the other line who tells him not to move Niall in case of spinal injury. He hears the wail of an ambulance, but he knows it will take them a while to reach the spot through the snow.
When paramedics finally arrive Harry refuses to let them stuff him into another ambulance. He goes with Niall. Holding his hand is a small comfort, but it’s the only one Harry can give Niall at the moment. He mutters apologies under his breath until he realizes he should call Liam. His phone rings to voice mail twice before he finally picks up.

“Hey Harry, what’s up?” Liam answers. His voice is so innocent, so unaware and that breaks Harry’s heart even more.

“I need you to meet us at Saint Francis Liam. There’s been an accident.” Harry is trying desperately to reign in his sobbing. He isn’t sure if Liam can even hear him properly.

“What kind of accident?” Liam asks. Harry hears a door close in the background and the rustle of Liam’s coat.

“Niall was hurt. We fell off the silage shed and he landed underneath me. I don’t know how bad it is Liam, but he’s unconscious and I’m so scared. We’re in the ambulance now but we should be there any minute.” Harry needs his last words to be true. Every second longer is one that could mean something terrible for Niall.

“I’m just down the street. I’ll meet you there.” Liam says and then he hangs up.

Harry spends the rest of the ride in oral combat with the paramedic who keeps trying to check his injuries. “I’m fine! They can check me out at the hospital, but for now all I want is to sit here and let him know how sorry I am. So back off right fucking now!” His screams are ripping themselves from his throat and it’s painful beyond reason.

The paramedic backs off and just lets him sit in silence. Seconds later they come to a complete halt and the doors to the ambulance are torn open. Niall is removed quickly but carefully. The red collar stabilizing Niall’s neck makes his skin look even paler and Harry’s breath catches in his throat. He’s broken this perfect human being, and he’s not sure he can ever forgive himself.

Running into the A&E is never an easy thing for Liam. The last time he was here was six years ago when Niall wrapped his car around a tree. Maura had just died and Liam had left him alone for the first time in days to get some new clothes from his flat. He’d gotten a call from Bobby, who was fall down drunk with grief. Twenty minutes later he was in the ER lobby, pacing like a mad man and praying for any scrap of hope that Niall would be alright.

Six years later the sensation is still the same. He’s been here for an hour, but nobody will give him any information about either Niall or Harry. He’s pleaded with every nurse he can find, he’s not family is all they ever say. When Harry comes limping into the room escorted by a nurse Liam sprints to his side. “Harry! Are you alright? Is Niall? What happened? What’s going on? Nobody will tell me a bloody thing and I—”

“Liam stop!” Harry sobs. “I’m alright. Nothing is broken, but my ankle is sprained. Niall is in surgery. The MRI confirmed that he didn’t break his back, but it’s slightly bruised. His knee is also broken pretty badly though and that’s why he needs surgery. They said he could be in surgery for hours. They’re taking us to a private waiting area now because they’re afraid that someone will alert the paps and that won’t be good for anyone.”

Liam follows Harry and the nurse through the halls. He’s quiet, almost deathly silent and that makes Liam even more nervous. When they reach a certain door the nurse swipes a card and waves them in. She asks if they need anything and then tells them that the doctors will keep them updated. The
room is nice. It has a window that makes the tight decor feel less suffocating and Liam drags a chair over to it. Harry sits on the couch with his knees pulled up to his chest and muttering something under his breath.

“What the hell are you doing Harry?” Liam yells when he can’t take anymore of Harry’s whispering.

“I um- I’m apologizing to Niall.” Harry says, hanging his head in shame.

Liam grows red with embarrassment for his snapping. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to yell. I just- I get this way when it comes to Niall.”

“I’ve noticed.” Harry says, tucking his face between his knees.

“Why are you apologizing to Niall? It’s not like you pushed him, did you?” Liam asks, suddenly horrified with the possibility.

“God no! He um- He grabbed me when I slipped off the silage shed balcony. I freaked out when he told me that you slaughter the sheep. I uh- I lost my footing and fell. Niall must have dived off to grab me and then his weight flipped us over. I fell on top of him. I didn’t mean to I swear. I would do anything to have landed underneath him. To have stopped him from getting hurt.” Tears are streaming down Harry’s face and his eyes are broken. Liam is filled with anger and resentment though and his sympathy is waning. All he knows is that Harry is the reason Niall is hurt and he can’t handle his anger.

“Don’t. Don’t sit there and give me that shit! Don’t act like you wish it had been you. You haven’t been around long enough to say that. You hurt him and that’s all there is to it. You want to absolve yourself of your guilt and I’m not going to let you do that.” Liam is fuming and he’s afraid he’s going to hurt Harry if he doesn’t get himself out of there.

The door flies open and a squat woman shuffles in. “He’s out of surgery. He’s awake but he’s groggy. His knee was easier to fix than we originally anticipated, it turns out that the doctor performing the surgery has already worked on his knee before. He should recover pretty quickly. Would you like to see him?”

“Yes!” Liam says, leaping from his chair and bounding over to the woman at the door. Harry stands up, but doesn’t say anything. He shuffles behind them, keeping his distance. When they reach the room Liam turns to him and says “Stay out here. If, IF, he asks to see you then you can come in.” Harry just nods and stays put.

“Payno!” Niall shouts when he sees him walk in the room “Hey babes, what are you doing here? Shouldn’t you be packing? You should totally be packing.”

Liam sits gently on the bed and wraps Niall up in a hug. He knows he shouldn’t be squeezing Niall as hard as he is, but he’s just so happy Niall is okay. He’s not sure if he’s crying or not. His eyes are stinging, but he’s happy so why should he be crying. “Of course I’m not packing Nialler. You fell off a roof. Packing is the least of my worries.”

“I’m fine Li. Well I might not be if you continue to squeeze me to death, but the knee is nothing new. I was due for another surgery in a few months anyway.” Niall is beaming and Liam is grateful for whatever drugs they have him on. “You know what I really want right now? Nialler-cakes. Do you think the cafeteria makes Nialler-cakes?”

“Probably not.” Liam laughs. “I didn’t sell them the recipe so they’d have to be pretty brilliant to come up with it themselves.” Liam is so filled with joy he can barely contain himself. He leans
forward and kisses Niall. It’s gentle, beautiful, but full of passion and words that Liam doesn’t quite know how to express.

“Liam I’m sorry to interrupt but- Oh!” Harry is quiet when he walks into the room. Liam breaks apart from Niall and throws a glare in Harry’s direction.

“I told you to stay out there!” Liam roars. He’s off the bed and across the room in a flash. “I said if he asks for you then you can see him. He hasn’t asked to see you and-”

“Liam James Payne! You apologize right this second!” Niall is trying to sit up in the bed and wear a stern face, but instead he just looks like he’s filled with pain. He fists his hands in the sheets and grimaces. Liam rushes back to his side and gently presses him back into the bed by the shoulders. He grabs the button off of the side of Niall’s bed and presses it to let more painkillers flood into Niall’s system. He doesn’t even see Niall’s hand.

The slap is weak, Niall is weakened by drugs and his disadvantageous position, but it hurts Liam nonetheless. “Harry didn’t do anything wrong and you don’t get to be angry with him.”

“But you’re hurt because he-” Liam stutters, pressing his hand to the spot Niall slapped.

“I’m hurt because I tried to save him Liam. I did this to myself and I forgive Harry for his small part in this. I shouldn’t have told the klutz that we kill the sheep while we were drinking whiskey on a balcony. That was my bad.” Niall’s face is as hard as it can be and it takes Liam by surprise.

“Niall I can’t apologize enough! I’ve talked to the hospital administrator and I’m paying your medical bills and you’ll have the best physical therapy money can buy. I know that’s not even going to begin to be enough to make up for what I did to you though.” Harry looks so wracked with guilt. His cheeks are stained with tears and his hair is mussed from repeated hand strokes through it.

“Hazza you stop that right now. I already said none of this is your fault. You don’t have to pay for a thing.” Niall smiles gently and waves the tall boy over to the bed. “Now come over here so that Liam can look you in the eye while he apologizes for being an absolute beast.”

Harry walks slowly, unsure of his place in this trio right now. “Liam you don’t have to apologize. You’re right. Even if Niall is too nice to say it.”

“No I’m not. I’m a right arse when it comes to Nialler here. I get worried and I don’t know how to handle it, so it turns into anger. I’m so sorry for treating you this way.” Liam’s says genuinely.

“He really needs to work on that. Do you accept Haz?” Niall asks. He takes a hand from each of them and smiles at the both of them.

“Yes. Yes, of course. Liam just reacted the way most people would when someone they love gets hurt.” Harry doesn’t meet any of their eyes.

“Thank you Haz. Now Liam you kiss Harry.” Niall says. The words are so unexpected that Harry tears his hands out of Niall’s.

“What?” Harry sputters, a blush creeping across his cheeks.

“Come on, it’d be right hot.” Niall waggles his brows.

“Stop being cheeky Nialler. You need to rest and Harry needs to recover. We’ll be here when you wake up.”
“’M not sleepy though.” Niall says. His eyes begin to droop as soon as the words are out of his mouth, as if his body wants to contradict him.

“Yes you are. I just pushed the button four times so you’d stop flirting with us.” Liam smiles and strokes Niall’s cheek with the hand that isn’t still being held.

“You’re-” Niall yawns and it’s so cute Liam could burst. “You’re a right arse. I expect you two to kiss and make up later. In front of me. With tongue.”

“Sure thing Nialler. Sleep well.” Liam smiles one more time and then Niall starts snoring. He holds Niall’s hand until Harry shuffles his feet. “You want to get some coffee before he wakes up?”

“Sure.” Harry offers a small smile.

They walk out of the room a few minutes later and head towards the cafeteria. Harry is afraid to initiate the conversation and Liam doesn’t look angry, but he is silent. When they take the final turn into the cafeteria Harry realizes that he hasn’t seen a single sign along the way. “How did you know exactly where we were going without any directions?” He asks Liam cautiously.

“I’ve spent a lot of time here for Niall. After his car accident and then a few years later when they had to go back in and fix his knee. There was also Maura’s treatments when she has doing chemo.” Liam says it so easily, like he’s unphased by all the pain he’s had to witness. Harry knows that isn’t true. He sees it in the way he holds so tight to Niall, how gently he touches his cheek, how sad his eyes are when Niall yells at him. He sees the pain and wonders how Liam can fight through it so well.

“How do you like your coffee? It’s on me.” Harry asks, stepping up to the counter. “Soy latte please. Large. And two biscottis.”

“I’ll just take it black please.” Liam asks. “I like to add the cream and sugar myself.” The barista rushes off to make their coffees and Harry is pretty sure she’s recognized him. He sighs, resigning himself to the probability she’ll want pictures.

“Here you go Mr. Styles. One large soy latte, one large black coffee, and two biscottis. Your total is eight pounds even.” Harry pulls a ten note out of his pocket and hands it over. He smiles at the barista and silently thanks whatever powers that be that she didn’t ask for anything. He hands Liam his coffee and a biscotti and Liam repays him with a smile that reaches all the way to his eyes.

“I’m sorry you’ve had to see so much pain Liam. I’m sorry I introduced more into your life. I’m so sorry.” Harry can’t meet Liam’s eyes. He’s afraid that the muscular man will hate him and he can’t take that.

A hand claps on his shoulder and Liam says “Harry it’s fine. I know you didn’t try and hurt him. I knew it before too. You’re probably the nicest person I’ve ever met besides Niall, and if he can forgive what happened then so can I. I’m the one who should be sorry, for treating you like such shite.”

“Okay I’m done with the sappy stuff now. Go get your cream and sugar now before I turn into a complete woman.” Harry laughs pushing Liam towards the counter with all the extra things for their coffee. He kicks at the ground with his old boots, not too hard though because he’s afraid it’ll scuff.

Liam wanders over and Harry can’t help but watch the way his hands work. He adds cream without even looking and way more sugar than Harry would have guessed. Everything is almost one fluid
motion and Harry can’t deny how much he’d like to feel those hands on his body. A blush rises in his cheeks when he realizes where his mind is at and he thanks the crutch that is supporting him for not breaking under the weight of his sexual frustration. Liam comes back and gestures to Harry that they can go.

“So what’s the blush for Haz?” Liam asks. He’s walking at the same speed as Harry, probably just to be polite, but he’s a step or two ahead of the limping boy so he doesn’t have to look him in the eye when he asks.

“You don’t want to know.” Harry says when they reach the elevator. “Now I’ll race you. You take the stairs and I’ll take the elevator and you’ll probably still beat me.”

“Oh uh uh. You can’t just dangle bait like that and then run.” Liam laughs. The doors open and he climbs in after Harry. He pushes the button for Niall’s floor and smiles at Harry from the corner of the elevator opposite him. “What’s got you all red Haz? I won’t judge you for it.”

“I um-” Harry says before he mutters too quietly for Liam to hear.

“I can’t hear you.” Liam tells him softly.

“I said I like your hands!” Harry blurts. His face is enough to rival a tomato and laughter bubbles out of Liam’s throat.

“You do huh? What about them do you like?” Liam asks.

“They’re just really good. You work with them really well.” Harry’s eyes are on his biscotti.

“Well I’ve had them my whole life. It’s almost like they’re a part of me.” Liam tries to cut the tension with a joke. “I’m sorry, that joke was terrible.”

“No it was funny. I just shouldn’t have said anything. Please just forget about it.” Harry is trying not to beg but he feels the desperation bleeding into his voice.

“Sure Haz.” Liam says. Guilt is working its claws through his stomach and he regrets the way he handled the situation. He knows Harry is lonely and he just made it harder for him to connect with someone he considers a friend. Coupled with his outbursts he isn’t sure how to salvage things. The elevator comes to a halt while he’s thinking of possible solutions and he almost falls flat on his face.

Harry drops his crutch and catches Liam by the shoulder with his free hand.

“Guess you aren’t as good with them as I thought. Couldn’t even hold on to the rail properly.” Harry laughs. It’s light and Liam breathes a sigh of relief that Harry clearly isn’t that mad about what he said.

“Thanks mate. I would’ve gotten coffee all over your shoes and I’m pretty sure they cost more than I have in my savings.” Liam laughs.

“I got these at a thrift store in New York. They barely cost me a thing. Now if you’d gotten any on my cardigan I would’ve been angry. Cashmere is a pain to get cleaned.” Harry laughs and they stumble out of the elevator before the doors can close. It’s only after the doors close and they hear the elevator fly off somewhere else that Harry whirls around and yells. “No! Damn it!”

“What’s wrong Harry?” Liam asks, cocking an eyebrow at the man in front of him pounding on the elevator doors.
“I left my crutch in there!” Harry cries, turning around with a manic look on his face.

Liam turns his back towards Harry and says “Hop on. I’ll carry you.”

“Liam Payne I will not be carried around like a child.” Harry says, stomping his foot on the ground and then wincing at the pain that jolts up his leg.

“Fine then.” Liam mutters. He puts his coffee down on the counter at a vacant nurse’s station and then walks back to Harry. The tall boy wears a confused look until Liam bends down and hooks one arm under his knees and one at the small of his back. He lifts Harry who screams none too quietly in Liam’s ear. “I’ll carry you like a bride instead.”

Harry drums his free hand against Liam’s shoulder and yells “Put me down! Liam I have dignity, don’t take it away.” He’s actually enjoying the way Liam’s arms feel around him, the warmth and safety they exude, but he isn’t willing to admit it to himself, much less Liam.

“Let me do this to make up for being an arse Haz. Please?” Liam asks. His pout is almost enough to drive Harry absolutely wild and he relaxes into Liam’s grip.

“Fine, but if anyone takes a picture of us like this I will fire you so fast.” Harry huffs. Liam picks up his coffee on the way past the nurse’s station and Harry lets his arms circle Liam’s strong shoulders. Once they reach Niall’s room, without any photographic incidents to boot, Liam sets Harry down on the couch by Niall’s bed. He pulls the couch, Harry included, as close to the bed as possible before plopping down in between them.

He uses one hand to hold Niall’s and the other circles Harry’s shoulder and pulls the curly haired boy into his chest. Harry doesn’t resist, in fact he likes the way he can feel Liam’s steady heartbeat through the worn out flannel he’s wearing. Liam finishes his coffee quickly and manages to toss the empty cup in the bin all the way across the room. After his hand is free Liam cards his fingers through Harry’s locks and the tired boy has to suppress a moan that he knows will sound too sexual.

“Mm don’t stop Li. That feels good.” Is the last thing Harry says before his breathing becomes shallow and slow. Liam obeys, lowering Harry’s head onto his lap so he can rest easier.

Liam startles awake when a click and a flash go off in the room. Niall is laughing and there’s a bashful looking nurse standing next to him. “Alright I’ll give you fifty quid if you send that picture to this number and then delete it.” Niall laughs, handing the nurse a slip of paper. Liam tries to stand up, tries to stop the transaction, when Harry moves slightly in his lap and he remembers what happened.

“Sent and deleted Mr. Horan. Anything else I can do for you this morning?” The nurse, Liam realizes, is the same woman who brought them to the room last night.

Niall laughs and shakes his head. He pulls his wallet off the night stand on the other side of the bed and hands over a fifty note to her. “You just have a great day miss. I know I will.”

“Niall Horan I will get you back for this.” Liam whispers through gritted teeth, trying carefully not to wake Harry up. It isn’t successful and the messy haired lad stretches, rolling over and planting his face right in Liam’s crotch. Niall erupts in laughter and Harry rolls off of the couch all together, scared awake.
Liam scrambles to pick Harry up off the floor, treating his ankle gingerly. Harry is still confused, not fully aware when Liam picks him up. He pulls himself and his sleeping partner onto the couch and sighs. Harry is torn between going back to sleep, Liam’s lap is so warm and comfortable, or waking up and getting breakfast. His stomach makes the decision for him when it growls so loud it startles Liam.

“Sexy Haz. Have you eaten?” Niall is laughing and the sound is magical to Harry, even after just waking up.

“We picked at the meal the nurse brought for you last night. Other than that? Nothing since the breakfast you made me.” Harry admits sheepishly.

“The breakfast he made?” Liam cocks an eyebrow.

“I made a full Irish for him as an apology for the night before last. On the plus side neither of us got sick. On the downside we landed in the hospital anyways.” Niall’s laugh makes it seem less serious than it is.

“He doesn’t give himself enough credit. It was actually pretty good.” Harry says. He sits up and stretches, wincing at the pain that shoots from his ankle. “Liam I hate to do this, but can you go find a nurse and ask them to bring me a crutch? I don’t think I can go anywhere without one and bridal style will not cut it this time.”

“How about I just go grab food for all three of us and we eat with Niall? I’ll still have a nurse bring a crutch by, but it’ll be faster if I go alone. Plus my hands won’t distract you.” Liam laughs.

Harry turns a brilliant shade of red and squawks. “You said you wouldn’t say anything about that again!”

“Sorry Haz. Completely spaced. Too early to think about consequences. I’ll be right back.” Liam hops out of the seat and stretches. His shirt lifts just a tiny bit and Harry almost drools at the peek of flesh he gets. Then like a bolt, Liam is out the door. He peeks his head back in and catches the wallet Niall throws straight to him. After that he’s gone again.

“So um- What was that about?” Niall asks curiously. He hits a button and his bed lifts slowly, letting him into a sitting position.

“I uh- I told him that I liked his hands. I’d blame it on the pain killers but all I have is aspirin.” Harry admits. Sometimes he hates how honest he is.

“He does right? His hands are amazing. They’re so callused but so soft at the same time. And he’s so coordinated it makes me jealous. I don’t blame you.” Niall laughs.

“You aren’t mad? Or jealous?” Harry questions.

“I have been lobbying for a threesome for literally days Haz. You blew up on me remember? Why would I be jealous or mad?” Niall asks. He honestly doesn’t seem to have a problem with it and that sends Harry’s mind reeling.

“Because you two are together? Because you two are so insanely in love it’s almost sickening? Because-” Harry stutters.

“But nothing. Liam and I haven’t really talked about what we are right now. And even if we are together that doesn’t mean we can’t have a little fun. It wouldn’t be the first time we did something like this. Love doesn’t have to mean no flexibility Haz.” Niall says it so plainly, so nonchalant, that
Harry almost falls for it.

“The thing Niall, is that I’m not looking for fun like that. I’m tired of being alone, but being a third wheel for occasional sex is not any better.” Harry can’t stand the idea actually, even if his cock seems to love it. Judging by the way it’s jumping in his jeans, it loves it a lot.

“Well then maybe it can be something more than that. I’ve always been open to the idea. Liam is where we might meet some resistance. I’d be willing to try though. That is if you like me as much as you seem to like Liam.” The pain meds have apparently removed Niall’s already tiny filter and Harry can’t believe he’s saying this. Especially out loud.

“Niall this isn’t the time or place to talk about this. You’re high on whatever is in that bag. And I don’t know how comfortable I’d be springing something like that on Liam right now. He’s still uncertain about me and I’m pretty sure he could beat me to a pulp with the right provocation.” Harry sighs. The idea of a relationship, a real relationship, with both of these amazing boys is beautiful to Harry. He’s always considered polyamory as a viable option in his life, but not while he’s still in the spotlight. Not while it could make things harder on all three of them.

“But Haaaaaz-” Niall whines.

“I’ll make you a deal. If you’re still interested once your leg is out of the cast you’ll get, and your physical therapist clears you for sexual activity, then we can bring it up to Liam. Because I do like you Niall. More than I should considering the roller coaster that has been the few days we’ve known each other. You and Liam.” Harry is being as honest as he can right now and it’s terrifying.

“Deal.” Niall says simply. “Expect a very interesting conversation in about three months. I look forward to the aftermath and the afterglow.”

“If you bring it up to him before that though I won’t agree to it. I need time to prepare for that conversation and I need Liam to like me more first.” Harry says.

“Fine fine. I’ll even keep the flirting to an acceptable minimum. I really like the idea so it’s worth it. Now where the hell is that nurse with your crutches?” Niall asks grumpily.

“Right here Mr. Horan.” The short nurse from before shuffles in. “We don’t have this equipment on the floor so I had to send someone to get it. I’m sorry it took so long Mr. Styles.”

“It’s fine. I’m sorry he was so rude. He can’t seem to stop himself from talking on these meds.” Harry says. The nurse brings him the crutches and relief swells in his chest. At least now he has a chance to run away if Niall says something to Liam prematurely. He’ll probably still die, but at least he can hope.

“It happens all the time.” She reassures him and then leaves.

“I was not that rude Harry. You’re hurt and they should be more efficient. You’re a celebrity and all. VIP status was made for people like you.” Niall laughs at that. “How do I keep forgetting you’re a celebrity? It’s so fucking surreal. I keep forgetting you’re Harry Styles instead of just Hazza.”

“Does it matter to you that I’m Harry Styles? Or is just Haz enough for you?” Harry asks. He shouldn’t be asking this. He doesn’t want to know the answer because if it’s negative it’ll break his heart, and if it’s positive he’s afraid he’ll fall in love too easily.

“Haz is definitely enough. I don’t mind the Harry Styles part either though. The confident swaggering lad that shows up from time to time is interesting too. I like his clothes, even if they aren’t suited to farm life at all.” It’s the perfect answer for Harry. It’s flattering and yet somehow still
grounding, yet it doesn’t disparage him at all. “Now go track down Liam before I waste away to nothing. I haven’t eaten in a day and that’s a national emergency."

“Don’t send the gimp Niall. I’m here and I brought enough doughnuts to feed you for a week.” Liam laughs, walking into the room with a large stack of boxes.

“I think I may have magic powers Haz!” Niall yells excitedly. Harry and Niall laugh and Liam just stands at the door with a very confused look twisting up his features. “Now I want Obama to walk in!”

When nothing happens, particularly the former President of the US walking through Niall’s door, he sighs. “It was worth a try. Besides Payno and his doughnuts are worth a thousand Barack Obamas.”

Liam beams and drops the majority of the boxes on Niall’s tray. He walks over to Harry and hands him his own. “I wasn’t sure if you’re a doughnut person so I got you this just in case. It’s an egg white omelet with chives and goat cheese. They’re just about the best thing this hospital makes so I got you one. There’s also some fruit and a muffin if you don’t want the omelet.”

“Sounds perfect Liam, thank you.” Harry offers a small smile in payment and Liam takes it happily. Harry can’t really resist the urge to cuddle up to Liam now that Niall has put his offer on the table, but he doesn’t want to upset him. He compromises by laying his legs across Liam’s lap. When the other boy doesn’t object Harry smiles. Maybe this really could work out. Maybe, just maybe, he won’t get his heart broken, and that hope is worth the world to Harry.

“Niall no! Just sit there and watch the telly. I’ll be done with your lunch soon and Liam will probably be back any minute.” Harry is frustrated. Niall isn’t asking for the moon, but he might as well be.

“Please Haz? I just want a little cuddle. The only human contact I’ve had in the two weeks since I got home is when Liam carries me to the tub. He won’t even give me a sponge bath so I have to wash myself.” Niall is whining and Harry just wants to give him everything he asks for. Except he can’t. He can’t just climb into bed with Niall, because he’s not sure how well he can control himself.

Niall isn’t wearing anything other than a jumper Harry gave him. It’s long so that it can cover his entire torso and groin. Niall refuses to wear trousers or underwear now. “It’s too hard to tug it off when I have to wee.” He says whenever Liam begs him. Harry’s pretty sure it’s just to torture him.

“Niall please stop asking for that. We have a deal and this is pushing it. When Liam gets home I will tie him into your bed if that’s what you want. You can cuddle him.” Harry is tempted to just walk away, but his ankle still hurts sometimes and he’d rather save it for finishing Niall’s food.

“He never lets me be the big spoon. I want to hold somebody, not be held.” Niall smiles when he talks constantly lately. It drives Harry wild.

“What makes you think I’d be your little spoon? I have like six inches on you. Hardly makes for a good little spoon.” Harry is smiling and he knows it’s giving it away. Little things like this are going to be how Niall knows that Harry is completely gone for both him and Liam.

“Because you’d do pretty much anything if I asked you to.” Niall wears a cocky grin and Harry’s not sure he can deny it. “Besides I see how you get with Liam. You lay on his lap and cuddle into his shoulder like you belong there. You’re totally little spoon material.”

“Yes well keep that to yourself. I don’t think he’s even noticed.” Harry mutters. It’s been increasingly frustrating trying to get Liam to notice him. Niall and he agreed that he’s allowed to use
physical closeness to subliminally suggest a relationship to Liam, but not flirt directly. Liam needs to be eased into this as slowly and carefully as possible.

“He’s thicker than you know. He can pick random facts out of his brain when he watches Millionaire, I’ve seen him win it half a dozen times. But when it comes to stuff like this he’s a complete natter. It took him sixteen years to realize I was there, and we were best mates.” Niall sighs. He can’t really push Liam when it comes to this, so he’s had to watch his master plan unfolding from the sidelines. Harry’s pretty sure it’s driving him up a wall.

“I’m pretty sure he just couldn’t love anybody, but you Niall. This thing can’t work if we’re just satellites orbiting you. Liam needs to be open to loving me as much as you, or it will never get off the ground. I just don’t think that’s going to happen.” Harry hangs his head. He’s falling for Liam and hard. The boy is like magic to Harry. His laugh is like music and his touch sends sparks flying across Harry’s skin.

“I said he hasn’t noticed that you’re interested in him. I know for a fact that he’s interested in you.” Niall says bluntly.

“Wait what?” Harry is flabbergasted. He’s seen no indication that Liam thinks of him in any other way than friendly. “I can’t see that at all.”

“Hazza I know Liam better than anyone on this planet, and that includes his parents or sisters. I know when he likes somebody.” Niall says with a huff. He crosses his arms over his chest. “How do I explain it? He’s comfortable around you, but he’s nervous too.”

“Well that’s hardly indicative of interest Niall.” Harry sighs. He thought Niall would be able to abate his fears, instead he’s only made them worse.

“Don’t you use words to try and throw me off Haz. I know what I’m talking about. He used to get this way around girls he liked. He’d be fine one minute, and then flustered the next. When he catches himself looking at you for too long he blushes. And he shares food with you. He’s only ever done that with me, not even any of the girls he’s dated.” Niall explains.

“Letting me take chips off his plate doesn’t mean he likes me! God! You got my hopes up Niall.” Harry sighs and stands up. He can walk without crutches now, but that doesn’t stop his ankle from throbbing dully when he puts himself upright.

“Please trust me on this Harry. I wouldn’t be pushing for this so hard if I didn’t think he could fall in love with you. I couldn’t hurt Liam like that, or you.” Niall pleads from his spot at the bed. He tries to get up, but Liam left his crutches in the kitchen so he’d stay in bed. Harry can help him to the bathroom, but that’s all he’s permitted until Liam gets back from his rounds on the farm.

Harry doesn’t say anything, just walks to the kitchen instead. He stirs the pot of sauce he has simmering on the stove, silently thanking the universe that it didn’t burn while he was gone. He can smell the roast in the oven and the timer tells him it only has about ten minutes left. The mashed potatoes have been done for a while and Harry turns the flame beneath them back on to low to keep them warm.

He hears the door open and Liam pad in. The rustle of his coat is the only noise he makes and Harry can’t take his eyes off the sauce because it’s seconds from being done. If he lets it burn the entire meal will be ruined. Liam’s boots hit the floor and now Harry has no idea where he is. No idea until the stubble on his cheek grazes Harry’s ear and he says “Mm. Smells amazing Haz. You’re spoiling us.”
His large hand wraps around Harry’s hip and the other takes the spoon from Harry’s hand. He lifts a tiny sample too his mouth and blows. His lips form this perfect pucker that Harry just wants to feel against his own. He puts the spoon in his mouth and Harry realizes that he hasn’t let out the breath that hitched in his throat when Liam grazed the shell of his ear.

He’s afraid he won’t be able to until Liam says “That is fucking perfect.” His breath lets itself out and he hopes it comes across as a sigh of relief. “Relax Haz. It’s not like we’re gourmets or anything. Your cooking is more than we deserve.”

Liam punctuates his statement by smacking Harry on the bum and then walking away. Harry’s pretty sure his heart has stopped. “Can you go cuddle with Niall? He’s pretty desperate to be a big spoon, so if you could overcome your masculine pride he’d be thrilled.” Harry isn’t sure how he managed to get out the words, but he’s glad they’re all he did.

“Yeah I can do that. Give us a call when lunch is ready yeah?” Liam asks. Harry smiles and Liam walks off with Niall’s crutches. When he reaches the door Niall is flipping through channels and groaning. “What’s wrong babes? Can’t find anything to watch?”

“Harry bought the largest package available and I still can’t find any footy!” Niall whines. He turns off the telly and drops the remote on the bedside table. Liam wades through the pile of clothes that litter Niall’s floor. You’d think it was because he can’t clean with a broken leg, but he actually always keeps it this way. It used to drive Maura insane.

“Then why don’t you just entertain yourself by holding me? Haz said you were positively gagging for it.” Liam smiles.

“He was right.” Niall laughs. He scoots over clumsily and pats the bed next to him. “Get over here you gorgeous hunk of man.”

Liam smiles and drops onto the bed, turning his back to Niall and laying down. His body stretches against Niall and his fingers lace through the fingers offered when the blond winds his arm through Liam’s. They sit in comfortable silence while Liam finds he enjoys being held more than he thought he would. Occasionally Niall presses a soft kiss at Liam’s hairline and it gives him goosebumps.

“Thank you Liam. I know you’d feel more comfortable the other way, but I needed this.” Niall holds him tighter and Liam lets out a contented sigh.

“I like this Niall. I wasn’t sure I would, but I do. It’s strange, because I always want to protect you, but it makes me feel safe being here.” Liam confesses. He’s not embarrassed per se, but he is feeling vulnerable. It leaves him with a nervousness that coils around his stomach. It’s dispelled when Niall rolls him over and gives him a kiss.

“I’m glad you finally get it.” Niall says. He presses their foreheads together and sighs. “You’ve always been my White Knight, Li. You’ve literally been in fights for me. Protected my honor and all that. But that doesn’t mean you always have to be that guy. I can protect you sometimes too. I can be more than just the damsel in distress, even if this big ass cast seems to say otherwise.”

“I know Nialler. There’s nobody I’d rather have in my corner.” Liam kisses him and it’s soft and sweet. They’re interrupted when Harry calls for lunch from the dining room.

Niall smiles and plops himself into Liam’s lap. “Carry me out there Payne. I want a ride.”

“I thought you weren’t a damsel in distress. Walk yourself.” Liam laughs and slips out from
underneath Niall. He hands him his crutches and then dashes out of the room.

“So mean!” Niall shouts after him.

When he finally comes hopping into the room his hair is mussed and his jumper is hitched up his thighs, barely covering anything. Harry nearly drops the glass of beer he’s setting on the table and Liam laughs. Niall wears a pout to complete his ensemble and he looks perfect. “Haz I’m glad you’re not mean to me. Holy shite that smells good.”

Harry helps him into his chair and then takes his own place the the end of the table between them. He’s about to tell the boys to dig in, but that would apparently be redundant. Niall is scarfing down potatoes like he’s afraid The Famine will happen all over again. Liam is eating too, but not as ruthlessly. He’s pairing the carrots with the roast and eating them slowly.

“At least someone appreciates all the work that went into this meal. I swear Niall I could microwave food for you every night and you’d be just as happy.” Harry sighs. He’s sensitive about his cooking. It’s a hobby he picked up in his spare time when he was performing and he hasn’t made meals for many people before.

“I just said how happy I am that you’re not mean to me Haz. Why you gotta ruin that?” Niall says with his mouth full of meat. “Of course I love your cooking. It puts anything me mum ever made to shame. This is just how I eat. The Queen could be sitting across from me and I’d probably splatter her with potatoes too.”

Harry turns red at the idea. He met Her Majesty the Queen once, and the thought of it makes him bleed with second hand embarrassment. “You would not!” He croaks.

“Okay probably not. But anybody else and it’s a sure thing.” Niall laughs. He resumes eating and Harry just accepts it. Niall isn’t polite, doesn’t just follow the rules of propriety blindly, but that’s part of his charm. It almost always brings a smile to tug at Harry’s lips and this is no exception.

He tries to hide it, but Liam notices anyway. “I’m pretty sure he would actually. You know how the Irish are. No respect.” He laughs.

“I respect the Queen!” Niall grumps. “I just don’t act like the Windsors are the second coming of Christ like you lot. I still have that portrait of Her Majesty up in the spare room. Me mum hung that and she was Irish.”

“Don’t I know it. Can’t have a wank with the Queen staring at me. Right creepy.” Liam mutters. Niall laughs, but his eyes find Harry’s and they’re as wide as he probably expected. Harry’s glad he didn’t have anything in his mouth or he’d have choked.

“I’m pretty sure that’s why she did it. Greg hated the bloody thing.” Niall says, trying to distract Liam before he can notice Harry’s reaction. It works and Liam laughs. He doesn’t notice how Harry grows red or they way he can’t seem to catch his breath.

“How are things with the flat Liam? I know tomorrow is your deadline.” Harry asks when he recovers.

“I’ve almost got everything packed. Losing those two weeks really left me behind. I’ll be heading out after this.” Liam sighs.

“I told you that you didn’t have to stay every day Li. Harry can play nurse just fine.” Niall sighs in
return. They’ve had this argument a few times, but it never gets serious.

“Yes well Harry can’t very well run the farm yet can he? You got ten minutes into lessons and fell off a roof. Kind of puts a crimp in the plans. And I can’t take him out until you’re out of the cast and in physical therapy. You need someone here.” Liam sighs right back.

“I told you I’ll pay for movers Liam.” Harry offers. “Just give me the okay and I’ll call them. I’d be happy to do it.”

“Thanks Haz. That’s so nice of you, but I don’t like the idea of strangers handling my things. It just makes me nervous. I swear this isn’t a pride thing okay?” Liam looks at him apologetically. He offers a small smile and Harry reciprocates.

“I can understand that. I can pack you something for dinner if you’re going to be late.” Harry says. He’s hoping Liam will be home for dinner. Usually Niall conks out after the meal and Harry gets to spend some alone time with the muscular lad. They generally lay out on the couch, Harry laying his head on Liam’s shoulder, and they watch bad television. It’s not much, not even that intimate really, but it’s nice.

“Thanks, but it’s not necessary. Gareth and his wife are having me over for dinner as a good bye.” Liam smiles fondly at the mention of the other couple and Harry can’t find it in himself to be disappointed.

“That’s fine. Haz and I can watch some stupid movie that he’s too afraid to admit to you that he likes.” Niall says. “You really should just watch Love Actually. It’s pretty decent.”

Harry hangs his head in shame. He didn’t think that Niall knew about his penchant for romantic comedies. Really he shouldn’t even bother trying to hide anything from the blonde. Apparently he’s easier to see through than a clean window.

“Well if he keeps cooking like this I’d watch the American version of The Office for him. Totally amazing meal Harry. I can’t thank you enough, but I need to get going.” Liam stands up takes his dishes to the sink. He cleans his dish, like always, and then gives Harry a quick hug from behind and Niall a peck on the cheek before jogging to the door. His coat is on and then he’s gone. A quick “See you later lads!” is thrown over his shoulder and the door clicks shut.

“I told you you get him flustered.” Niall laughs. “Did you even notice that he almost kissed you, or did that escape your observation?”

“He did not!” Harry yells incredulously.

“He most certainly did. Puckered his lips and everything. Only caught himself at the last second. Plus he always said he’d rather die in a fire than watch that horrible remake. He liiiiiikes you.” Niall sings the last part and Harry blushes.

“Niall please don’t. We both know he isn’t ready for this yet. Just let things be more organic. I don’t think I can take it if we push him into this too early and he leaves. Or worse, he stays with you and I stay on the sidelines.” Harry feels himself choke on the words. Just the thought of that hurts him and he knows he’s in too deep.

“That’s not going to happen Harry. But I’ll back off. I trust you to handle this and I have full confidence in you.” Niall smiles when he finishes and Harry feels a little better than he should. “Now I’m going to go to my room and when you put everything away I’d like you to join me. I want to watch a movie, but I’ll let you pick.”
Harry nods and Niall hobbles off to his room. The jumper is hiked up even more and his bum is showing. Harry takes a second to breathe and then starts clearing dishes. It doesn’t take him long, Niall practically tongue-bathed his plate. He puts the left over food in containers and the fridge.

It doesn’t take him long to pick a movie to watch. He grabs one of the super hero movies he knows Niall loves to watch, and that he’s begun to like since moving in. Thor: The Dark World seems like a good choice and Harry decides it’s settled.

He really shouldn’t be surprised. He’s been aware this was a possibility since Niall got home, but that doesn’t stop the air from rushing out of his lungs when he sees it. Niall is laying spread out on the bed. Harry’s jumper is pulled up to Niall’s chest, where one hand is exploring the delicate nub of his nipple. The other hand is presently pumping his cock and Harry can’t think.

He doesn’t feel his legs moving, he just knows they are because Niall is getting closer. He doesn’t control his hand when it takes its place around Niall’s. He doesn’t control his mouth when it surges forward and kisses Niall’s. And he doesn’t control his legs when he climbs into the bed.

He positions himself between Niall’s legs, careful not to jostle his cast, and pumps. Niall is moaning into his mouth and it feels like the whole world has stopped outside this room. Niall’s not big, but he’s bigger than he looks when he’s soft. He’s apparently a grower. Harry can’t help himself when he breaks the kiss. He scoots down and takes Niall in his mouth. Niall moans loudly and Harry takes that as encouragement.

He bobs his head up and down and Niall writhes underneath him. He can’t get much leverage with a cast that takes up his entire leg, but he tries his damnedest. Harry moves his hands to Niall’s hips and pins them to the mattress. Niall groans in frustration and Harry removes his mouth from Niall’s cock.

“This is a mistake isn’t it?” He asks. A string of precum is connecting his lips to Niall’s dick and he finds it so irresistibly hot.

“If you think it is, really truly think so, we can stop. I don’t want to pressure you Haz. I didn’t even mean for you to know I did this. I planned on wanking so I could keep myself under control while you were in here.” Niall says everything so surprisingly clearly, and that just turns Harry on more. “You’re so fucking gorgeous. I figured the best way to keep myself at bay was to get off before you got here.”

“Well apparently you didn’t plan it that well. I think you were trying to seduce me. Wearing my fucking jumper. So perfect Niall.” Harry’s hand has taken over where his mouth has left and Niall shudders with every tug.

“I wasn’t, I swear. I only want to go as far as you do.” Niall says. He can barely keep his breathing steady now. His hips are jerking and moans escape his lips when he lets his guard down.

“So you’d be alright if I stopped?” Harry asks. His eyebrow is cocked and his hand is moving excruciatingly slow.

“If that’s what you want then yes.” Niall meets his eyes. He means it, Harry can tell. If Harry stopped right now, there would be no consequences. And that makes the decision for him. He removes his hand and climbs out of the bed.

“I don’t think we should do anything without Liam. Not until we all agree on something. It won’t always be all three of us together in bed. I know that. But it still feels wrong.” Harry is afraid to meet Niall’s eyes. He knows Niall is okay with the decision, that the decision is right, but that doesn’t make it any easier. He doesn’t want to stop. He wants to see Niall panting and moaning beneath him,
wants to be the reason Niall can’t breathe properly. But now it’s him who can’t breathe.

“It’s fine Haz. I actually agree. I wasn’t thinking clearly before.” Niall grabs Harry’s hand and gives it a small kiss. “Would you mind if I finished though? I’m pretty sure I’ll die if I don’t.”

Harry laughs and nods. He walks out and closes the door behind him. Niall is pretty sure he’s going to go do the same thing and that just makes him hornier. He grabs himself and he’s still wet from Harry’s mouth. His hand slides so smoothly he knows it isn’t going to take long. Then he hears it. Harry is in the room behind his bed and he can hear Harry moaning. It’s loud and unabashed. Niall is actually pretty sure he’s doing it just to rile him up.

Within moments he’s cumming. It’s so intense that he screams. Judging by the noises coming from behind his head Harry is only seconds behind him. There’s a burst of noise behind him, probably Harry’s head hitting the wall, and his cock twitches hungrily. “You stop that. You’ve had your fun.” Niall laughs at his own joke and then decides to clean up. He grabs a towel off the floor and wipes his stomach clean.

Harry walks into the room and he’s clutching a jumper. He’s not wearing one though. In fact he’s not wearing anything at all. His hair is flowing freely from where he took it out of it’s standard bun. He’s still semi hard and Niall thinks he’s going to die from arousal. He drops the towel on the floor and says “You’ve got to stop trying to kill me Harry Styles. My heart can’t take much more of this.”

“Relax. I brought you a new jumper that’s long enough to cover you up and I figured I’d wear some clothes of yours. Where are your underwear?” Harry’s voice is cocky and he knows exactly what he’s doing to Niall.

“Top drawer.” Niall says casually. Harry Styles wearing his clothes may just be the most arousing thing he’s ever heard, but he doesn’t want to let on. Doesn’t want to give Harry that level of power over him. “Joggers are in the one below that.”

Harry pulls out a pair of each and then walks to Niall’s bedside. He stands just out of reach and pulls them on tantalizingly slow. They’re tight, obviously meant for someone smaller than he is, but that just means they hug every curve. He pulls a shirt out of the closet and shrugs it on. “This seems a bit big for you Nialler.” Harry says when it doesn’t quite fit like he obviously thought it would.

“That’s because it’s Liam’s. I stole it from him when we were dating.” Niall laughs at the memory.

“Oh. I’ll just-” Harry says as he starts to take it off.

“Wear it. I don’t think he even remembers that I stole it from him. And if he does it’ll probably just turn him on.” Niall pats the spot next to him and Harry shakes his head.

“Gotta put in the movie first.” He says as he wags his finger. “And don’t get cheeky Ni. We agreed on organic, remember?”

Niall huffs but says nothing. Harry pops the disc in the player below the television and hops into the bed. He snuggles up to Niall and watches as the trailers roll.

“Thor huh? You pick my favorite on purpose or just because he’s the hottest one of the Avengers.” Niall asks, circling his arm around Harry’s chest.

“He’s you favorite?” Harry asks.
“Idiot. Absolute arse.” Niall laughs. They get comfortable and Harry’s head rests on Niall’s stomach. He can feel each beat of Harry’s heart and he knows it will put him to sleep sooner rather than later. He can’t think of a better way to fall asleep right now.

When Liam walks in he isn’t sure how to feel Niall and Harry are sound asleep on the couch. Niall is tangled up in Harry’s legs and his head is resting on Harry’s chest. Harry has his arm wrapped around Niall with his hand buried in blond hair. Niall’s jumper has changed since earlier and worse, Harry seems to be wearing Niall’s clothes instead any from his own massive wardrobe.

Jealousy slithers through his stomach, but something else is sitting in his chest. It’s cute. It’s almost unbearably cute. Liam hates how much he wants to take a picture and paper the house in it. He pulls out his phone and resigns himself to just taking the picture. He can get Niall back for his little photographic ambush at the hospital. That’s a viable enough excuse.

He positions himself across from them and the firelight just serves to make the scene more adorable. He snaps the picture and somehow neither of the boys wake up. Small miracles. Liam switches off the tv. He’s tired of the instrumental swell that accompanies the romantic photo montage of the DVD menu.

“I was watching that you know.” Harry says. His voice scare Liam so bad he nearly screams.

“Christ Harry! You can’t just scare a bloke like that. Right sod you are.” Liam’s heart is pounding in his chest and he’s not sure it’s just because he was scared. “And it was a DVD menu. It’s hardly worth watching.”

“If you leave it alone for five minutes it plays the movie again. I was about a minute out from watching it.” Harry is quiet. He’s keeping his breathing shallow so that Niall won’t wake up. “I missed you tonight. We moved out here because Niall let me watch romcoms, but he laughs when I cry at them. You’re a much better movie mate.”

“Thanks Haz. If you tell Niall that it bothers you he’ll stop. I used to cry at the Fox and the Hound and Niall did the same thing. When I asked him to stop he did.” Liam admits shyly.

“It doesn’t really bother me that much, but I’ll try that if it does.” Harry offers a small smile. “So how was dinner. You’re home earlier than I expected. Our dinner may still be warm if you’re still hungry.”

“It was awful. Gareth’s wife, Madeleine? She’s a sweet woman. Her flat is immaculate and she’s got a great sense of fashion. She however is not a good cook. I may just be spoiled by your cooking now, but I almost vomited. Twice.” Liam rubs his stomach and his face looks like he’s having war flashbacks.

“My cooking is hardly spoiling Liam. So are your boxes all packed up?” Harry shifts, ever so slightly, and Niall rolls over and hugs onto Harry’s stomach. He’s still asleep, but things have gotten much more awkward. For Harry at least. Liam isn’t seem phased.

“It so is Haz. And yeah. My clothes are out in the truck, but everything else is in the flat and ready for me to move in the morning. I was kind of hoping you’d still be up to help me grab the clothes, but I think it’s more important that you stay where you are.” Liam tells him. He stands up and walks towards the door. Harry circles long fingers around Liam’s wrist and he becomes vividly aware of his own quickening pulse.
“Send me that picture yeah? I already have the one of us. Might as well get the set.” Harry’s voice is soft like his fingers.

Liam laughs nervously and asks “He sent you that?”

“I asked for it. It’s kind of precious and my hair was super on point. Have you seen it? I look proper fit.” Harry laughs and pulls out his phone. He picks the picture out and shows it to Liam. Harry was right. He looks amazing even though he’s asleep. His lips are pink and gorgeous and his hair is falling across his face in a way that looks almost angelic.

Even more surprising is how good Liam thinks he looks himself. His hair is slightly tousled and his scruff gives his jaw great lines. Even with that he looks soft in a way he’s never seen himself before, and he kind of likes it. Likes the way they look together. Guilt rushes through every vein in his body once he has that thought.

“I’m going to go grab the clothes now. Thor and Loki are off with the sheep so I’m going to leave the door open alright? I should be finished in a few minutes and then I can put Niall to bed.” Liam walks away before Harry can say anything. Cold air stings at his cheeks when he walks outside, but it’s coming from a direction that isn’t blowing into the house so he leaves the door open as planned.

He can’t seem to catch his breath. His lungs are filling, they’re emptying, but he still feels lightheaded. When he reaches the truck he climbs into the bed and sits for a minute. He can’t keep doing this to himself. Harry is fit, insanely fit, but Niall finally seems open to them getting back together and he can’t do anything to jeopardize that. He has to stop and he will. His willpower has been exceptional most of his life and this time is no different.

He grabs the four duffels that contain his entire store of clothing and hops back out of the truck bed. He uses his foot to kick the tailgate back up and then walks back towards the house. The duffels are heavy but Liam takes pleasure in the weight of them. Other than carrying Niall he hasn’t worked out in weeks and it’s taking it’s toll on him.

When he walks through the door Niall is sitting up, but his eyes are closed and he can’t seem to keep his head up. Harry is trying to get him to lay back down but he keeps muttering something that Liam can’t make out.

“Oh thank god you’re back Li. Niall has to use the loo, but I’m not sure I can carry him right now and I know he can’t walk properly. Can you take him? I’ll drop your clothes in your room.” Harry sounds desperate and Liam drops his duffels on the floor. He closes the door behind him and then picks up Niall, who insists on being carried wrapped around his chest rather than bridal style.

Liam can feel an erection poking into his stomach through the jumper Niall is wearing and he sighs. He plants one hand under each side of the smaller lad’s bum and lifts him higher. Niall’s arms wrap around Liam’s neck and he carries him down the hall. Once they reach the bathroom Niall’s eyes open just a little bit and he darts his head forward, locking Liam’s lips in a soft kiss.

“Didja miss me?” He asks groggily.

“Did you fake being tired and needing the loo just to molest me Niall Horan? Because I have to say, that is surprisingly sexy.” Liam kneads at the flesh of Niall’s arse in his hands.

“Nope. I just wanted to know if you’d stay with me tonight. Didn’t want to ask in front of Haz.” Niall has a sleepy smile on his face and Liam decides to kiss it off. Their lips lock for several moments until Niall pulls back. “I really do need to wee though so if you could but me down on the loo that’d be great.”
Liam sighs and drops Niall gently onto the padded toilet seat that Harry insisted on installing for just this purpose. When a stream starts to flow Liam leaves the room. Harry is waiting for him outside the door.

“I’m not being creepy, I swear. I just wanted to say good night before I headed off to bed. Tell Niall for me?” Harry asks. He’s not meeting Liam’s eyes now and Liam can’t help but wonder why.

“Sure Haz. One thing though? I meant to ask earlier, but I wasn’t sure I wanted to know the answer. Why are you wearing Niall’s clothes?” Liam still isn’t sure he wants to know, but it will eat away at him if he doesn’t ask.

“Oh these?” Harry asks, pointing to the joggers. “I figured that if he’s going to keep wearing my cashmere jumpers and getting them covered in crumbs, the least I could do to repay him is to get his joggers all sweaty when I work out.”

“Okay I can see that. Why the shirt though? Wouldn’t one of your exercise shirts be better for that?” Liam asks.

“Well it isn’t technically his shirt now is it? It’s yours. It’s payback for ditching my dinner. I made roasted pork sandwiches because Niall said they were your favorite.” Harry blushes and rolls his toes into the ground.

“It’s mine? Oh that’s right! Niall, the little sod, thought I didn’t notice that he stole it. I’m sorry I missed dinner Haz. I hope there’s leftovers.” Liam feels guilty for spoiling the surprise Harry had obviously worked hard to make for him.

“Of course. I made extra chips for Niall to eat so he wouldn’t take all your pork. And thank you for apologizing Li. You didn’t have to, but it makes me feel good that you did. Here-” Harry strips the shirt off his back and holds it out to Liam. “I believe this belongs to you. I can launder it first if you want. I was planning on tackling Niall’s laundry tomorrow anyway.”

The pale light coming from the living room, combined with the tattoos littering Harry’s body makes it look like shadows are dancing across his skin. Liam can’t tear his eyes away. “You keep it Haz. It looks better on you than it ever did on me.” Harry blushes and holds the shirt to his chest.

“Are you sure? I don’t want to take something of yours unless you’re actually willing to give it.” Harry stutters out and starts nervously shifting his feet. This just makes the shadows dance more beautifully and Liam feels himself hardening in his jeans.

“Definitely. You have those amazing swallows here.” Liam reaches out and drags his finger lightly across Harry’s chest. His hand traces the lines of the birds until he says “Makes for a much better use of the v-neck. Besides I don’t shave my chest anymore so it’s look all hairy. I’d prefer it to look all Harry.” It’s so corny he can’t believe he’s said it. His cheeks feel like they’re on fire from his blush.

“Wow. Apparently you ate nothing but cornballs at dinner and that old saying came true.” Harry laughs.

“If you want to make a trade for it though, I’d love to have you as a work out buddy.” Liam offers. “I’ve fallen behind so badly and I’m pretty sure you would be fun to talk to on runs.”

“Only if you do yoga with me too. No point in working out separately for some things and together for others.” Harry says.

“Sure, just don’t expect me to be super flexible right off the bat. I mostly lift and run so there’s not a lot off deep stretches.” Liam counters.
“Don’t worry, I’ll have your legs behind your head in no time.” Harry beams. Suddenly the smile falls off his face like an anchor. “Oh Christ I did not mean that to sound the way it did. I’m going to bed now before I say anything else to embarrass myself.” With that he runs into his room and shuts the door.

Liam can hear Harry pounding his head against the door and wants to tell him that it’s fine. Niall begins calling from the toilet though, so he lets Harry be for now. When he gets back into the bathroom Niall is still sitting on the toilet but his smile has turned into a pout.

“Finally! I been waiting for my ride to come back.” Niall’s pout quickly fades. It almost always does. “Can you take me back to my bed now?”

Liam laughs and picks Niall back up. He carries him the same way he did before, their torsos flush against each other, but this time he’s the one with an erection and Niall is nibbling on his neck. He quickly carries the small boy down the hall and dumps him on the bed. He crawls between Niall’s legs and begins kissing him.

“Take off the jumper.” He growls into Niall’s mouth. The smaller boy complies quickly and tosses it aside. Liam gropes at him, exploring every inch of his favorite terrain. His mouth moves over the curve of Niall’s shoulder, planting rough kisses along the way. He takes a bit of the flesh of Niall’s neck into his mouth, sucking so that it’ll bruise. So that it will mark him.

“Possessive tonight aren’t we?” Niall moans. There’s no trace of humor in his voice. This is turning him on and that’s very clear.

“I don’t like you only wearing his jumpers. I have a flannel that I’d like you to wear tomorrow.” Liam pulls away and says the words straight to Niall’s face. “You don’t always have to wear my clothes, but I’d like it if you would sometimes.”

“Anything Li. Just don’t stop.” Niall moans. His hands are trying to undo the buttons at Liam’s chest, but he can’t quite make it work. Liam decides on the short route. He places a hand on each side of the button up and tears it off. Buttons fly everywhere, but Liam only cares that the fabric separating his flesh from Niall’s is gone. “Fuck mate. That was right hot.”

Liam falls on his back and pulls his jeans off in one swift motion. Tonight isn’t about patience or gentleness. Tonight is about giving Liam and Niall what the both need. Liam reaches down and grab’s at Niall. He isn’t surprised to find the boy hard and leaking everywhere already. Niall has always loved it when Liam takes charge like this. He pumps quickly. His hand spread the natural lubricant over the whole of Niall’s cock and he takes great pleasure in the way the blonds body writhes. He spits into his other hand and begins pumping himself. It isn’t pretty, but judging by the way Niall moans when he sees it he finds it hot nonetheless.

“I want you to fuck me Li. Now.” Niall moans.

“I can’t with your cast Niall.” Liam says, never slowing his pace.

“Yes you can. I’ve thought about this plenty, trust me. Just let me get into a better position.” Niall says. He grabs the wrist that Liam is using to stroke him and stills it. Unfortunately he doesn’t seem to have that much willpower and his hips thrust up into Liam’s hand. Liam bites his lip and then lets go. He stands up and Niall moves. He keeps the leg with the cast up on the mattress, but lowers the other one to the floor. He folds himself over the mattress and uses one hand to pull at the cheek of his arse. “Now fuck me Liam.”

“Lube?” Liam asks. His eyes are focused on Niall’s tight pink hole and he thinks he’s going to come
just from looking.

“Same drawer as always you git.” Niall is grinding his hips into the mattress now, desperate for any friction.

Liam flicks open the drawer in question and withdraws the small bottle of clear liquid. He squirts a good amount onto his palm and then slicks his fingers up. He slides one down to Niall’s entrance and circles a few time before pushing it inside. He works the first finger slowly, the angle causes his finger to ache a bit, but he doesn’t mind. When Niall moans into the mattress Liam takes that as a sign to add another.

Several minutes later Liam is sheathing himself inside Niall and the blond is moaning like crazy. Liam doesn’t mind that Harry can probably hear it. In fact the thought of Harry getting horny from Niall’s moans makes him harder. He pulls his hips back and then snaps them forward hard. Niall moans so loud he uses a pillow to smother the noise and Liam isn’t having that. He winds a hand into Niall’s hair and pulls him up.

“Oh fuck Li, harder!” Niall cries. Liam grabs harder at Niall’s locks and then finds his rhythm. His hips are pounding into Niall furiously and the sounds escaping from him only spur Liam on harder. He thrusts his hips so hard he’s afraid he’ll bruise, but it would be worth it. His orgasm is building rapidly and there’s nothing he can do to stop it.

He cums inside Niall, something he wouldn’t normally do without asking, but this time is different. He wants to mark Niall. Not necessarily as his, but as having an attachment. He’s not ready to go down without a fight. His hips haven’t stopped moving yet, but his pace is becoming erratic. He’s moaning loudly as Niall tightens around him and milks him. He’s almost sure he could cum again.

“Wank Niall. I want you to cum while I fuck you.” Liam growls in his ear.

“I um- I already did actually.” Niall admits sheepishly. “You were hitting me just right and with the way it was pinned I had enough friction to cum.” Liam’s hips come to a halt, Niall’s do not. He pushes back as much as he can. It isn’t much but it keeps Liam hard inside him and that’s all he needs. “Can you cum again? Because I’m not ready to stop yet.”

Those words are all the encouragement Liam needs. He quickly returns to his previous pace and pounds Niall into the mattress. The whole bed is shifting from the force of his thrusts and Niall is practically coming undone beneath him. Liam closes his eyes and lets the sensations take over. He feels Niall clench around him, the small backwards thrusts he does to get Liam that much further inside him. He hears the moans that sound almost animalistic and he thinks they may be coming from him too.

Then Harry’s chest pops into his mind. He tries to drive it out, to push his hips that much harder to remove it. Instead he just thinks about Harry’s lips. He thinks about the tight curve of Harry’s arse in Niall’s borrowed joggers. The way his chest was so smooth under Liam’s fingertips. And he’s coming again. Harry’s name is on the tip of his tongue and he does everything in his power to drive it away. In the end he has to bite into the tender flesh of Niall’s shoulder just to keep it muffled.

He can’t even bring himself to feel guilty. He can’t feel anything except for the euphoria of his orgasm as Niall clenches around him, pumping his fist until he too cums a second time. The duvet needs washed, but that isn’t an immediate concern. Liam collapses onto Niall’s back completely spent. His cock gives a few last twitches inside Niall and then begins to calm down. Niall collapses forward and pulls Liam out of himself.

“I’m going to regret this in the morning aren’t I?” Niall pants.
“Better not. I think that was the best shag of my life.” Liam mumbles into the flesh of Niall’s back. He feels dirty, inside and out, but he doesn’t care. He puts a hand under Niall’s arse and pushes him back into the bed. He collapses next to the blond and if they fall asleep with Niall as the big spoon, Liam really can’t complain.

“So did you enjoy the show?” Niall asks, waggling his eyebrows at Harry, who has been unusually quiet all morning. Liam has literally just left, the door had barely closed before Niall asked.

“So off. That was cruel and you know it. You weren’t supposed to sleep with him remember?” Harry pouts.

“It was your fuckin plan Haz. And dear god did it work. You’ll have his legs behind his head in no time? Bloody brilliant. He has never, and I mean never, gotten that worked up over something so simple. And I dare you to get going with him like that and manage to stop yourself. I had a hard enough time doing that with you yesterday. Twice in one day is too hard for a guy with my low willpower.” Niall laughs. “I figured that I’d at least give you somethin t’ wank to though.”

“I barely slept at all last night Niall. I’m pretty sure my dick is dead from all the wanking I did.” Harry moans. He stretches backwards and Liam’s shirt rides up on his hips.

“Well I’m pretty sure my arse will never recover if it makes you feel any better. How many times?” Niall asks. Harry mumbles something that he knows Niall can’t quite hear. “Speak up Haz. Inquiring minds want to know.”

“Nine alright? Nine times. I wanked nine times because it was so bloody hot I couldn’t get it out of my head. And that mark on your neck? I wanked to that too when I went to the loo earlier. So actually ten.” Harry closes the space between Niall and him. His lips hover over Niall’s and their eyes lock. Niall surges forward and Harry pulls back just far enough that his lips are still almost touching the blond’s. “It’s really not fair to know that he pounded you last night because I was wearing his shirt. Or because I let him touch my tattoos. I’m not one hundred percent sure which thing got him riled up.”

“I’m pretty sure it’s all of it Haz. It’s just you in general. He wasn’t the only one you got riled up last night. Knowing you set it up, knowing he was getting off in me to you, was surprisingly bloody hot. Good thing I’m not the jealous type.” Niall darts his tongue out to wet his lips and it just barely grazes the edge of Harry’s.

“God this is so fucked up. Are we crazy or just slutty?” Harry laughs breathlessly.

“Neither. We’re falling for each other Haz. And maybe we’re a little kinky, but not crazy.” Niall says. He’s so unbearably sweet sometimes. It drives Harry wild.

“You’re falling for me?” Harry asks. He falls back on his bum and Niall shifts on the couch, apparently disappointed Harry withdrew and took all his warmth with him.

“Well duh Haz. It’s a little soon to say I’m in love with you, but I’m pretty sure I am anyway. For now though, I can safely settle on falling for you.” Niall says. He’d probably rather go back to the thick sexual tension. Declarations of affection make him a little uncomfortable. His Irish is showing.

“I um- I’m falling for you too.” Harry smiles, it’s sweet and maybe a little dopey.

“I know that Haz. When you don’t think I’m watching you, you wear the same sappy look around me that you get when we watch your movies. It’s quite adorable” Niall says the last part with his best
British affectation, mimicking Harry’s slow deep speech pattern.

“Ya sure know how t’ suck all the sweetness out of a moment, don’t ya?” Harry says, trying to mimic Niall in the same way. His result is less successful.

“Oh my god Haz!” Niall laughs. “You sound like an American trying an Irish accent. You’re so ridiculous” He plops his head down in Harry’s lap, shifting his bound leg out from under himself.

“Are we just kidding ourselves Niall? Can this even really work? Because if I leave now you and Liam can still be together and I’ll survive it. If this goes on much longer and it doesn’t work out, I’m not sure. I want you to be happy, but I can’t put my heart out there only for him to crush it because he could only ever love you.” Harry is running his hands through Niall’s hair.

Niall sits up and takes Harry’s face in his hands. “Haz, yes. I honestly believe, not hope, believe that this will turn out for the best. Please don’t leave us, leave me. I don’t know if I could take that. Besides this is your farm. If anything you should fire us and just hire someone else to take over.” Niall tries to make the last part a joke, but he barely gets it out.

“Niall this farm is yours. I’ve known it since we went up to that balcony. You love this place, even with all the pain you’ve had to endure here, it’s a part of you. I’ve already decided that if this does work out I’m going to sign the farm over to all three of us. And if it doesn’t I’m signing it back to you. The money you’ve already been paid is yours.” Harry stops when his cheek starts to sting. It takes him a few seconds to focus his eyes and see that Niall is crying and his hand is still up.

“Don’t you dare. You don’t get to just cut and run from me Harry. I can tell you from experience that it hurts you just as much as it does other people. Now stop talking about it like it’s going to happen, because I won’t let it. I don’t care if I have to strap Liam and you to chairs and beat you with a slotted spoon until you both come to your senses.” Harry is pretty sure Niall’s threat is valid. The anger in the blond lad’s eyes when he says it makes him believe it.

“Well alright then you bloody lunatic. Don’t go all Guantanamo on me.” Harry laughs. “I can’t believe you slapped me. That was so- not Nially.”

Niall barks out a laugh. “Nially? No I guess it wasn’t. I’d have punched you instead, but I didn’t want to bruise your pretty face.”

“That would definitely have been more Nially.” Harry laughs at the word. He’s not quite sure what it means yet, but he knows he likes it. “So are you sure that was about me last night?”

“Would you like to check my arse to find out? Because I’m pretty sure it’s still has a bruise shaped like your name on it.” Niall laughs. He rolls over and waves his bum at Harry. He yelps when Harry smacks it.

“That was for slapping me. Now don’t wave that thing at me or I might not be able to resist taking my own turn.” Harry jumps off the couch and takes Niall’s crutches with him.

“Mm don’t tempt me Haz.” Niall laughs, wiggling his bum some more before sitting on it. “I told you I don’t have that much willpower.”

“That makes two of us.” Harry mutters under his breath. He pulls out the ingredients for lunch and starts to make it. Nothing complicated today, just a simple beef stew in a pot. He really needs to do the laundry. He quickly dices the potatoes and carrots. The rest of the process is a blur, his mind only on the process enough to avoid cutting himself. The majority of his thoughts are wrapped up in Niall and Liam.
"You’re awful quiet Haz." Niall says from the couch. His footy match is muted ad he’s angled so he can see Harry from the couch.

"Just trying to figure out how many loads of laundry I’m going to have to do to clean your room. I’m pretty sure that it’s at least eight." Harry sighs. He really hates doing laundry.

"It’s going to be a pain to hang that much. Especially when all the snow has just barely disappeared." Niall says. Harry freezes mid chop and then puts down the knife. He walks over to Niall and grabs his squishy face between his hands.

"Excuse me, hang?" Harry asks aghast.

"The dryer has been broken for years. We hang all our laundry.” Niall tells him through his misshapen mouth.

"Oh uh uh." Harry mutters, dropping his hands from Niall’s face. “I am ordering a new washer and dryer. Now.”

"It’s your money. If you’re too lazy to hang your clothes do it.” Niall challenges him.

"I’m not lazy Niall. I’m busy. I do all the cooking and cleaning around here. Not to mention taking care of you. And Liam has been trying to teach me about the farm even if I can’t go out there with him. I have so much to do every-" Harry says in frustration.

"Haz! I was trying to make a joke. Sorry. I didn’t realize how much you actually did every day. I’m sorry." Niall is blushing and Harry realizes he was yelling.

"Don’t be sorry Niall. It’s my fault you were hurt. It’s my fault we’re cooped up here every day. I just feel like I need to get outside every once in a while, but not to just do more chores." Harry sighs.

"I may have just the solution to that problem Haz.” Niall laughs, and combined with the mischievous smile he’s sporting Harry is almost certain he’s going to regret listening.

"It’s not a date Liam!” Niall moans for the thousandth time. “Look Haz needs to get out of this house and so do you. You’re both going stir crazy and frankly it’s making me crazy too. Now I can’t go out wearing your flannel and a cast. The cops would throw me in jail. That means it has to be just you two.”

"At a bar for drinks without you. That feels like a date Niall. Besides, I’m exhausted . I moved everything I own into storage today.” Liam huffs. This argument has been going around in circles for what feels like hours, but has probably only been twenty minutes. Honestly the idea isn’t that heinous, but Liam has been wracked with guilt over last night and he can’t control it. He feels like if he goes out with Harry tonight he might let himself slip and that isn’t an option. Especially now that Niall and he are back together.

"I swear to God Liam James Payne you can be so stubborn! Listen I am asking you, begging you even. Go out with Harry. He doesn’t know anybody except us. He needs us to help him settle in here. Do it for me?” Niall pleads.

How can Liam tell him that he can’t? That he’s trying to avoid it for Niall? There’s no way, not without letting on about his budding feelings for Harry. He sighs, resigned. “Fine, but the millionaire is buying first round.”
“He might buy the bar he’ll be so happy.” Niall laughs. He wraps his arms around Liam. “Thank you Payno. It means so much to me that you’d do this for him.”

“Why? Why does he matter so much to you?” Liam asks. He’s horrified, he never meant to ask that.

Niall pulls back, his face has hurt written all over it. “He’s my friend Liam. He’s been feeling guilty about what happened to me. I just want him to relax. And honestly? I think you need to forgive him still. Getting to really know him will help with that I think.”

“I have forgiven him Niall.” Liam says gently. “Really I have. It wasn’t his fault or yours. What happened just- just happened.”

“I know you’ve accepted it Liam. But you need to actually forgive him. I know when you’re holding back. Remember the fight we had when we were seventeen? You let me come back over to yours after a couple weeks and an apology, but you didn’t really forgive me for at least another month.” Niall takes his hand.

“You said my hair was stupid. You didn’t deserve forgiveness.” Liam pouts, remembering the fight with surprising clarity.

“You had something between an Afro and a perm Liam. It did look stupid. Besides I had a thing for your long straight hair. You looked proper fit with that.” Niall snorts.

“You think I should grow it back like that?” Liam asks, combing his fingers through his buzz cut.

“Not like that no. I’d like the medium on top and buzzed oh the sides look again though. You were so insanely sexy with that. It’s a shame you wasted it on women.” Niall laughs.

“The Beckham? Alright yeah I could do that again. It raised my tips at the bar too.” Liam laughs.

“Mm I look forward to it. Now get going. The cabbie has been messaging me every ten minutes. I paid him a butt-load to sit and wait for you guys here and at the bar. Neither of you have to drive so have fun.” Niall laughs and then pushes Liam towards the door.

Liam sighs and then walks away with a quick wave to Niall. He’s going to regret this night and he knows it.

When Liam walks into the Druid’s Chair with Harry everyone erupts in a cheer. Liam smiles and takes a seat at the bar, waving Harry over to join him. A tall man walks over and smiles at Liam before clapping him on the shoulder with an absolutely massive hand. “Liam, me aul son. How you been?”

“Busy. How about you Paul?” Liam smiles.

“Same. Same. Listen I know you said you needed time off to help Nialler through everything with his da, so what’re you doin out with this pretty bloke?” The man who is apparently named Paul asks. Harry blushes and tries to hide behind his coat collar.

“This is the guy who bought the Horan farm. Harry Styles.” Liam says, pulling him closer to meet with Paul properly. “We’re helping him run the place. Well actually I’m running the place by myself right now because he’s taking care of Niall.”

“Yeah I heard about that. This is that bloke what fell with him right? Bad form bein on a roof in mid-
march Harry me boy.” Paul laughs. “So your usual table booth?”

Liam nods and then Paul shouts. “Seamus! Stop chatting up that bird, she isn’t interested. Get yer drunk arse out of Liam’s booth and go home. Yer wife’ll be after me wit a broom again if yer late.”

Liam laughs and a man across the bar stumbles out of a booth and waves before walking out of the bar. Liam tugs Harry by the wrist and walks to the booth. He holds up two fingers at Paul and then sits down. “So now you’ve seen the Chair. Marveled by it’s culture?” Liam asks.

“I like it.” Harry says, glancing around. “I really like it. I could totally see being here all the time. It doesn’t hurt that people don’t seem to know who I am.”

Liam is surprised. With all Harry’s clothes, and his books, and his fancy cooking Liam just thought he’d be more spoiled. “Well I highly recommend the place. Working here I’d have to, wouldn’t I?”

“You work here? Does that mean I can get free drinks?” Harry asks excitedly. It reminds Liam of the first time he met the lad.

“According to Google, you’re worth one hundred and forty eight million dollars Haz. If you want free beer then open a brewery. And no. I get a discount but not much.” Liam sighs.

“Google is wrong. It’s more like one hundred and forty two. And it’s even less after I literally bought the farm. I like your idea though. I could call it Harry Styles’ Payne in the Arse Lager.” Harry laughs.

“You ready for all the gay jokes that come with that one?” Liam asks. “Because all I’m asking is that the label doesn’t have a picture of my face being shoved up an arse.”

“Oh that’d make an excellent label. I’m pretty sure Niall would even quit Guiness for it.” Harry laughs. The conversation is more comfortable and it’s helping Liam relax.

“He probably would. Listen, about Niall, I wanted to thank you for everything you’ve been doing to help him. He’s adjusting to his dad’s death better than I could have imagined and that’s because of you. I’m sure of it.” Liam says. Paul comes over with two pints and leaves without a word.

“It’s not just me Liam. It’s you too. And maybe a little bit the distraction of falling off a roof. It kind of puts things in perspective when something like that happens.” Harry says shyly.

“How are you handling that? I know you weren’t seriously injured, but it had to be scary.” Liam asks, taking a drink from his glass.

“I’m fine. I’ve fallen off stage a few times because I can’t stay still. It was kind of like that. A farther fall, but not too much worse. I was just worried about Niall. He’s taking the cast pretty well.” Harry says.

“Yeah, not much stops Niall from getting what he wants.” Liam laughs and then he blushes.

“Yeah I definitely noticed that.” Harry says, throwing a small smile at Liam. Liam nearly chokes remembering that Harry definitely heard them last night. “What about you Liam? You get what you want too?”

Liam blushes and takes another large gulp. He finishes his glass and holds up a finger at Paul. “Depends how much I want it. I tend to be my own biggest obstacle.”

“How do you mean?” Harry asks.
“I have a lot of insecurities.” Liam says, taking the new beer that a bar back brings with a grateful smile. “I wasn’t very well liked when I was younger. Niall was just about my only friend growing up. Kids made fun of me because I was British. Then they made fun of me because my parents were poor. Or because I couldn’t spell well. Or because I liked to sing.

“But Niall was always there for me. He kept my spirits up, so it didn’t bother me that much that I didn’t have any other people. Then when Niall came out, what few friends we did share left. We went to a catholic school. My parents didn’t like that much, life long Church of Englanders and all, but it was the best education around.

“Anyway we only had each other for years. For my sixteenth my parents went all out. They scraped every euro they could together and threw me a huge party. I invited the whole class, told them no presents just fun. I was- I was so excited. I thought that maybe Niall and I could have some friends again. So the day of the party we helped set up. There was pizza and a paintball course and a reptile show because I love them.

“Nobody came though. Nobody except Niall and my family. My mum was so upset she stormed off somewhere and my dad had to leave for work. Niall though, Niall forced me to have fun. He made me take a picture with every safe snake the tamer had all over my chest and arms. He shot me up so bad at paintball too. You wouldn’t know it because you’ve mostly seen him in the cast, but he’s kind of a ninja. And then he ate the entire sheet cake except for the pieces my family ate, because he didn’t want me to feel bad. He also threw up on my brand new shoes, but I’d say it was a good trade. It was the best birthday I ever had.

“None of my girlfriends ever stayed with me for long. They said I was hot, one or two even told me they loved me, but they also called me stupid. They made fun of me when I missed a work out. They said they didn’t want me to look like my father, he’s a large man. They said that the only thing I had was my looks and my voice, and that one day they’d both be gone.

“Ever since then I’ve had problems with confidence. That tends to affect me in a really bad way. I think it’s why I didn’t go to uni, or why I’ve never had a real job. I’m afraid of failing. Wow, dear god, I am over explaining. I’m going to shut up now” Liam blushes deeply when he realizes he’s basically poured his soul out onto the table. He drains his beer again and waves for another. Harry on the other hand has barely touched his.

“If you don’t drink that Paul will be offended Haz. He’s not a guy you want to offend.” Liam says, his voice affected more by sadness than the beers. Paul brings a pitcher this time.

“Gonna be one of those nights innit Li? If you start any fights I’ll use yer skin to reupholster your booth.” Paul says before he walks away.

All of the blood rush out of Harry’s face. Blanched and trembling he lifts his glass to his mouth and drains the entire thing. Liam laughs and says “Relax, he talks a big game, but he’s harmless.” He pours Harry another drink and laughs some more. “It got you to drink the beer though didn’t it? I can’t let you walk out of here sober while I get plastered. Legendary party boy Harry Styles is going to show me how he earned that title.”

“This is a pub Liam. The only music is the drunken group of rugby fans singing in the corner. I’m dressed like a school teacher. And the alcohol level is eight percent at best. Besides, I don’t like that guy anymore. I’m tired of being a parody of myself. I’m Haz now.” Harry says, gulping down
another glass in one go. “But if you want me to be somewhere beyond sober I can do that.”

Liam smiles and pours Harry another glass. “Cheers mate.”

Several drinks later for each of them Harry carries a stumbling Liam to the cab Niall hired for the night. “You hold your liquor like a broken beer bottle Li.” Harry sighs, dropping him into the back seat. He pushes Liam over and climbs in too.

Liam is fumbling with his seat belt and Harry buckles it for him. When he feels it clip he sits back in his seat. Liam slumps over onto Harry’s shoulder in a swapped version of their movie nights. He pushes his lips against the shell of Harry’s ear and whispers “I’m sorry Haz.”

Shivers run tiny fingers down Harry’s spine “Sorry for what?” He asks, careful not to move and remove Liam’s lips from his ear.

Liam does it anyway and drops his head into Harry’s lap, staring up at him. “I’ve been blaming you. For Niall falling. I uh- I hadn’t uh- I hadn’t forgiven you. I know it isn’t your fault. But I blamed you anyway. I don’t now though. Forgive me?”

Harry smiles affectionately and runs his hand through Liam’s hair. “Of course Liam.”

Liam snuggles into Harry’s hand and murmurs “Mm Haz don’t stop. Feels good.”

Harry smiles at the memories that bring up. He says it almost every night now, ever since the hospital. Harry lays his head down in Liam’s lap and Liam seems to love playing with his hair. He pulls at it unconsciously, twists it, even braids it sometimes. Harry loves every second of it. “Are you making fun of me Liam? Because that would be rude.”

“’m not.” Liam slurs, barely awake anymore. The sensation of Harry moving his hand across the short bristly hairs is putting him to sleep.

Once he starts snoring Harry plants a small kiss on his cheek and whispers “You are an incredibly beautiful man Liam Payne. Inside and out.”

“Sooooo?” Niall asks in a singsong voice as he hobbles into the kitchen.

“So what?” Harry asks coyly. His head is decently clear. Hangovers have miraculously never been a problem for him.

“You know what Haz. Don’t play stupid with me. I know how devious and cunning you really are.” Niall says. He takes the bowl of potatoes Harry is peeling and begins to do the work himself.

“Niall I was-” Harry whines.

“No. I’ll peel, you talk.” Niall commands. He pulls the bowl out of reach when Harry makes a desperate grab for it. “I want to know everything.”

“Of course you do. You’re impatient.” Harry sighs.

“Says the man who paid an extra hundred quid in shipping so his fancy new washer and dryer would be here tomorrow.” The blond counters with a smug expression.
“It was worth it. Your room needs the Red Cross to hand out coffee and disaster blankets.” Harry doesn’t laugh at his own joke.


“’M not.” The long haired boy says from where he’s buried his face in the crook of his elbow. “’m jus confused.”

“About?” Niall prompts.

“About this. I don’t think it’s a good idea anymore.” Harry pulls his head up and sighs. “He loves you too much Niall. I can’t compete with the boy who threw up on his shoes at his sixteenth birthday party.”

“That? That was almost a decade ago Harry. We weren’t even together then.” Niall keeps peeling the potatoes, but he isn’t paying much attention and Harry fears he’ll cut himself.

“And that just goes to show how strong the love between you is. You’ve meant more to him than anyone for twenty years. You’re past the finish line and I haven’t even gotten to the starting point. I can’t catch up.” Harry curls his arms back over his face.

Niall throws a potato shaving in his hair. “This isn’t a race or competition Harry. Love isn’t finite. If this happens, I will love you in a different way than I do Liam, but that doesn’t make it or you any less important to me than he is.”

Harry pulls the potato shaving out of his hair and sighs again. “I just don’t want to come between something so beautiful. It would be like photo-bombing the Mona Lisa.”

“Liam and I have our share of problems Harry. And honestly you and each of us will too. It’s how relationships are. But having you would just make it all the more beautiful.” Niall resumes peeling, still miraculously not slicing his finger off even though it dances precariously near the blade.

“How are you so patient with me?” Harry asks, dropping the peel into the second bowl.

“Because I care about you. If the worst thing going on right now is some doubt I can handle that. You’re worth it.” Niall beams. It finally happens. The knife slips and blood spurts out of his finger. Harry quickly grabs a towel and wraps Harry’s finger.

“Stupid boy, pay attention when you handle a knife.” Harry mutters.

“I’m not stupid. I was dazzled by your radiance.” Niall jokes. He waves Harry away and sets to dabbing up blood. The cut isn’t that deep, he won’t even need stitches. Harry is worrying over nothing because he’s worried about Liam.

“Don’t joke with me right now. You don’t get to joke when you hurt yourself!” Harry cries. He searching desperately for plasters, but there aren’t any.

“Calm down Haz. It’s not that deep. Just find me a plaster and I’ll finish with the potatoes.” The blond says calmly.

“The potatoes are ruined Niall. I can’t eat something that I know had blood on it. Too creepy.” Harry groans from inside yet another cabinet. “I’ll figure something else out for breakfast.”

“If you insist. Plasters are in the bathroom Harry, where they belong.” Niall points to the hallway.
Harry rushes off and returns a moment later with a box of plasters. “So what are you thinking for breakfast then? Because I vote for-”

“Nialler-cakes? Just like you do every morning even though I don’t know how to make them?” Harry sighs. The struggle occurs every morning.

“You’re not stupid Haz. I’m sure you could figure it out.” Niall sighs.

“That would be taking something special away from Liam. I can’t do that. What if I come up with my own special Nialler based recipe? Will that work?” Harry asks. He isn’t sure what he could possibly make to represent Niall, but he’s willing to try.

“Yes! That would be amazing Haz! What is it?” Niall asks excitedly.

“I don’t know yet, but something will come to me. You’re pretty good inspiration.” Harry says. He crouches down in front of Niall and unwraps the plaster.

“Stop flirting Haz. You’ve already got me interested, no need to keep trying to win me over.” Niall giggles and it is precious.

“I’m not flirting. Flirting would be if I told you that at this angle I can see your cock and it looks particularly pretty today.” Harry laughs and puts the plaster on Niall’s finger.

Niall laughs and hikes up his sweater. “Want to see up close? Because it thinks you’re pretty cute too.”

“Stop that! Who knows when Liam’s going to get up? He can’t walk in on me sucking you off or this will all have been in vain.” Harry whispers through clenched teeth.

“He’ll be out for hours. I heard you two come in last night and I could tell he was absolutely smashed. He’ll sleep until the afternoon after that. And then he’ll run over and take a shower until he stops throwing up. I know the process well. He holds his liquor like a broken beer bottle.” Niall sighs. Liam has apparently always been a predictable drunk.

“That is word for word what I said last night.” Harry smiles. “Still, we agreed nothing between us until Liam is on on it. It would be like you’re cheating with me and I won’t be the other woman- um other man.”

“I just figured that it would be fair considering I had sex with Liam the other night. I can’t expect you to be completely celibate for another ten weeks. We have to come up with some kind of plan for that.” Niall smiles and puts down his jumper. He climbs unsteadily to his feet and uses his crutches to hobble to Harry. He wraps his arms around the taller boy’s chest and trusts that Harry won’t let him fall.

“Maybe. But Liam is going to be around a lot more than the last few days, we’d have to be careful. And I’d still have to feel like I wasn’t your mistress.” Harry holds Niall close and whispers this into his hair.

“You’re not my mistress Haz. You’re my- actually I’m not sure what to call you. We haven’t really talked about terms.” Niall pulls his head up and looks Harry in the eyes. “I want to call you my boyfriend, but I guess that isn’t really accurate is it? You’re more like my super secret future boyfriend.”

“Oh how romantic.” Harry sighs. “This isn’t Pride and Prejudice Ni. Secret glances and fleeting touches of fingertips isn’t exactly what I want from a relationship.”
“Me either Haz. That’s why I’m proposing more. At the same time, I see what you mean about it feeling like cheating. I just don’t agree. I care about you and you care about me. Why does that have to be put on the back burner until Liam is ready?” Niall asks. Harry and he are so close that the air they’re breathing is blowing lightly across each others lips.

“Because he’d be hurt if he ever found out?” Harry questions. It’s the only thing he can think about, and it hurts. But Niall is so close, so warm, so beautiful.

“I think it’s safe to say that with the way we’re going about this everyone is going to get hurt a little. I know that you weren’t just okay with what happened the other night, that part of you wanted to be there with us. And Liam is going to feel manipulated. Hell I broke my leg.” Niall sighs.

“So why can’t I stop now while nobody gets hurt any worse? Liam never needs to be feel any pain.” Harry pulls back. It’s a war inside him, but in the end his rationalization wins over his heart.

Niall walks away with his crutches scraping the ground below him. “Everybody needs pain Haz. It makes us strong. I can’t keep doing this every day. I don’t mind giving you the reassurance you need, but I can’t let you make me doubt. I’m going to offer you a chance, right now, to pull the plug on this. If you don’t care about me or Liam enough to try this, to invest in this, then do it. Because I won’t hold you to the promise you made that day if you don’t really want it.”

Then he’s gone and Harry is left alone.

Liam rolls out of bed late in the day. The sun is low in the sky and he feels like his eyes are going to explode when he looks out the window. He coughs hard, his throat is dry and the cool air feels like razor blades. Then his stomach heaves and his feet hit the floor. He only barely makes it to the bathroom before the entirety of his stomach contents rip their way out of his throat.

He pants and lay’s his head on the cool skin of his arm. He should be used to this by now, but hangovers never seem to get any easier. Drinking less often occurs to him in these twilight hours of misery. He never pays those thoughts any mind. You can’t drink less in Ireland.

He reaches behind himself and starts the shower. He can only reach the cold water, but that’s all he really needs. He only notices that his clothes are on once they start clinging to him in the stream of water. He doesn’t care. They smell like sweat and alcohol anyway. Once his head stops throbbing and his stomach stays put he stands up. He sheds his clothes, dropping them on the floor of the shower. Every article he sheds gives him a heightened sense of relief.

After an inordinately long time he shuts off the water and walks out the door. Using a towel is too much for him. When Harry gasps and falls backwards Liam remembers that he does not, in fact, still live in his own apartment. He rushes over to help Harry up, ignoring the fact that he’s dangling freely. Harry takes his hand and then backs away.

“You’re um- you’re very naked.” Harry gulps. His eyes look nervous, but they take in Liam’s body all the same. Liam stiffens a bit as the curly haired lad’s eyes take him in. He hates himself for enjoying the way Harry bites his lip.

“Well I’d fix that, but you’re between me and my room and the clothes I was wearing are soaking in the tub.” Liam stretches. His muscles are still stiff, but he mostly does it to flex his muscles and watch Harry’s reaction. It does not disappoint. His eyes bug open and his mouth drops. Best of all Liam can see a twitch in the jeans Harry is wearing.
“Then I’ll just leave. Leaving sounds good.” Harry laughs nervously and then backs away. His eyes never leave Liam’s body.

“Wait. Help me pick something to wear. Whatever you’re cooking smells amazing. I’m tired of eating fancy meals looking like a mess.” Liam steps forward and traps Harry against his door. He reaches, brushing Harry’s hand, and grabs the door knob.

“Liam you never look like a mess. Well you did last night, but you were pissed, so it fit pretty well.” Harry breathes.

“Help me anyway.” Liam says. His face is only inches from Harry’s and he’s not sure what he’s doing anymore. All he knows it that this boy awakens something inside him, and he wants to let it out.

Harry ducks to the side, stepping around Liam. “Mate I think you’re still a little drunk. You wear what you want and I’ll set dinner.”

Liam nods and reality comes crashing into him like a train. Niall is just down the hall, Liam can hear whatever movie he’s blasting through the walls. He almost made a very stupid mistake. “Yeah, sorry mate. I don’t know what that was. No beer for me at dinner alright? I really need to sober up.”

He knows the alcohol is out of his system, he saw it almost flood the loo. He knows that what he just did can’t be blamed on anyone but himself. But part of him doesn’t care. Harry gave him a hand in support last night, he’s sweet, and so insanely beautiful. And he aggravates Liam’s feelings in a way that only Niall has ever done before.

“Sure thing Li.” Harry smiles.

Liam closes the door and Harry breathes a sigh of relief. Nothing has ever been harder for him than resisting Liam just now, except for resisting Niall the other day. He really needs to shag. He walks down the hall and knocks on Niall’s door. He hears shuffling and cursing. After a minute Niall opens the door. His eyes are puffy and he asks “Have an answer Harry? Because if you don’t I’m not interested in talking.”

Harry pushes the door open and picks Niall up over his shoulder. The blond squawks and Harry quickly closes the door. He plops Niall down on the bed and climbs on top of him. Their lips meet and it feels like stars are bursting in Harry’s chest. The kiss is brief, it has to be. But it obliterates any tension between the two boys like a bomb.

“I’m in.” Harry says. He’s willing to take this chance. What just happened proved to him that Liam doesn’t only see Niall, that he can see Harry too. That one spark of hope is enough.
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

This chapter is, I believe, the shortest one. A lot happens though, like a lot. This is also probably the happiest portion of the story. Buckle in because the ride is just getting started.

Eight weeks pass and things fall into an easy rhythm. Niall gets his cast off early because his leg is doing exceptionally well. Liam is managing the farm with Harry’s help while Niall follows behind them. He still uses crutches for longer distances, but the fact that he can walk to the bathroom by himself makes him giddy.

Harry and Liam run the entire border of the farm several times every morning. They’re up to five, but they add another lap every once in a while. Every three days Liam heads off afterwards to get whatever they need for the house. Harry and Niall use these times to build their relationship. Harry teaches Niall how to cook some days. Others Niall plays with Harry and the dogs. Others still Niall gives Harry guitar lessons. Some days they just talk while Harry does his yoga. But most often they have sex. This is one of those days.

“Fuck Haz! Oh fuck! Harder!” Niall moans, turning his neck to bite into the pillow. His leg isn’t strong enough to ride Harry yet, so they almost always end up with Niall on his back with his legs wrapped around Harry’s waist. It’s a better workout than anything that Louis, his physical therapist, puts him up to during his sessions. It’s also better than the twist on doggy style that they’d been doing. It felt so impersonal and Harry likes this much better.

“You’re just gagging for it this morning aren’t you?” Harry teases. He obliges to Niall’s request and pounds into him harder. “Liam not enough for you anymore? I heard you two last night.”

“Shut up and fuck me Haz.” Niall moans. His fingernails dig into the skin of Harry’s back. He’s careful not to scratch, in case Liam sees Harry without a shirt on, but god does he want to.

“Yes sir.” Harry laughs. He’s most probably talking to delay his orgasm. Niall is somehow so tight every time they fuck. It really doesn’t make sense, especially given that the blond still has sex with Liam most nights. He really doesn’t care why though, as long as it stays that way.

“Oh god Haz right there.” Niall moans. Harry keeps his pace and angle and within seconds Niall is cumming between them. Harry isn’t far behind. He keeps fucking into Niall, milking them through their orgasms. Finally he rolls off the boy underneath him and grimaces at the gooey substance rapidly cooling on his stomach. His butterfly is completely obscured.

“We’ve got to start putting condoms on you when we do that to contain the mess. The gas bill is shooting up from all the double showers I’ve been taking.” Harry sighs.

“We could always try me in you.” Niall offers. “Then your stomach would be clean.”

“Last time we did that you started crying in pain. When your knee is better you can fuck me however you want. Until then, I’m the top.” Harry says. He’s taken to hiding a fresh wash cloth under Niall’s bed every day and he uses it to wipe himself up.
“I won’t complain. I’m not much of one for topping anyway. I just wanted you to stop whinging while I’m basking in the afterglow.” Niall laughs.

“I’m not whinging Niall. One day Liam is going to get back early and I can’t still be in the shower from when he left.” Harry sighs. They’ve been pushing their luck for weeks and even Niall is afraid they’re almost out.

“Then why don’t you clean it up with your Harry-cloth and then let it dry on your abs? I would go crazy knowing you’re coated in me all day.” Niall rolls over and places a hand on Harry’s chest. “Seriously, that’d be insanely hot Haz. Like when you wear my underwear but better.”

“Niall your jizz isn’t the only thing I have to clean. Bareback has certain consequences.” Harry sighs. “Did you just say Harry-cloth? What even?”

“It’s what I call your little stash of cum rags, and I see your point. Jizz is hot, arse juice is not. Go shower. I’ll join you in a minute.” Niall laughs. Harry ambles out of the room and Niall goes to the kitchen.

He runs warm water over a cloth and cleans himself. Liam doesn’t seem to notice that dishcloths go on the shopping list every other week. Niall doesn’t like Harry to see this part though, so it’s a necessary evil. He wipes his own cum off his stomach and then Harry’s that’s leaking from his arse down the inside of his thigh. He throws the cloth in the bin just as Liam walks through the door.

“Hey babe.” Niall says, posing provocatively. He’s screaming inside, but he vamps. “How was the shopping?”

“I think the more important question is why are you naked?” Liam asks, putting down the bags.

“Harry’s in the bathroom so I’m using the sink to clean up after my morning wank.” Niall smiles and saunters over to Liam. His knee is starting to throb, but Liam can’t know that or he’ll suspect Niall was doing something strenuous.

“I wasn’t enough for you last night? You had to go again?” Liam asks. He pulls Niall up into his arms and kisses him around his face.

Niall giggles and slaps at Liam’s chest. “Stop Li, you horny git. I need to go get dressed before Harry comes out and sees the full show.”

“By all means, go put on something tight.” Liam laughs, setting the blond gently down on his feet.

“You wish. Today is joggers and a t shirt. Louis will be here at noon for an extra session. He wants to add one more a week. Says it’ll get me playing footy in no time.” Niall says, sauntering out of the room.

“Well then put on something tight underneath!” Liam shouts before he heads back out for the rest of the supplies.

As soon as Niall hears the door click he grabs something off his floor and runs as fast as he can (which admittedly isn’t very fast) to the bathroom. He throws open the door and is relieved to see that Harry is only just stepping into the shower. “Liam is home. Use the sink and pray you get dirty on the farm today so you can shower again.”

Harry trips back out of the shower, but Niall can’t help him. He realizes he’s grabbed jeans instead of joggers and he has to get some. He runs back down the hall and rummages through his dresser for some. He barely tugs on the clothes before Liam calls from the kitchen. “Has anyone fed the dogs?”
“No! Sorry Liam!” Harry calls from the hallway before Niall can. He hears the lock click on Harry’s room and he knows the brunet is scrambling for clothes of his own. He hobbles out to the living room and his knee is really starting to hurt. Liam is heading back out the door and Niall offers a smile before limping to the couch. Louis is going to absolutely murder his pain threshold today.

Harry walks out in a shirt and shorts. He’s reveling in the early Summer heat. His hair is pulled back tight into a bun and he has his keys. Niall sighs because he knows what that means. “Off for another of your mystery meetings Haz?” He asks cautiously.

“Yeah. I just got a call and I need to go.” Harry doesn’t look happy. Liam was supposed to explain the selective sheep breeding process to him today. He was strangely excited.

“Whatever.” Niall sighs. This process of secrecy has been going on for weeks now and Niall is not amused.

“Hey. Soon I tell you both what this has been for. I just have this last meeting and then everything is out in the open.” Harry smiles at him.

“Not yet it isn’t.” Niall groans. “But it needs to be. I think we should talk with Liam tonight. Do everything at once.”

“Can we wait on that just one more day? I’ll make a huge dinner, all of our favorites, and we can do it all then. I promise.” Harry pleads.


“I know. You only ask for it every day. I still don’t think Liam likes that name, you should change it.” Harry sighs. “I have to go. Tell Liam I’m sorry would you?”

Niall can’t say anything before Harry is out the door. Liam comes back in a minute later looking just slightly angry. “He keeps saying he wants to learn this business, but every time I have something important lined up he has another meeting. Pop stars are such divas.”

“Don’t I know it. He didn’t even make me lunch before he left. PT is going to be hell today.” Niall whines.

“Your knee acting up again?” Liam asks.

“Tripped into the bedpost putting on me trousers.” Niall says. Liam sits on the couch and puts Niall’s legs over his own. He massages Niall’s knee now without him even having to ask.

Niall moans and lays his head back on the couch. “How is it Louis is one of the top rated physical therapist in the entirety of the UK, and you still do this better than he does?”

“Because Louis is here to train you, I’m here to pamper you.” Liam plants a small kiss on Niall’s knee and smiles. “I think you should tell him that you aren’t ready for three sessions a week. It’s only been three weeks. He’s pushing too hard.”

“I hate using crutches out there on the farm Li. You know how it gets muddy. I don’t want to fall and hurt it again. The faster I recover, the faster I can do my job.” Niall is frustrated. His progress has been phenomenal on all counts, but all this waiting has been killing him.

“If you say so. I’m just worried he’s pushing you too hard. Every few days it seems like your knee hurts. I wish you’d take the pills he recommends.” Liam sighs. This has been a daily struggle between them.
“No. If it gets to the point I cry then I’ll take them. Otherwise the pain just helps me push harder.” Niall says the same thing every time. He might even believe it.

“Fine. I just want you to feel better babe.” Liam says. It’s sweet and Niall feels guilty for snapping.

“I know. I want to get better too. We just have different ideas on how I do that.” Niall takes Liam’s hand and kisses it.

“Well he’s going to be here any time, so you should get your mat ready. If he does that eye roll again because you forgot I might break his leg.” Liam says. He stands up and offers Niall a hand. Niall takes it and sighs in relief when his knee doesn’t throb anymore.

“Sometimes I think the same thing.” Niall laughs. “But Harry’s paying for the best and his track record speaks for itself.”

“You just like his arse in those leggings he insists on wearing.” Liam laughs.


“I can’t lie. I catch myself staring too. His personality is just so off=putting.” Liam sighs. “He’s like a perpetual child who somehow magically heals people better than anyone else.”

“That’s what I put on my business cards.” Louis says walking in the door. “Perpetual child, magical healer, arse looks magnificent in leggings.”

Liam jumps and blushes. Niall just laughs. “You need to start knocking Louis.” Liam sighs. This isn’t the first time he’s just walked in and Liam hates it. Niall can tell by the way his eye twitches.

“And you need to quit staring at my arse. You aren’t the only one who catches yourself staring at it. I’m going to put a big NO on it.” Louis laughs.

“You do that. I’m going to go bring in the rams. Ronny is coming to check the sperm count on them.” Liam sighs.

“You’re spending the afternoon jacking off sheep?” Louis asks. Liam nods and the cinnamon haired lad laughs so hard he doubles over. “And people say my job is intimate.”

“Better not be. Not what you’re paid for.” Liam grumbles and then he leaves.

“You’ve got to do a better job at hiding your affair with Harry. He can’t keep thinking it’s me you’re shagging on the side. He could break me in half.” Louis says as soon as they hear Liam’s engine start up.

“What? I’m not- I- How did you know?” Niall asks. He hangs his head in shame because it’s the first time anyone has called it an affair. It’s not exactly right, but it fills him with guilt anyways.

“I didn’t. I just had a feeling. You smile at them both the same way. That and you always smell like cum when I get here and Liam isn’t always home.” Louis laughs.

“Cum doesn’t smell you git.” Niall groans.

“Niall my face is near your stomach and arse half the time I’m here. When you sweat, you smell like cum. Trust me on this.” Louis sighs. “Now get out your mat.”

Niall groans and says “Go easy on me. My knee is sore from this morning. I had to do things more quickly than usual.”
“I swear I’m going to kill you.” Louis hisses. “If you want to shag both those guys at once, fine. I
don’t care. But don’t put too much pressure on your knee. I had to leave home for long enough for
this job. I don’t want to extend my stay because you need another cast.”

“Harry has offered to buy you a standing seat so you can fly back between sessions. If you’d be
satisfied with two visits a week you could be at home more often.” Niall says.

“That’s hardly a good use of my time. Besides that would mean missing out on the house Harry
rented me. That place is amazing. The tv comes up out of the counter Niall.” Louis tells him
excitedly. He flips back and forth between angry and excited so fast sometimes that Niall thinks he’ll
get whiplash. “And if I left all the time who would tell you to pick between the two gorgeous blokes
you’re shagging so your knee survives.”

“I’m not picking one Louis. It’s none of your business so either stretch me or go home.” Niall’s tone
leaves no room for argument. He lays down his mat and crawls onto it.

“Righto, let’s get started then. Can’t let Liam have the most awkward job today so we’re going to
work on flexibility. I really hope you don’t smell like jizz because my face is going to be all up your
arse.” Louis laughs after he says it and kneels onto the mat.

“I’m going to fart if you make one more joke about that.” Niall laughs.

“Ooh, cum-farts, my favorite.” Louis laughs right along with him. Niall just hits him with his pillow
and pretends to gag.

“Louis knows.” Niall hisses at Harry before his morning run. Harry always gets up a half hour earlier
than Liam to make coffee before their work outs, so it’s the best time to get him alone.

“How the-” Harry catches himself yelling and lowers his volume. “How the hell does he know?”

“He said I smile at you the same way that I do at Liam. And that I smell like jizz whenever he comes
over here.” Niall groans.

“You smell like- God why did I hire that guy? Why couldn’t I just take that Swedish woman?”
Harry whines. He’s is way too tired for this conversation.

“Because she scared the piss out of all three of us and wanted her own room here instead of a house
in the city.” Niall tells him. It’s the truth, but it’s not what Harry wants to hear.

“Well I’m willing to bet she’s never smelled jizz in her life. I don’t know a man brave enough to
climb Mt. Sonia.” Harry laughs.

“There isn’t one, but Harry this is serious. We absolutely have to tell Liam because Louis can’t keep
his mouth shut.” Niall hisses.

“I told you we will tonight. I bought everything for tonight and I hid it in the fridge. It’s going to be
an all day affair cooking this dinner.” Harry whines. He really wishes Liam didn’t insist on workouts
this early because he feels half dead.

“Don’t say affair. Louis called what we do that word and it made me feel dirty. He made me loving
you feel dirty.” Niall looks close to the verge of tears and Harry just wants to hold him. The rustling
from Liam’s room tells him that’s not an option.
“This isn’t dirty Niall. Sometimes it’s a little messy, but we’re not bad people for it. I love you too. Now go back to bed, you look like a zombie.” Harry pushes him towards the bedroom but Niall just falls on the sofa.

Liam comes out a minute later in his usual tiny shorts and tank top and Harry has to stop himself from ogling too much. He dresses like this every morning and it still takes Harry’s breath away.
“Why really should wear joggers Li. The cold isn’t good for you, and if you get sick I have to run the farm. Haz can’t just throw himself into the middle of breeding season.” Niall groans from the couch.

“I never get sick Nialler. What are you doing up? The only time I’ve ever, and I mean ever, seen you up before the sun was when you waited in line for tickets to see Bressie.” Liam laughs.

“Don’t remind me. That was hell too. I just wanted to see if I could walk a lap with you guys, but then I met the couch and he’s much more friendly.” Niall says.

“You have fun with that. You ready Haz?” Liam asks.

“Just let me drink my coffee. Nialler interrupted my routine so I’m behind schedule.” Harry says. What he actually wants is to cuddle up on the couch with his boys and sleep until he’s dead. He’s really not a morning person.

“That’s fine. I need to wee anyhow.” Liam says. He leaves and Harry downs the rest of his cup. The caffeine starts working, slowly spreading tendrils of energy through his limbs. Coffee is the only true god.

When Liam comes back they head out leaving Niall snoring softly on the sofa. Their first lap is quiet. They never talk until their third or forth lap when they start needing encouragement. Liam’s legs are strong and he can easily carry himself at a steady pace the entire time. Harry is more like a gazelle. His legs are long making his strides count for more than Liam’s. He doesn’t have the same stamina though.

Around the end of the second lap his lungs start to burn, right on schedule. Liam’s breathing is easy and it helps Harry keep time. In, step step, out, step step, in, step step, out. It helps bring his heart rate down, the calm silent strength of this boy who runs alongside him. Once they reach the middle of their third lap Liam asks the inevitable question. “Six?”

“Five.” Harry tells him between deep breaths. Honestly he may be able to do it, but he needs all of his energy to make it through this day. This day that may break him and everything he and Niall have worked towards. This day that may very well be the end of Haz. “I have. A lot. To do. Today. I need. To catch up. On the. Work from. Yesterday.” Harry says. He can only manage a few syllables between breaths and maybe this day is hitting him harder than he thought. “And I’m. Doing. A special. Dinner.”

“Well, What kind?” Liam asks.

Harry slows to a stop and Liam follows suit. Harry can’t talk and run anymore. He can’t quite catch his breath either. “Special. I’m making everyone’s favorites. Pork sandwiches. Pot roast soup. Niall even requested the cake.”

“What’s the occasion?” Liam asks.

“We have some things to talk about. But that can wait until dinner. Let’s get going before my heart rate slows all the way down.” Harry says.

“Righto mystery man.” Liam laughs and then takes off.
Harry scrambles to follow. He passes Liam, relying on his huge gate to do so. “I’m totally telling Louis you used his word. He owes me twenty quid!”

Liam laughs and catches up. They spend the rest of the run quietly challenging each other. Liam wins in the end, like he almost always does. Harry can’t seem to even out his breathing. He’s almost afraid something is wrong, but within ten minutes he feels fine. His heart does anyway. His brain is swimming around in a fog of fear. Niall keeps giving him little touches as reassurance.

Niall reads him so well that it helps Harry calm down. This can work, this will work. It’s been his mantra for the last eight weeks and repeats it under his breath every time he gets nervous. Liam never seems to notice. He’s far away today, shut off in his head. Niall is going crazy trying to make the both of them feel better without saying anything much at all.

After breakfast Liam sits around and watches tv. It’s not completely unusual, he does it every once in a while, but usually he’s eager to take Harry out on the farm. He sits in the arm chair so Harry and Niall are forced to take the sofa. They don’t touch though, Liam’s silence makes things feel awkward. He isn’t paying them any mind though, so it wouldn’t matter if they did.

“Alright that’s enough of that Liam.” Niall finally sighs. “You need to take Harry out on the farm now. He needs to come back to cook dinner before dark.”

“Yeah sure.” Liam says absentmindedly. He helps Harry to his feet and they leave, Niall throwing Harry a small smile.

Liam climbs into his truck and starts it. They drive to the silage shed in complete silence. Once they reach it he turns off his truck and sits quietly. He doesn’t make a move, doesn’t say anything. Harry touches him lightly on the shoulder and he flinches.

“Liam-” Harry starts.

“I’m putting in notice Harry.” Liam interrupts. He climbs out of the truck and slams the door leaving Harry in stunned silence.

Harry takes a second to breathe and then follows Liam out of the truck. He runs to catch up with the muscular lad. “Liam what the fuck?”

“I can’t do this anymore Harry. Niall has been distant lately and so have I. I won’t do this to myself or him.” Liam yells.

“What can’t you do Liam?” Harry asks.

“This. You. Niall. Me. I can’t. I can’t think around you!” Liam says. He pushes past Harry, but the curly haired boy follows close behind.

“I don’t understand what you mean. Please Liam just talk to me.” Harry pleads. His worst nightmare is unfurling right in front of him and he hasn’t even told Liam yet.

“I don’t want to talk to you Haz! I just-” Liam grits his teeth and clenches his fists. He pushes Harry up against a column and ducks in so close their lips brush. “I want to kiss you. I want to hold you and love you. But I love Niall. This is so wrong and I just can’t make myself not have feelings for you. So I’m going to remove myself from the equation before I hurt Niall. I’ll wait until his contract is up and then we can leave.”

“Get in the truck Liam.” Harry says flatly.
“Harry-” Liam starts.

“Get in the fucking truck!” This time Harry is roaring. He grabs Liam by the neck and steers him towards the truck. Liam gets a blank look on his face and just lets himself be directed.

Harry drives them home and Liam sits in stunned silence. It only takes a few minutes, but the tension is palpable. When they get to the house Harry just points and Liam obeys. “Niall!” Harry shouts when they walk in.

Niall comes running out of his room with a look of fear on his face. “What? Is Liam hurt?”

“It’s time. We need to have this talk now. Liam can’t wait anymore” Harry’s voice is stern, but inside he’s trying not to break.

“Oh. Alright um- us on the couch and him in the chair?” Niall asks.

“Fine. Liam sit in the chair and give us a minute.” Harry tells him and Liam obeys again. Niall and he step out on the porch. “I’m sorry to have to do this now, but it’s now or never. He tried to quit.”

“He was going to leave?” Niall asks. His eyes are pained and his voice breaks.

“He said he has feelings for me and he doesn’t want to hurt you.” Harry sighs. “We should have done this before now. How did we not notice he was feeling like this.”

“Because he bottles everything up inside until he breaks.” Niall says. “He’s very Irish that way. Let’s go. It’s time to do this.”

Harry takes his hand and they walk back in. Liam looks confused and tears stream down his face. “Oh god. It’s you. I thought it was Louis, but of course it was you. How could I be so stupid. How could I be in love with two men, and not notice they were with each other when I wasn’t looking?”

“Liam please-” Niall begs.

“No! I feel stupid enough already. Just let me leave. Please.” Liam cries and it strikes Harry how strange it is. He’s only seen Liam cry a hand full of times and it’s never easy.

“Liam sit down. We have been trying our best to tell you something for weeks and if you want to leave afterwards then you can. We’ve both known that was a possibility since we thought of this.” Harry commands. He hates this. He feels cruel yelling at Liam like he has been.

“Fine. Talk so I can go.” Liam says sitting back down.

Niall and Harry take their seats on the sofa. Their fingers are threaded together and that’s the only thing keeping either of them from falling apart. Neither of them knows what to say so Niall just starts. “Liam I’m so sorry about this. We never should have waited this long to tell you. We just weren’t sure you were ready.”

“Who is ever ready for a breakup Niall?” Liam scoffs.

“Breakup? NO! Liam that isn’t what this is, at least not unless you absolutely won’t try this. Harry and I are in love. But we’re also both in love with you.” Niall says it softly, like he’s afraid he’ll break if he says it too loudly.

“Wait what?” Liam asks.

“We want to propose an unusual relationship. We want it to be all three of us.” Harry says.
“How long have you two had this idea?” Liam asks. His voice is hollow.

“I came up with it in the hospital.” Niall says even more softly. “Harry said we could talk about it once I was out of my cast. But I wasn’t ready yet, and I didn’t think you were either.”

“Why not? I’ve had these feelings for so long and I’ve been falling apart trying to cope with them. Do you even understand how hard it was to decide to leave you? To leave both of you?” Liam keeps his voice flat, even as tears begin streaming down his cheeks.

“Well I didn’t even know you were upset Liam. You bottle everything up and push it all down. Yesterday we were cheering at old footy tapes on the couch and today you’re leaving. I always thought you’d tell me if something was really wrong.” Niall is crying now too and honestly it’s like a soap opera in the living room.

“Don’t you blame this on me Niall! You decided I wasn’t allowed to know about this until you thought I was ready! Secrets and lies are not a good foundation to a relationship! Especially one that is this unusual!” Liam is shouting now. He can’t control his volume or the way his hands shake.

“We know Liam. This isn’t Niall’s fault. It’s mine.” Harry says. “I wanted to wait. I wanted as much time as possible with you and Niall before I left.”

“And where exactly are you going?” Liam growls.

“I told Niall already and now I’m telling you. This isn’t going to work so I’m going to leave. I’ll sign the deed over to Niall and you two can live a beautiful life together. Just let me pack a suitcase and I’ll go.” Harry stands up and Liam is on him like a flash.

“No. You don’t get to leave. Not now that I can do this.” Liam grabs his neck and pulls him into a kiss. It’s salty from tears and it’s rough like real first kisses are supposed to be. But it’s more amazing than Liam could have ever dreamed. Harry fists his hand in Liam’s collar and kisses him back. The intensity of it is only overshadowed by the excitement radiating off Niall.

The blond lad is cheering from the couch and his sobs have turned to laughter. Liam grabs one of his arms and Harry mimics with the other. They lift him up onto his feet and Liam kisses him too. Soon he pulls away and just marvels at the two beautiful boys he loves. Marveling turns to lust when Niall kisses Harry.

Fire lights inside him and he refuses to let it go out anymore. He’s spent enough time pushing his feelings down. “I know this is new, but I can’t think of anything I’d rather do than you two right now.” he grins.

“My bed’s the biggest!” Harry yells and then he runs off, stripping his shirt off on the way. Niall waggles his eyebrows and runs after Harry. Liam follows once he gets the chance to squeal without being made fun of. Harry’s room being at the back has never seemed like an inconvenience until Liam almost trips on the minefield of clothes the other boys have left littering the hallway. When he reaches the door both boys are standing in nothing but briefs and Liam feels like his whole body is buzzing with electricity.

“So what exactly are we about to do?” Liam asks, pulling his tank top over his head.

“Niall tells me you’ve done this before. I think it’s pretty clear, but if you need to talk through it that’s fine too.” Harry cocks an eyebrow as a challenge.
“You told him about Darragh?” Liam asks Niall incredulously. That doesn’t stop him from removing his trousers.

“Of course. Had to assure him that you’d at least be open to the idea of more than just me.” Niall says it like it obvious and Liam doesn’t know how to respond.

“That- Niall that was completely different. We were all pissed and Darragh moved literally the next day. Also neither of us was in love with him.” Liam sighs.

“Are we going to fight about this or are you going to fuck Harry into the mattress?” Niall counters.

“Wait what about you?” Harry asks. The whole situation is quickly becoming not very erotic.

“I’m going to watch you two. My knee isn’t up for anything this athletic yet as you both know. Also you two have never slept together while I’ve had both of you. I think it’s for the best. Plus I really want to see this from a better angle than somewhere between or underneath you two.” Niall shrugs while he says it.

“Are you sure Niall? I’m not sure if the first thing we should do in this relationship is have sex with just two of us.” Liam sounds hesitant. Secretly he’s incredibly turned on. Being watched has always been a fantasy of his.

“I’m sure. Now you two get started because this conversation is about as sexy as mashed potatoes.” Niall takes a seat in the armchair and looks at the other two expectantly.

“Well let’s give the boy what he wants.” Harry says. He pulls off his briefs to reveal his surprisingly large cock. Harry’s bigger than Niall by a good bit, and therefore the biggest Liam has ever seen in person aside from his own . “Get over here.”

Liam does not hesitate. He crosses to the bed in two steps and pushes Harry down onto it. He strips off his own briefs and climbs on top of the other boy. He captures Harry’s lips with his own. Hunger races through his veins and he feels a need to devour the beautiful boy under him. He gives in to it. He marks Harry’s neck and chest, small nips and sucks leaving bruises across his perfect skin. Harry moans underneath him and that just ignites Liam further.

His hips grind down, rubbing their erections against each other and he can’t help but gasp at the contact. “Fuck Li. That thing is huge.”

“I’m not fully hard yet Haz.” Liam murmurs into the skin of Harry’s neck.


“It sounds intimidating, but it’s so so good Haz.” Niall moans from the chair. He’s stroking himself and Harry doesn’t know where to look. Liam is grinding against him and he decides to focus on the most immediate source of pleasure. He kisses at Liam’s neck, paying special attention to the way he gasps when Harry kisses the birthmark on his neck. He files that away for later and runs his hands down Liam’s back. He feels the way each muscle moves and contracts under his hands and it’s like a symphony to him.

“Flip over.” Harry moans. Liam bites down on Harry’s shoulder and rolls. Harry sits up on top of him and takes in the view. Liam’s chest is muscular and hairy. It’s not something Harry generally likes, but on Liam he loves it. Harry moves his hands down the sculpted torso. Each of Liam’s abs stirs something inside Harry and he can’t help himself. He bends down and licks a stripe from just
below Liam’s belly button all the way up to his neck.

“How long have you wanted to do that?” Liam asks.

“Remember that morning where you sicced the dogs on me and then tried to give me the boot? Since then.” Harry laughs. His hands never stop touching Liam’s torso. He wants to explore every inch of the map that is Liam’s body.

“That was when we met. You wanted me even then?” Liam asks.

“Have you seen yourself Liam? Of course I did. What about you? When were you first interested in me?” Harry wonders out loud.

“Um- Do you remember the dildo incident?” Liam asks bashfully.

“You mean the literal worst couple hours of my life? Yes. Yes I do.” Harry sighs.

“Well when I went to the bathroom I kind of heard you shouting my name in your room.” Liam tells him.

“This is like the worst live porno ever!” Niall huffs from the chair. “Stop talking and fuck already. We all know you both want to and my erection is losing interest.”

“Well you did say let’s give him what he wants. How about we do something really special though. Something I’ve never had Nialler there do? Anyone actually.” Liam whispers in Harry’s ear.

“Are you asking what I think you’re asking?” Harry whispers back.

“Fuck me Harry.” Liam says. This time is loud enough for Niall to hear and he moans loudly.

“I will get you back for this Liam Payne.” Niall moans. His hand is pumping again and both other boys watch for a moment before Harry grabs the lube off of his night stand.

“I’ll let you do it too. Once your knee is better that is.” Liam says. Then a lubed coated hand is stroking his cock and he doesn’t talk anymore.

“Quiet now. You’ve never done this before and I want it to be perfect. Besides Nialler will explode if we keep talking.” Harry soothes Liam, pumping slowly up and down until Liam is fully hard.

“Mm, go slow. I tried this once with myself and I don’t think I did it right.” Liam grinds down on Harry’s hand forcing Harry to withdraw to keep his finger from breaking. Liam whines at the loss.

“That’s only a fraction of it Li. But if I only have one finger inside you, you can’t push down. My fingers are small. Now if I do two you can do that.” Harry phrases it very specifically so that he isn’t quite asking permission, but he’s still leaving it up to Liam.

“Do it. Please.” Liam moans. He lifts up his legs and pulls them to his chest, offering all of himself for Harry. Harry takes the invitation happily and slides in his index and middle finger. Liam moans
again, even before Harry presses his fingers against the spot that he’d memorized. When Harry moves his fingers against the sensitive bundle Liam unravels. He begins leaking profusely and panting like he’s in heat.

Harry is surprised at how much Liam is enjoying this. His first time bottoming was an awkward and uncomfortable experience. To his understanding it’s the same way for most guys, and Liam is a top if Harry has ever met one. He pushes back and forth, fucking Liam with his fingers and Liam gasps. He places a hand on Harry’s shoulder and moans “Stop.” Harry does, but he’s confused. “I’m too close and I want to feel you, all of you, inside me.”

“It’ll be tight. I’m not as big as you or anything, but you’ve never had a cock up you before. I don’t want to hurt you.” Harry is uncertain with this change of events.

“If I can take him with just two fingers he can do the same.” Niall moans.

Liam nods his approval and Harry lubes up his cock. He can only argue so much against doing something that he wants to do. He lines up with Liam’s entrance and pushes in slowly. Niall moans from the corner and Harry and Liam join in like a chorus. Harry goes slow, trying to angle for the spot he’s been stimulating. Liam puts his hands on Harry’s hips and pulls Harry all the way into himself. “I want you to fuck me Harry. I’m not going to break.”

Harry decides that’s good enough on the approval scale and he starts thrusting. Liam is tight, so insanely tight. “Fuck this is not going to last long Li. I’m sorry.”

“I’m not either.” Liam moans. “Right there. Right fucking there!”

Harry pumps hard. His hips are meeting Liam’s ass with a loud clap over and over again. Niall moans again and Harry is beginning to feel overstimulated. His orgasm is approaching at an alarming, and frankly embarrassing speed. The last time he came this fast was in sixth form. Liam screams underneath him and streams of white shoot across his stomach. “Fu-u-u-u-ck Harry don’t stop!”

Harry goes for as long as he can, which is only another thirty seconds before Niall is moaning in that way that he does when Harry fucks him. He glances at Niall who is fingering himself and that’s it. His hips stutter as he cums so hard he can’t see straight. It lasts for days and he doesn’t want to come down from this high. Harry sees the spent boy beneath him and smiles. Only one sight even compares and that’s Niall looking the same way.

“Who’d have guessed?” Niall laughs. “I would have bet everything Harry paid for this farm that Liam would top until he dies. Now I’m pretty sure he’s a true bottom.”

“I still think I prefer topping, but I’m not sure and that’s saying something. I’ll have to run some more tests see.” Liam smiles up at Harry and the curly haired boy feels his heart swell.

“Well there’s one last part.” Harry says quietly. “This is going to feel weird.”

Harry pulls out quickly. Quickly is better. Harry knows that from experience. Liam doesn’t react well. “Oh lord. Is it supposed to feel-” he groans.

“Like you’re shitting? Unfortunately yes. It’s different in the heat of the moment, but once you’ve come down from orgasm there’s no real way to avoid it.” Niall says, standing up from the chair. “Now lets go take a shower because I need some attention. That was hot and all, but I feel a little left out.”

“Oh I think we can work something out.” Harry says. No affection is lost between any of the boys in
this moment. It feels almost magical. It’s a shame Harry has to ruin it tonight.

Harry had to scramble to make dinner at a decent time. All the boys are so giddy they can’t seem to leave each other alone or get properly dressed. Liam keeps sneaking up behind Harry to steal kisses and bits of food. Harry is perfectly prepared to make that sacrifice. The happier the boys are, the easier tonight will go.


“Niall there is a bag of crisps in front of you.” Liam sighs.

“I don’t want crisps. I want everything Haz is making. It smells so good.” Niall walks over and drapes himself across Harry’s back.

“Well the oven is older than I am so things are going a bit slow. If you want to help peel the potatoes that’d be great though.” Harry kisses Niall on the cheek.

“Trust me to do it again? Even after you had to throw out the whole batch last time I helped?” Niall returns the kiss and then sits across from Harry.

“Liam, I’m appointing you safety monitor. Make sure Niall doesn’t try to remove his finger please.” Harry calls. Liam slinks over and gives each of his boys a kiss before he hands Niall a proper potato peeler instead of a knife.

“I bought this and put it in the drawer after the last incident. I’ll chop the ones for the chips myself.” Liam says.

“I’m not a child Liam. I can chop potatoes.” Niall whines.

“I know you can Nialler. It’ll go faster if we both help Hazza make this meal. Besides the potatoes need to be peeled first before they’re chopped so it would take twice as long.” Liam tries to keep the peace.

“Oh. That makes sense.” Niall sighs. “Can you go wash the potatoes then Li?”

“Sure thing Nialler. Seeing as I have the enviable position of Safety Monitor I can do that.” Liam laughs. Harry breathes a sigh of relief. He doesn’t want them to fight. Not today of all days. Not when they can finally all be together.

“So Hazza, you ready to tell us what you’ve been up to?” Niall asks. He cocks an eyebrow and Harry almost gives in because he loves that expression so much.

“Over dinner Nialler. I’m going to get you as fat and happy as possible first.” Harry laughs.

“Why? Is this bad Harry?” Liam asks from his place at the sink.

“I don’t think so. I do think that it will be difficult though.” Harry sighs. He really wishes that this hadn’t come up yet. He has a whole speech prepared and everything. This was supposed to be gentle.

“I think we should talk about it now then Haz. Waiting is just going to build tension.” Niall tells him. He reaches a hand over and takes Harry’s fingers in his. “Harry we’ll listen to everything you have to say whenever you’re ready, but I think it’s for the best if we just get everything out in the open
Harry sighs because he knows it’s true. His mouth moves faster than his brain though. “I want to build a house.”

“Harry we have a house. Why do we need to build one?” Liam asks. He sits down at the table and hands Niall the bowl of potatoes.

“Liam, I said we’d listen to everything he had to say. Please don’t make me a liar.” Niall sighs. Liam nods and takes Niall’s other hand. Harry grabs Liam’s and they look like a drum circle.

“I had this whole talk planned out. I swear.” Harry sighs. “First let me say I don’t want to expand on this house or tear it down. I would never do something like that. I want to build another house. That’s why I’ve had so many meetings. I’ve been trying to find a contractor I can trust, who also doesn’t think I’m an idiot just because I’m a professional singer. Also someone who can finish the house by then end of Summer or early fall.

“I’ve been thinking about this since I bought the farm. When Niall told me he planned on leaving after his contract was up I figured he wouldn’t care much either way. Since then we’ve all been under each others feet. This house is too small for three grown men to share, especially in a relationship.

“I um- I have plans that I want to offer as options, but I want your input on this. Both of you matter too much to me for me not to use your input in it’s design. I’ve been toying around with the idea of each of us having our own room, but a larger main bedroom for us to share. So, what do you think?” Harry finishes. He’s out of breath because he tried to talk as fast as possible. He tends to babble when he goes on for too long.

“I think that it’s your farm Harry. If you want a bigger house, that’s your decision.” Liam’s voice is steady.

“What would we do with this place?” Niall asks. He sounds uncertain and Harry wants to reassure him.

“I want to keep it as a guest house. I want to use it as a memorial for Bobby, Maura, Greg, and all of the five generations that came before on this farm. To honor their lives and the memories you all built in this place.” Harry tries his best to keep calm, but his voice does break a few times. He just got both of these perfect boys to agree to be with him and now he’s afraid he’ll lose them again.

“That’s really beautiful Haz. Can I just- I need a minute by myself to think.” Niall stands up from the table and walks out the front door. Harry wants to follow him, wants to tell him he’ll give up the plans in a heartbeat if that’s what Niall wants. Instead Liam holds the lanky boy onto his lap and cards his fingers through the long curly hair he’s let down.

“I know. He does too. If he asked you to abandon the project, we all know you would. But it means something to you and Niall doesn’t quite know how to decide between his discomfort and his love for you. He doesn’t have it in him to be selfish. Well he can when it comes to food, but other than
that he’s the kindest most giving person I’ve ever met.” Liam soothes Harry. His fingers gently play
with Harry’s long hair and he kisses the tip of each of Harry’s fingers before giving him a small kiss
on the cheek. “Love being able to do that.”

“I do too. I can’t express how happy it’s made me that you agreed to give this a try.” Harry laughs
into Liam’s shoulder.

“I’m not giving anything a try Harry. I’m in this for the long haul, not an experiment. You’re the
only person who has ever affected me like this besides Niall. I’m not letting that go unless you both
do too.” Liam holds him tight. They sit in silence for longer than either of them know, they’re too
wrapped up in each other to realize Niall has been gone for over half an hour.

Harry kisses Liam on the nose when he feels better. He smiles at Liam and runs a hand through his
newly grown locks. “Have I told you that I love your new hair? Because I really do.”

“Mm not as much as I like it when you let yours down. I like the Tarzan look you get going.” Liam
kisses him right back.

“No I definitely like yours more. I’ve met Beckham, and he doesn’t pull it off as well as you do. And
now there’s something for me to run my fingers through when you’re drunk in the taxi.” Harry
laughs.

“Because I’m beautiful inside and out? Sorry, I actually think it was incredibly beautiful.” Liam
smiles at Harry’s loud cry of surprise.

“You were snoring! You were asleep!” Harry jumps out of Liam’s lap. “You were literally fall down
drunk! How could you possibly remember that?”

“Because it’s the first time you ever kissed me.” Liam laughs. “I couldn’t forget that if I tried. It’s part
of why I felt so guilty for so long, because I kept thinking about it every day for the last two months.
That and trying to molest you in the hall the next day while Niall was in his room among other
things.”

“You could have told me you remembered.” Harry sighs. He plops down back in his chair.

“I couldn’t actually. That would have been healthy and I’m not so good at healthy emotional
responses. It’s why I went through that trouble a few years ago.” Liam blushing.

“What trouble?” Harry asks.

“I um- I was borderline anorexic. I barely ate and I spent half the time I was awake working out
either on jobs or at the gym. I was almost hospitalized and then Niall about killed me for it. He sent
me to rehab, got me back to a healthy body and state of mind.” Liam sighs. He hasn’t talked about
this in four years because he can’t stop feeling ashamed about it.

“I understand if you don’t want to tell me about it, but can I ask what triggered it? It’s just you eat so
well, I never would have guessed.” Harry is shocked. Niall has never mentioned anything, nor has
Liam during their pub outings, which have become a common experience.

“It was Dani, um Danielle. She was the prettiest girl I ever dated. I couldn’t believe she was
interested in me. But she’d make these little comments about my body. I don’t think she meant to
hurt me, but it did. I started working out more and more and she’d tell me how good I looked, but if I
ate a normal dinner she’d laugh and call me a pig.

It went on for months. One day I collapsed in the gym. I don’t remember almost anything about it. I
do remember Niall though. I’ve never seen him so angry. Not even the day with the dildos. He practically threw Dani out of the room. Then he yelled at me until Bobby and my dad physically took him out. The next day he convinced me to go to a rehab clinic and I stayed for him.” Liam explains.

“Will you tell me if you ever feel like slipping? I went through something similar with someone once. She didn’t get healthy though. She died from something with her heart.” Harry is quiet.

“I will, yes, but I’ll never need to. Niall may not say anything because I asked him not to, but he watches me like a hawk. And your food makes me want to get fat.” Liam laughs. He doesn’t want anymore tension today. It’s been too full of it already. “Now where is Nialler? He’s been gone for forever.”

“I’m not sure. I figured he’d be back by now. Do you think we should go find him?” Harry asks worriedly.

“Yeah. We’ll split up to cover more ground. If I know Niall he walked until his knee started hurting and he’s just to proud to call and ask us to get him. Or his phone is dead because he never charges it.” Liam shrugs on his jacket and they go. Liam hands Harry a torch and they each head separate directions. The dogs follow Liam and he starts calling Niall’s phone.

Harry doesn’t bother. He’s pretty sure it’s in the living room anyway. He has a pretty good idea where Niall is and heads out. He can’t see much after his torch dies about two minutes from the silage shed and he doesn’t bother to turn back to get some batteries. Once he sees the light on inside he knows he was right. He slides open the door and climbs the old ladder.

“You never told me the bottle really did break.” Niall sighs when Harry climbs up behind him. “Just one more thing I couldn’t do for me da.”

“Niall, your father loved you. He wouldn’t have cared that a fall broke a bottle of whiskey, not as long as you were okay. Why didn’t you come home?” Harry asks.

“I can’t get back down the ladder. My knee is throbbing from the walk. I didn’t realize how bad it was until I sat down up here.” Niall tells him. His voice is strained.

“I’m sorry we didn’t come sooner. We thought you wanted to be alone.” Harry sighs. He sits down next to Niall. Being on this ledge again brings back painful memories.

“I did. Just not for this long. Listen Harry, I’m okay with the house. I have some stipulations though.” Niall isn’t meeting Harry’s eyes, but he links his fingers through Harry’s and that’s enough for now.

“Anything Nialler. Anything.” Harry’s heart swells with Harry’s touch.

“First I want a room dedicated to the tv. Which also needs to be huge.” Niall laughs. “I get to decorate the room and I want no complaints.”

“Sounds fine by me.” Harry smiles.

“And I don’t want some ten thousand square foot monstrosity. This is a farm first and foremost. Can’t take up half the space just for a house.” Niall laughs with that too and it fills Harry with happiness.

“Damn, I was going to replicate Highclere Castle and get a bunch of shifty servants like Downton Abbey.” Harry jokes. “I figured you wouldn’t want something too gigantic. The biggest floor plan I
have right now is six and a half thousand square feet."

“Jesus, that’s huge. What would we even do with that much space?” Niall asks. He doesn’t sound upset though.

“Well it has a full gourmet kitchen and a dining hall. And a home theatre. It’s got six bedrooms and just as many bathrooms that have full showers and tubs, along with two loo’s downstairs. I’m not going to lie, It’s my favorite one right now.” Harry smiles.

“Well hot damn. I can see why. What about the main bedroom? That’s for all of us right? So it’s bigger?” Niall is curious.

“It’s kind of obnoxious actually. It has room for a custom sized bed and a sitting area. It even has it’s own fireplace and balcony. Oh and french doors.” The brunet is almost bouncing with happiness as he tells Niall about the house.

“Well we’ll see. I don’t know what we’d do with that much house. We’ll all decide together. Oh my god how ridiculous are we? We’re talking about building a house on the first day of a new relationship.” Niall laughs.

“Well to be fair, none of this is normal. We moved in the day we met, you and Liam were exes. Then you were kind of together. Then we were together while you and Liam were. Now we’re all together and this sounds crazy the more I say it out loud.” Harry sighs.

“I’m not going to lie. I’m kind of going to miss having you to myself. I always felt so special being the boy that Harry Styles picked, and even more special being the one that Hazza loved.” Niall cuddles into Harry’s chest.

“You’re still special to me Niall. A very smart man once told me that love isn’t finite and he was right. Adding Liam in doesn’t change what we feel for each other. And we’ll still have time together, not everything we do will be as a trio.” Harry wraps his arms around Niall, careful to lean back from the ledge. They stay that way for a minute until Harry says “We need to call him. He’s really worried and we can’t hold it off any longer.”

Niall nods and says “Alright. Can you ask him to bring my crutches? I still want to walk back.”

“Sure thing.” Harry says. He dials Liam and holds the phone up to his ear with his shoulder so he can continue to hold Niall tightly away from the ledge. Liam answers and Harry tells him where they are and asks him to bring Niall’s crutches. Liam agrees and says he’ll meet them soon.

“Well we have a few more minutes of just us.” Harry tells the boy in his arms.

“Good. Liam will probably grump at me for being stupid. I just don’t want to have another row. I’m done fighting.” Niall sighs.

“Well I think if you apologize for making him worry before he says anything it’ll be fine.” Harry squeezes the lad in his arms tighter.

“Alright alright. You know what I am looking forward to? Us all sleeping in the same bed. I only ever get to sleep with you if Liam is too drunk to walk to my bed.” Niall smiles and they can see Liam’s torch in the distance.

“Oh god. That bed is going to be completely full.” Harry groans with realization. He loves Niall, even loves sleeping with him to a degree, but he hates feeling crowded in bed. It’s why he’s ordering a large custom bed that’s almost the size of the bedroom in his first flat. It’s ten feet by twelve and it’s
glorious. It’s called an ultra bed and he’s in love with it.

“Yeah I know. I also know you don’t really like sleeping around people so thank you for doing it anyway.” Niall says softly.

“How did you know that? I always snuggle with you until you fall asleep.” Harry laughs.

“Yeah but when you wake up the area around me is always cold. There’s space between us when we sleep. If it bothers you that much I can be in the middle and keep myself on one side with Liam. He won’t mind and neither will I. Not if it makes you more comfortable.” Niall smiles genuinely.

“Thanks Nialler. I’ll try my best to get used to it though. I’ve spent a long time sleeping alone. You get used to it. Just don’t expect miracles overnight.” Harry sighs contentedly. These boys he’s found are truly amazing.

“Well you look flat knackered today. Not getting any?” Louis asks. Niall is flat on the mat and he feels like hell.

“Too much. I’ve been fucked eight times in the last two days Louis. I never sleep.” He can barely bend his knee at all after yesterday. A new relationship tends to have a lot of sex, that’s usual, but this has been ridiculous. When they aren’t bickering about the house they’re shagging. It’s nonstop love and war.

“Christ Niall. And Liam hasn’t found out yet?” Louis asks. He grabs Niall’s bad leg just above the ankle and the knee and forces it too bend. It’s excruciating and Niall only stifles the scream building in his throat because he doesn’t want to give Louis the satisfaction.

“He’s been involved too. We’re all shagging each other. Well actually they’re shagging me alternately if Harry isn’t shagging Liam while I watch. My knee feels like it’s made of jam.” Niall spits through gritted teeth.

“Wait Liam and Harry are shagging too? You don’t think some threesomes will make things difficult on you and Liam’s relationship? It’s one thing if it’s a friend or a stranger, but the guy you live with? Sounds like a mess to me.” Louis stretches Niall farther and he can’t stop his scream this time.

“Jesus Louis! Relax on the stretches. I’ve been pretty flexible lately. Strength is the problem now. I need the bands.” Niall groans.

“Interesting how you avoid mentioning all the points I made there.” Louis says. He lets Niall’s leg down and goes to rummage through his pack. He pulls out a long ribbon that looks like a really huge rubber band. Niall knows from experience it’s the thinnest one.

“That’s because my relationship is none of your business. I only told you about the shagging because it might affect what we do in sessions.” Niall groans and moves into a sitting position with his legs bent in front of him.

“Niall I want to be your friend. This is so much easier if we’re friends. And you told me because I figured it out.” Louis sighs and hands Niall the band. He doesn’t need any instructions as he’s been through all this before. Once after his car accident and once after the surgery to fix some problems that arose after a few years.

“If you wanted to be my friend you wouldn’t be more abrasive than steel wool.” Niall grunts and stretches his leg against the band.
“I’ve been told I’m a delight. You’re just put off by me because these sessions are painful and I don’t hold back my questions. Your discomfort is less important to me than your health Niall.” Louis says. “And those exercises would be more successful if I sat behind you and held the band. Your arms will try and compensate for the pain by lessening the tension.”

“Louis, please for the love of god, shut up until I finish the set. If you do I will either tell you about my relationship or you can help me with the next set. It’s your choice.” Niall drops the band and glares at Louis. The skinny boy makes a zipping motion over his mouth and sits back silently.

Niall picks back up the bands and pushes his leg straight. His arms strain with the pressure and he knows Louis is right about the the subconscious urge to relieve the pain. He doesn’t let that happen though. He curls his arm as tight as he can and stretches his leg until he feels like he’s going to cry. He does five more and then drops the band. Sweat beads into his eyes and it stings. His chest is soaking through his shirt and he’s pretty sure even he can smell the cum on his skin.

Louis leans forward and says “Relationship status please? I have to know so I can go call you a liar on Facebook.” Louis smiles and Niall just wants to slap it off his face. He actually doesn’t mind the lad, his jokes are funny, and when he’s not torturing Niall like he works for the U.S. Government, he’s easy enough to get along with. But he’s so smug and catty sometimes that Niall also hates him a bit. It’s a very weird relationship to have with someone, but Niall seems to be an expert on weird relationships now. He sighs deeply and picks back up the band.

“No no. That can wait. Your recovery is nothing short of stunning Niall. You can rest for a minute.” Louis smiles and Niall can’t stop the flood of relief that bursts out of him with a sigh. He falls onto his back and takes a minute before he finally tells someone what’s going on.

“We’re all together. It’s not Liam and me as a couple with Harry joining in bed. It’s all three of us together in one relationship. We’re a trio, but it’s a relationship.” Niall sighs and braces himself for the onslaught of questions Louis is about to unleash.

“That’s really open minded.” Louis says. “I’ve never met anyone who’s polyamorous, but I’ve always thought it was interesting lifestyle.”

After Louis falls silent for a minute Niall asks “That’s it? No weird questions about the sex or anything? And how do you even know that term? I didn’t even know that term until Harry told it to me.”

“I went to university for health studies Niall. I took courses in the psychology of sexuality and human relations. I may stick carrot sticks up my nose to make you laugh, but I’m not completely ignorant.” Louis sighs. Niall realizes he’s never really thought about how much Louis really does know about the body. It only makes sense that he knows a lot that Niall doesn’t get to see.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to make it sound like I think you’re stupid or anything. Most people just don’t understand this kind of thing. I’m afraid when we tell people they’ll think it’s like some weird Sister Wives cult or something.” Niall sits up and grabs the band. “Now if you’d get down here and help me that’d be ace. You were right about my arms wanting to give up.”

Louis laughs and Niall feels relieved that the other lad isn’t judging him. “Of course I was. I know my business. Just wait a minute until I find a can of spray deodorant to cover up how you reek of jizz.” Niall laughs and snaps at him with the training band. Louis dodges it and takes the spot behind Niall “And just so you know I don’t think it’s like a cult. I think it’s really beautiful that you can all love each other. Even if it is unfair to the rest of us mere mortals that three blokes that fit are all in one bed.”
Harry never got to make his feast the other night. Most of the food burned or spoiled while he talked with the boys and went looking for Niall. He had to throw it all away, but it was worth it if his relationship is sound. He’s decided to try again tonight. Just because the occasion isn’t special anymore doesn’t mean he can’t do something for his boys.

Niall is asleep on the sofa. His session with Louis really seemed to wear him out today. When Harry asked if he wanted a cuppa he just laughed and said “I’m good. I wouldn’t want to stop you three from having a good time.” He left and Harry was confused, but then Niall yawned really big and Harry found it so adorable he completely forgot about it.

Now he’s boiling pork in marinade and water for Liam’s favorite sandwiches and simmering beef cubes for pot roast stew. He’s already peeled the potatoes which are in the fridge until he’s ready to make the chips and mash. The ingredients for Niall cake are staring at him and he needs to get started soon. It’s actually just a classic Guiness cake but Harry adds Bailey’s, and fresh blueberries instead of raisins, and he tops it with mint icing. Liam gave him the idea one night when Harry was trying to come up with a recipe to honor his promise to Niall.

Liam is in town, retrieving the results of the sperm tests on the rams. Any of them with low counts aren’t likely to be chosen for breeding. Harry isn’t quite sure why that matters, but Liam says it does and Niall agrees. Harry stirs around the beef cubes, flipping them when necessary and sings quietly to himself.

He hasn’t done much of it since he moved here, which feels like a relief and a betrayal of himself. He loves singing, he misses it sometimes, which is probably the reason he’s put off his official retirement. That and he wasn’t sure he still would if Liam rejected the relationship. He’d have probably gone back to his first love in music if that had happened.

“You should do that more often. It doesn’t make sense to keep a singer around if he doesn’t sing.” Niall wraps his arms around Harry’s waist and the taller boy nearly has a heart attack. His arms fly up and he screams. A beef cube flies through the air and lands on the floor with a wet plopping noise.

“Jesus Niall!” Harry gasps. “I could have hurt you! Why do you two do that?”

“Because you look particularly cute when you’re scared.” Niall admits. He kisses Harry on the cheek and giggles. “I’m sorry Haz. I just didn’t want you to stop singing. You have the most gorgeous voice.”

“Flatterer. You’re just trying to get out of trouble.” Harry laughs. A smile splits wide across his face because he’s never been good at taking compliments. He blushes and Niall giggles at how adorable he is.

“Oh no. I’m not in trouble because you think I’m cute and because you love apology blow jobs.” Niall palms at Harry’s crotch and rubs softly. “So let me apologize.”

“As amazing as that sounds, I can’t ruin another special dinner. I’m about to start the Niall cake once I finish the beef.” Harry kisses Niall on the pout that forms across his sweet pink lips. Niall kisses him back, wrapping his arms around Harry’s neck. Harry smiles against Niall’s lips and says “Greedy greedy Nialler.”

Niall sighs and backs off of Harry. “I just miss being with you. You’ve been very focused on Liam lately.”
“Because we cut him out for so long Nialler. He needs to feel more connected to me, like he does to you. It’s not because I love you any less.” Harry sighs. Niall isn’t wrong. Harry has spent more time with Liam over the last two days than he has with Niall.

“I know why Haz, and I agree with you on it. I just wanted to take advantage of the time we had alone. And since I spent most of that time asleep I figured I’d make it up to you.” Niall hangs his head and Harry kisses him on the cheek.

“You don’t need to make anything up to me Niall. You’re tired. We’ve spent a significant amount of time exerting energy over the last few days, especially for someone in PT. Besides you’re so cute when you sleep that it’s my background now.” Harry laughs and pulls out his phone, showing the picture to Niall. There’s a small spot of drool dripping onto the couch from his open mouth. His hair is fluffed perfectly and he’s cuddling with the throw pillow instead of laying on it. Overall it’s probably the cutest picture in existence, at least Harry would argue that it is.

“You are such a weirdo Haz.” Niall laughs. He smiles at his boyfriend and playfully shoves his shoulder. “Now go make my Niall cake, or I’ll tell Liam you’re a freak that photographs people in their sleep.”

“Literally every one of us has photographed the others in their sleep Nialler. Liam took one of us when he came back late from moving and we were sleeping on the couch. And you took that one in the hospital.” Harry laughs. Liam never did send him that picture and Harry decides to bug him about it when he gets home.

“Ah, but I have a loophole. I didn’t take the picture, I paid the nurse to do it.” Niall grins and Harry sighs because he’s right.

“Well threats aren’t going to work on me. I may not even make a cake now. I’ll just make all of Liam’s favorites and mine.” Harry tries to keep a straight face. It’s not possible with the look of horror that grows on Niall’s. “I’m kidding. Of course I’m going to make your cake. It would be cruel of me not to. You just go find something to do that lets you relax.”

“Fine.” Niall pouts. He walks off somewhere and Harry turns back to the beef. Most of it is cooked now and he tosses the pieces that are into the mixture in the pot. He’ll clean up the cube that Niall made him drop later. Actually it’s more likely that Liam will toss it to Loki, because he definitely plays favorites with the dogs.

Nothing happens for a while and Harry cooks in an easy silence, afraid that if he sings again Niall will scare the crap out of him. Instead he hears an unfamiliar chord progression from the back hallway. He transfers the rest of the meat to the stew pot and turns down the pork. He pads quietly down the hallway listening to a song being played acoustically from Niall’s room. He doesn’t hear Niall singing until he stands right outside the door.

“I think I’m gonna lose my mind, Something deep inside me I can’t give up. I think I’m gonna lose my mind, I roll and I roll til I’m out of luck. Yeah, I roll and I roll til I’m out of luck.” Niall stops quickly and Harry can hear a low muttering. He’s shocked and angry.

“Niall what the hell?” Harry pushes open the door. “Where did you get those lyrics?”

Niall jumps and scrambles to hide the papers that are laid out on his bed. “Haz! I um-”

“Niall I never released that song. I never even sang it for anyone. The only thing that even proves it exists are the lyrics written in my notebook and I hid that in my room. I don’t even have music for it.” Harry is furious. It takes a lot to make him mad, but this has struck a particularly strong nerve.
“I found them one day.” Niall blushes and tries to shrink behind his guitar.

“That notebook is literally the one thing in this house I don’t want anyone touching but me Niall. This is a massive violation of privacy.” Harry steps forward and rips the book off the bed. There are papers underneath and he glances at them. There are scribbles everywhere. Small bars show progressions and hastily written notes cover the margins.

“I’m sorry Haz. I really am! Please please don’t be mad at me.” Niall is on the verge of tears and Harry feels all the anger leave his body.

“Just tell me why you’d do something like this. Why wouldn’t you talk to me if you were interested in my work?” Harry sighs. He sits on the bed next to Niall and the small boy scoots back.

“Because I wanted to do something special for you.” Niall says quietly. “I wanted to write something but I’m no good with lyrics. When I found this song and saw you didn’t have any music it felt like a gift. I talked to Liam and-”

“Wait Liam knows about this too? Did you both go through my room or does at least one person in this house understand that some things are meant to be private?” Harry groans.

“No, no he didn’t I swear. Please don’t be mad at Liam. He only agreed to help me because I begged. I asked him to write a piano part to accompany me. We were going to surprise you with it when we finished. I just- I just wanted to do something special for you. I’m so sorry Harry.” Niall is hiding almost his entire body behind the guitar and Harry is wracked with guilt.

“No I’m sorry Niall. I get too upset about my music. Especially now that I’ve decided to retire. I just felt like that was the last link to my old life. What you did was incredibly sweet and I’m sorry I yelled at you.” Harry takes the guitar and sets it gently on the floor. He puts his arms around Niall and embraces the sweet boy.

“God we’re such a soap opera.” Niall laughs into Harry’s shoulder. His face is slick with tears and just a little bit of snot. Harry thinks he’s beautiful anyways.

“Actually I think the last two days have qualified us more as a porno than a soap opera.” Harry smiles at his boyfriend and wipes away his tears with soft thumbs. “How can you be so beautiful all the time?”

“Maybe I was born with it.” Niall says.

“Don’t. Don’t you do it Niall.” Harry sighs.

“Maybe it’s Maybeline.” Niall finishes his joke and Harry is aghast with how much his stupid jokes have rubbed off on Niall. He hasn’t even made that many because he was afraid the other two boys would make fun of him.

“Wanna hear a dirty joke? Two white horses fall in the mud!” Harry laughs. “Wanna hear a dirtier joke? Three white horses come out.”

“Oh my god Haz that was so much worse than mine.” Niall laughs anyway.

“Why do birds fly south for the winter? Because it’s too far to walk.” Harry has a million of these jokes stored away. He thinks Niall will probably laugh at them all. He does that. He laughs at everything Harry says, and it’s always genuine. Niall loves to laugh almost as much as Harry loves to make him.
“Haz you’re an idiot.” Niall laughs. “I swear you have the same jokes that a five year old would.”

“Why are bananas the sexiest fruit? Because their skin is a-peeling.” Harry moves closer to Niall on the bed.

“Total idiot.” Niall can’t stop giggling now.

“I love you too.” Harry kisses Niall on the nose and picks him up in his arms. The smaller boy squeals in delight. “And I can’t wait to hear the music you wrote for me. What I did hear was pretty good.”

“Don’t flatter me Haz. I have a lot of work to do if I want to live up to your talent.” Niall says while he snuggles into Harry’s shoulder.

“Now who’s the one flattering? You’ll do brilliant. I’m positive I’ll love it. Now let’s go bake that cake.” Harry carries Niall out of the room and drops him on the sofa on the way to the kitchen. Niall lands with a soft plop and a whine. He reaches up and makes grabby hands at Harry. The brunet just laughs and grabs Niall a beer from the fridge. “This’ll have to do for now. I can’t bake Niall cake and hug you at the same time.”

“Well if you ask me, the hug takes priority.” Niall sighs, taking the stout from Harry. “But I really love your cake so I won’t argue.”

“Two minutes okay? If I wait too much longer dinner is going to be bad again.” Harry climbs onto the couch and drops his body onto Niall. The blond laughs and squirms under Harry.

“Haz get offa me! You’re gigantic and I’m just a runt!” Niall laughs.

“Are you calling me fat Nialler? Because that would just be rude and would result in this-” Harry’s fingers race up and down Niall’s sides. The blond explodes with laughter, the sound of which just spurs Harry on further. He wedges his hands under Niall’s arms and tickles the sensitive skin underneath. “Say I’m not fat! Say it!”

“Haz! You- you aren’t- Christ you’re not fat okay? You’re a bean pole! Just stop please!” Niall gasps. Harry relents and kisses Niall on each cheek. He pushes up from the couch and Niall latches on to Harry’s torso. “Two minutes isn’t up yet. I just didn’t want you laying on me like I’m a mattress. That’s only fun if we’re both naked.”

“How can you still be horny? We’ve had so much sex over the last few days I thought I might die from exertion.” Harry sighs. He loves Niall and Liam, but sometimes it feels like the relationship is mostly just about sex. He doesn’t want this to just be a bunch of threesomes with occasional feelings.

“I didn’t say I was horny. I just said that particular thing is better nude. Personally, I could go without for a few hours. I think Louis will kill me if we keep having sex marathons. My knee has been shit for the last two sessions.” Niall groans and rubs his knee.

“Speaking of, do you really think it’s a good idea to tell him? All it takes is one phone call and he could put us in paparazzi hell. Non-disclosure agreements can be worked around.” Harry sighs. He really wants Niall to talk to him before he puts them all in jeopardy of becoming infamous.

“I trust him Haz. He didn’t ask too much about it, just said he thought what we were doing was beautiful and open minded. And that I really need to shower before he gets here after I get tag teamed by the two hottest guys in Ireland. I can vouch for it too, I totally smell like jizz.” Niall laughs and lets go of Harry. “I’m going to go take that shower now. Sweat and cum is a terrible combination of odors.”
“I wasn’t going to say anything, but yeah it is.” Harry puts his hands up just in time to block the playful slap Niall aims at his shoulder. Niall walks off and Harry gets up to start cooking. Liam walks in a few minutes after the water starts running in the bathroom.

“He’s just now taking a shower? You two shag while I was out?” Liam kisses Harry on the cheek and drops a stack of papers on the table.

“Nope. He took a nap after his session, so he’s just now getting around to cleaning himself off. He’s completely sweaty and gross. A total boy, it’s beautiful.” Harry laughs. “He looks like me when we get back from our runs.”

“You always look fuckin’ ace after our runs Haz. Like a sweaty prince.” Liam laughs and pulls out a chair at the table. He sits down and groans. “Eight of the twenty rams that can breed are low. They’re the two oldest. I think we’re going to have to sell them to slaughter.”

“I’ve been thinking about horses.” Harry blurs.

“Horses Haz?” Liam questions.

“Most of the farms in Westmeath raise horses. They’re expensive to start off with, but they pay back massively and you don’t slaughter them.” Harry dumps his cake mix in the bundt pan and pops it in the oven. “I have the funds to get us started. There’s probably someone out east who’d want to buy a flock of Galways this big. We have one of the largest flocks in Ireland.”

“None of us know a thing about horses Haz. And this place has been a sheep farm for over a century. I don’t think Nialler would go for it, and I can’t bring myself to agree either. Besides, the fact that seventy two sheep is one of the largest flocks in Ireland should tell you how much they’re actually worth. The breed might be extinct in a few decades.” Liam sighs.

“Which is why I think we should sell them to a breeder. There’s conservation efforts focused around the breed. We wouldn’t make much, but I didn’t get into this for money. I have more than I’ll ever need. Horses are a good investment in the future of the farm.” Harry takes the seat opposite Liam to try and argue his point.

“We don’t have the space for horses and cows. We’d have to do months of research, find a good breeder to start from, sell off our entire stock, and all while building a house. And above all you’d have to get Niall to agree which might actually be the hardest part in all of this.” Liam rubs at his temples.

“Actually I think he’s right Li. Bobby was talking about the same thing. The biggest problem was the lack of capital to buy the horses and a real barn. A good starting herd plus renovations and trainers would be worth three or four times what we’d get for our stock at least. You have a point about the house though. Either the build or the buy would have to wait a year. Horses hate noise so it’s probably the buy.” Niall is completely starkers except for a towel wrapped around his waist and it reminds Harry of the day they met.

“Nialler you know how much work this would be. Foals and mares take time to get to know before you can do anything with them. And wintering wouldn’t be as easy as buying silage to drop on the snow so the sheep can find it. You need a heated barn, cleared grazing and exercise areas, a completely different breed of dog to watch the barn, cats to keep out mice, qualified and trustworthy trainers, and goats to keep the horses calm. You’d have to drop half a million on all of this minimum to compete with the rest of the horse farms in the area.” Liam explains. That’s not even everything.

“And that’s a drop in the bucket to Harry. He’s literally worth hundreds of times that. This is his farm
now and if he want’s to do this then we don’t stand in the way. He’s so uncomfortable with slaughtering the sheep he almost died Liam.” Niall takes his natural seat at the head of the table. He isn’t particularly commanding, probably doesn’t even think of himself as a leader, but Harry and Liam mostly defer to his judgment.

“It’s our farm Niall. The second you two tell me you’re ready I’ll have Zayn write up a revised contract and sign the property rights to all three of us. And I want your approval, both of you before we do anything drastic.” Harry says quietly.

“If you’re both willing to put in the work in on this then I’ll agree. But I also agree that we should wait until next year to do all of that. The house should come first and mares are already foaling.” Liam agrees. “But Haz I have some conditions.”

“Of course.” Harry folds his hands and waits.

“I supervise the entire thing. Research, sales, purchases, construction, and hires. The whole mess. I’m in charge of it all. And you trust my judgment on it all.” Liam puts his hands palms down and speaks compellingly.

“Actually I was going to ask you to do that anyway. I’m not always the most responsible when it comes to money and I wanted Niall to help me oversee the house’s construction. You’re the natural choice to do this part.” Harry admits.

Niall gasps. “You want me to help you supervise the construction? I don’t have any experience in that.”

“This is your land Niall. Your home. I want you to be satisfied that none of it is an infringement on it’s history or it’s dignity.” Harry blushes and tries to hide behind his hair. It’s all true but it sounds so corny to him.

“Thanks Harry. I’d be glad to.” Niall giggles and takes Harry’s hand.

“And Liam, there’s nobody I trust more to look out for this farm and the three of us than you. You’re the most responsible person I know and the job’s all yours.” Harry smiles.

“I’ll get started on research tomorrow. Tonight is dedicated to Harry’s amazing feast. Now get cooking Haz, I didn’t eat breakfast.” Liam laughs.

“Yes master. Right away master.” Harry bow and scrapes sarcastically. “Is there anything else I can do for you master?”

“You can stop being an arse.” Liam laughs. They’ve fallen into their easy pattern and Harry wouldn’t change it for the world.

The day has finally arrived and Harry is nervous. He grabs Niall’s hand to help calm the acid roiling around in his stomach. His seat lurches forward and he knows it’s too late to turn back now. The flight will be short, Dublin to Heathrow is just over an hour, and then Harry will watch how his whole life plays out.

“You wouldn’t think that someone who flies all over the world would be nervous on an airplane.” Louis pops his head up to Harry and Niall’s row and laughs. He’s only here because Harry offered to fly him home for the three days they’re in London. A choice he’s beginning to regret deeply. He should have flown him economy.
“It’s not the flight Louis. It’s the visit. You have a ride from the airport yeah? Because my mum is picking us up and we’re heading straight to Holmes Chapel. I can give you taxi fare if you need it.” Harry sighs.

“As much as I’d like to take more of your money Harold, yes, I have a ride.” Louis sighs and sits back in his seat. Harry clearly isn’t going to be any fun.

Niall squeezes Harry’s hand. “Haz everything is going to be fine. If you don’t want to do this you don’t have to. I know Zayn would be thrilled.”

“I’ve put this off long enough Niall. Once the house starts construction next week I won’t have time to do this. It’s now or never. Besides I haven’t gone this long without seeing my mother in my life. It’s easier than her just showing up at the farm.” Harry sighs. He talks to his mum at least three nights a week, but she’s liable to do it anyway.

“Mama’s boy.” Niall snickers.

“That’s not fair. I can’t help it if I’m her baby.” Harry whines. “Niall there’s something I need to tell you about before we get there.”

“Sure Haz.” Niall opens the pack of cookies the flight attendant brought before they took off.

“I um- I used to have a sister. She died a little over a year ago. Heart complications.” Harry’s throat is dry. “We’ve all learned to live with it. It’s hard but we have. But my mother babies me when I’m home because of it. I just don’t want anything being said unintentionally because my mum doesn’t handle it well.”

“Oh Haz. I’m so sorry. Why haven’t you told us before?” Niall takes Harry’s hand and strokes it gently.

“It’s hard to talk about. I kind of told Liam, when he told me about his eating disorder, but I didn’t say who it was. She had the same thing, anorexia. It made her heart weak. I just- I’ve felt so guilty about it. She started because my family was always getting interviewed. My big sister, the most confident person I ever knew, became self-conscious enough to destroy her body because the press wouldn’t leave them alone.

“My mum called me while I was in LA one night. Told me Gems had been hospitalized. I grabbed the first plane back. I did everything I could to get there in time. But she died three hours before I landed. I killed my big sister and I couldn’t even be there to say good bye.” Harry is doing his utmost to stop himself from crying. It’s working well enough to stop full sobs, but his eyes are leaking profusely.

“Oh Haz.” Niall pulls the brunet onto his chest and Harry can’t hold back anymore. He cries into Niall’s shirt and fists his fingers into it. “It isn’t your fault. It isn’t anyone’s fault.”

“It is. If I hadn’t gotten into the spotlight she’d still be alive.” Harry cries.

“There’s no way to know that Harry. We don’t know when or why people die. We can’t control it. It hurts so bad, but we can’t let that and guilt consume us.” Niall soothes Harry, running his hands through Harry’s hair.

“What if it’s Liam next though? This announcement is going to stir a pot Niall. People will come looking for what made me leave the business. I couldn’t handle if Liam relapsed too.” Harry wipes his nose with a napkin.
“We won’t let that happen. He so much as tries and I’ll beat him senseless. But I think you should tell him about this when we get back. It would mean a lot to him.” Niall brushes away some of Harry’s tears. He checks on Louis and finds the boy completely passed out. They haven’t even been on the flight for twenty minutes and he’s asleep. Terrifying really.

“I will. I just didn’t want it to seem like I was preaching or I would have told him then.” Harry says. He’s wiping his face, but he’s going to have to put on sunglasses. The flight attendant will be back soon and he doesn’t want some sneaky tweet of his face all red and puffy all over the internet after this.

When they land at Heathrow it’s a flurry of activity. Harry and Niall can leave immediately, but Louis has to declare his cash at customs so they say a quick goodbye. Harry insisted on packing light so they don’t have to do baggage claim either. A man with a sign that says Styles picks them up and they sneak out a side entrance to his car. Once they get inside Niall is met by Harry’s mother Anne. She’s a beautiful woman, she looks so much like Harry Niall can’t help an immediate swell of affection.

“Hi Mrs. Styles, I’m Niall. Niall Horan.” Niall puts out his hand to shake hers and she grabs it gently.

“Anne. And it’s Twist actually. I remarried.” Anne offers a sweet smile and Harry slides in the car nervously. “Hi stranger.”

“Mum-” Harry whines.

“Don’t you mum me Harry Edward Styles. You could fly home any time to see your poor mother. It’s not so much to ask now is it?” Anne scolds Harry and Niall struggles valiantly not to smile at it. Ever since Liam’s parents moved back to Wolverhampton he hasn’t seen almost any mothering. It stirs something in his heart.

“I know, I know. I’ve been learning a whole new business in another country mum. It’s going to take some time.” Harry sighs.

“And the cute blond you brought home? I’m sure that has nothing to do with it.” Anne smirks.

“That’s a part of it yes. I have something to tell you, but it can wait until dinner. Is Robin cooking or do you want me to order something while we’re still here in London?” Harry pulls out his phone expectantly.

“I am cooking, thank you very much. Robin is watching it at home, but I have a roast ready and Robin will pop it in the oven soon. It’ll be ready when we get there. Why do you need to wait to tell me have a boyfriend? He’s literally sitting right across from me.” Anne indicates to Niall who is blushing like a fool.

“Because there’s more I have to tell you and because ominous announcements have apparently become a staple of my personality. Now tell me about how you’ve been doing since I left.” Harry smiles and gives Niall’s hand a quick squeeze.

“My son is a slut!” Anne wails melodramatically. “He’s a brother-husband!”

“Mom I swear it’s not like that!” Harry is trying to keep things calm. When he told them about the
relationship Robin quietly walked away. Anne had a completely different reaction. Her loud crying turns to a cackle.

“I know Harry.” Anne pulls a smile. “You fall in love too easily to be a slut. And Niall seems like a nice boy. I’m sure this Liam is too. I highly doubt that they’re part of a cult. I just knew that’s how you thought I’d react, so I wanted to have some fun.”

“You are a complete loon.” Harry sighs.

“Where do you think you got it from? I’ll go talk to Robin. You know how men can be. He’ll come around.” Anne stands up and gives Niall a quick kiss on the cheek and whispers in his ear. “You seem good for him. Don’t disappoint me.”

After she walks out of the room Harry sighs and drops his head onto the table. Apparently he forgot about dinner because his face lands right on a dinner roll. Niall laughs into his hand, using his napkin to smother the sound.

“Don’t laugh at me Niall. I was afraid they’d disown me.” Harry sighs into his bread cushion.

“Yer mum is the sweetest woman I’ve ever met Harry. She wouldn’t do that just because you’re my brother-husband.” Niall laughs.

“Oh god, that word. Never say that again please.” Harry laughs. “Do you want to go to a hotel? My old bed is really small so it would be comfier. And we could walk around naked.”

“You do that anyway.” Robin says, walking into the room. “But he’s right about the hotel. That bed is about the size of a postage stamp and it’s over a decade old. His mum insists on keeping it though.”

“It’s the bed my baby grew up on!” Anne huffs. “Feel free to stay here if you want. I’d love to cook you boys breakfast before you run off to London tomorrow.”

“I don’t want to put you out.” Niall blushes.

“It’s nothing love. I’d be glad to.” Anne smiles sweetly.

“Well I was thinking the hotel, because I can order room service. The meal was delicious Mrs. Twist, but Harry can vouch that I eat more than that entire roast for dinner every night.” Niall grins sheepishly and Anne laughs.

“I knew when I saw you that you had an appetite. Go ahead love, I won’t be offended. I’m used to only cooking for two, so this meal was small.” Anne pours Niall another glass of wine and looks at him fondly. “This one is good for you Harry. He’s not afraid to say what’s on his mind.”

“Neither am I!” Harry squawks.

“I know. But what’s on your mind is generally ‘What if I put roller blades on a giraffe?’ or ‘Do bananas think of their spots as freckles?’ It’s not quite the same.” Anne laughs at how red Harry grows.

“Mum!” Harry whines for the hundredth time today.

“Harry I have personally heard you ask the giraffe one.” Robin laughs.

“Everyone at this table is against me. Why do I even come home?” Harry sighs.
“Because if you didn’t I’d fly to Ireland and stay with you for a month. And I’d spank you silly.” Anne snarks.

“We’re leaving now.” Harry says. “We’ll see you day after tomorrow in London. I’ll send a driver for you.”

“Harry sit down and drink your wine.” Niall says sharply. “We can at least wait a little while. Your mum and Robin are happy to see you. Don’t take that away from them or yourself. You forget what a treasure it is to have a family.”

“Of course Nialler. I’m sorry. I didn’t think.” Harry sits back down and puts his hand over Niall’s. Anne cocks her head curiously but doesn’t say anything.

Robin is another matter. “I have never seen that boy take instruction in my life. What is going on?”

“My parents are both dead. My mother died six years ago, breast cancer. My father from an aneurysm a few months ago.” Niall says slowly. He tries not to sound too upset, for Anne’s sake. He knows it wouldn’t take much to remind her of Gemma.

“Oh Niall love, I’m so sorry.” Anne tries to comfort the blond boy.

“It’s okay. I mean it isn’t okay, but I’ve learned to accept it. Hazza and Payno helped me through it. And falling off of the roof kind of put things in perspective.” Niall laughs.

“Niall no-” Harry starts.

“You fell off a roof? Were you hurt?” Anne asks.

“Well I didn’t fall really. I jumped to save Harry when he fell. I broke my knee, but it’s healing we-” Niall stops talking when he realizes that nobody is listening. Anne is glaring at Harry and Robin looks like he just wants to run.

Anne slams her hands on the table and stands up. “You fell off a roof and didn’t tell me? You think that’s something I didn’t need to know?”

“Mum, I’m so sorry. I didn’t want to worry you. I just sprained my ankle.” Harry is backed all the way against his seat and Niall realizes his mistake.

“I raised you better than that!” Anne roars. For such a small woman she’s truly terrifying when she’s angry. She reminds Niall of Maura that way. “One phone call Harry!”

“I call you all the time.” Harry says quietly. It was the wrong decision.

“You know what I mean Harry.” Anne’s voice has gotten quiet and that’s even scarier. She walks slowly around the table, dragging her long fingers around the edge. “You should have told me.”

Harry scrambles out of his chair, but his mother moves quickly. She traps him against the wall and Harry looks like a rabbit in a cage. Her hand moves like lightning, striking against the back of Harry’s head with an audible crack. Harry yelps and grabs the spot that Anne had struck. His hair took most of the blow, pulled back in a tight bun to keep it out of his face.

“I’m sorry!” Harry pleads. Mercy is granted and Anne walks away.

“You should have told me Harry, but you’re forgiven. Sit down and finish your wine like Niall said.” Anne takes her seat and drains her glass. Robin just Breathes a heavy sigh of relief.
“Yes mum.” Harry says quickly. He sits down and takes a gulp.

“You were saying about your knee love?” Anne asks. Niall is in so much trouble.

“I can’t believe you sold me out to my mum!” Harry calls from the shower. Niall is buzzed and camped out on the giant bed in the hotel room. Harry rinses his hair out and turns off the water. He dries off lightly and walks out, not bothering with a towel in the privacy of their suite. Niall is smiling from the bed and Harry smiles back.

“I can’t believe you didn’t tell her.” Niall laughs. He pats the spot next to him and Harry falls on the bed. Niall traces his fingers over the laurel leaves on Harry’s hips. “Louis cleared me for a bit more activity.”


“Sex of course.” Niall kisses at Harry’s collar bones.

“Did that stop you before? I seem to remember a cast not even stopping you.” Harry laughs.

“True. But he says my leg should be strong enough to have you ride me now, or vice versa.” Niall straddles Harry, as if to prove a point. “Whichever you prefer.”

“I think you should pick.” Harry smiles.

“Then I want to ride you. Been dreaming of doin that since we met.” Niall gasps. His skin is flushed from the wine and he pulls off his shirt. “Since before we met actually. Always had a crush on Harry Styles.”

“And is he everything you thought he would be?” Harry asks.

“So much better.” Niall moans. “He fucks me so good. I kind of thought he’d be selfish in bed, a real diva.”

Harry scoffs. “So he isn’t?”

“Nope. Gives the best head I’ve ever had. It’s the lips. Absolutely made for sucking cock.” Niall starts rubbing his chest. He’s entirely ready to go, but Harry wants to tease him a while. He circles his long fingers around Niall’s wrist and pins them to his side. He flips them over so he’s on top now, and licks a stripe up Niall’s chest. Niall giggles and says “Did I forget to mention the tongue? Absolute perfection.”

“And what would you like him to do with that tongue?” Harry asks. He moves Niall’s hands up above his head, trapping them with just one of his large hands. His other hand moves slowly down Niall’s torso, stopping on the way to twist lightly on his nipple.

Niall moans and says “Well I’d like him to eat me out with it, but that’s not something we’ve done before so I don’t think he wants to.”

“Mm I bet he does.” Harry says. He flips Niall over onto his stomach and gets off the bed so he can tear off Niall’s trousers. They come off easily and Harry groans. “You didn’t wear underwear to meet my mum?”

“Focus Haz.” Niall whines. Harry does. Niall’s arse is too great a distraction to ignore. Harry spreads
the smaller boy's legs and scoots up on the bed. Niall's erection is poking through his legs and Harry can't help but give it a little lick. Niall moans and his hips grind into the bed. Harry gives it a few kisses, mouthing at the head before he licks at Niall's legs. He works his way up, mouthing at the sweet flesh of Niall's cheeks.

He spreads them and licks tentatively at Niall's hole. Niall moans like he does when Harry fucks him so he takes it as a good sign. He presses his tongue flat and licks with more vigor. Niall starts leaking and Harry rubs the palm of his hand through the precum. He slowly rubs circles on the underside of Niall's cock, just enough to stimulate him without him actually getting him close to cumming. His tongue constricts to a point and he presses it into Niall.

Niall starts to unravel beneath him. His moans fill the hotel room and Harry is painfully hard. He wants to wank, wants to put himself inside Niall right now and fuck him into the mattress. Niall is right though. Harry isn't selfish in bed. The only thing that gives him more pleasure than fucking, is seeing his partner get pleasure from him. He licks away at Niall, prodding and swirling with his tongue. Niall pants and moans like the world is coming to an end.

Harry's long fingers grab at Niall's hips and he pulls the blond up. With this vantage he can lick at Niall easily, his legs spread in a way that creates a natural separation of the arse cheeks. His hand wraps around Niall and tugs agonizingly slow, leaving Niall rutting into his hand. Harry takes advantage of this and points his tongue so that Niall is fucking himself onto it with the back thrust. “God Haz, I’m so close.” the blond moans.

Harry lets go of him immediately. He licks a few more times, enjoying the way Niall gasps, before asking “Lube?”

“My bag. Wasn’t sure you’d wanna fuck me after dinner with yer mum.” Niall moans. Harry stands up and Niall whines. “Hurry. Want you inside me. Wanna ride you.”

“Flip over. I like to watch your face when I finger you.” Harry commands. He rummages through Niall's pack until he finds the lube. He turns around and Niall is on his back with his knees pulled up to his chest. He climbs back onto the bed and undoes the cap, pouring lube generously onto one hand. He runs his fingers across his palm, grabbing to slick them all the way around. He circles his fingers around the entrance before slipping in his middle finger.

They have this down to a science. Niall pants and moans while Harry quickly finds his prostate. The small bundle of nerves is easy for him now, he moves his finger in circles the way he knows Niall likes. He knows exactly when to slip in another finger, and the third, working Niall open just enough to take him.

“Now.” Niall says. He doesn’t need to. Harry can read his face and knows the exact split-second that Niall is ready. His toes flex just the slightest bit and he bites the center of his lip. Even after such a short time Harry can read Niall like a book. His favorite book.

He quickly falls back on the bed and lubes up his cock. Niall straddles over him and lines himself up. He pushes back onto Harry quickly, greedily, and moans. He bottoms out almost instantly inside the blond and he feels like he's going to cum from just the arousal that creates. “You always do that too slow.” Niall moans. “Sometimes I just wanna yell at you to get on with it.”

“Point taken.” Harry says. He’s not interested in talking. He’s interested in the warmth Niall has wrapped around him. He’s interested in the steady pace Niall sets, rocking his hips back and forth like a metronome. He goes quickly, eagerly, pressing his hands into Harry’s shoulders to take the weight off of his knees. Harry pulls him in for a kiss, their first through the encounter, and leans up. He pulls Niall flush to him and tries to change their position.
He wraps his legs together and pulls Niall’s legs behind his back. He’s sitting up now so he can thrust up into Niall. The blond pants and throws his head back. His cock is grating against Harry’s abs and that just turns Harry on more. He puts one of his hands behind his back to give himself leverage and fucks into Niall with all the force he can muster. His body collides with the small boy, slaps echoing through the suite.

“Fuck I’m so close. Right fucking there. Please Harry.” Niall moans. Harry almost stops dead, the air knocked from his lungs. It’s the first time Niall has ever called him that during sex. He’s Haz, always Haz. It’s such a little thing, but it throws Harry’s mind for a loop. He continues to thrust up, wanting Niall to cum, but his orgasm has completely vanished.

“Oh fuck!” Niall screams. Harry can feel Niall’s orgasm. The way he tightens around Harry’s cock, the way his desperately twitches against Harry’s abs, the way streams of cum shoot up Harry’s stomach and chest. Harry doesn’t stop though. He rips himself out of the blond and flips him over. Niall is bent over the mattress and Harry shoves himself back in. He fucks into Niall roughly. His hips move statically like his mind. Niall doesn’t seem to mind. He’s moaning under Harry like they’ve only just started.

It doesn’t take Harry too long, even with how impersonal this feels. Niall’s slim body beneath him, the moans that echo off the walls, the tightness of his lover all spur him on. He cums hard, so hard he can barely stay conscious. He collapses onto Niall, their torsos hanging off the edge of the bed.

“It’s because I called you Harry, isn’t it? That’s why you couldn’t look me in the eyes?” The questions are soft. Harry almost doesn’t hear Niall ask them.

“Is that petty?” Harry asks.

“No. No it’s fine. I just wanted to know what I did wrong.” Niall says quietly. Harry’s heart breaks. He pulls out of Niall and rolls him over. Niall’s eyes divert and he tries to blink away the the tears that are starting to form. Harry pulls his face up and kisses him gently.

“You didn’t do anything wrong Nialler. It just threw me off. Sometimes I forget that I’m not just Haz, not even to you.” Harry sighs.

“You are though. I don’t care about who you were before we met. Not like that. We were just talking about it. I thought- I thought it would be okay. I thought it was turning you on, me worshiping your rock star status. I won’t do it again, I promise.” Niall curls sideways, pulling away from Harry.

“Niall it’s okay, I promise. You shouldn’t have to focus on what name you say during sex. As long as you don’t call me somebody else’s name like Liam or Louis or something, I’ll be fine.” Harry says. Niall laughs at that.

“Oh my god I’d die of embarrassment.” Niall giggles. The mood lightens and Harry feels a little relief. He also feels Niall’s cum all over his stomach and sighs.

“I’ll call maid services and you go take a shower. I’ll join you when the duvet is changed. I’m not sleeping under blankets covered in jizz.” Harry laughs. Niall jumps off the bed and starts the shower. Harry pulls on his bathrobe and someone is up at his door less than thirty seconds after he hangs up. He grabs the complimentary bathrobe off a hanger and answers. Two women rush in and change the linens in under two minutes. Sometimes it’s still good to be Harry Styles.
“Please Harry, for the love of every god in legend, do not do this.” Zayn is on his knees, latched on to Harry’s leg and being very stubborn about being shaken loose. Niall is laughing, egging this on, and Harry is not amused. “Do you want me to suck your dick? Because I will if you’ll just stop this terrible idea. Anything to keep you from making this mistake.”

“Zayn!” Perrie scolds. She and Niall became fast friends and are tangled up on the couch watching this unfold. Harry would find it cute if he wasn’t so close to the edge of a nervous breakdown.

“Pez he’s my only client. I sold my soul for this sod. If I have to give a blowie to save my livelihood I will. You can go in the other room if it makes you uncomfortable.” Zayn turns on Perrie and glares. Niall apparently doesn’t have a jealous bone in his body because he’s laughing his stupid cute arse off.

“Just let me get out my phone. I wanna take a picture because that’d be hot.” Niall laughs.

“Ooh good point!” Perrie giggles. She whips out her phone and the small bright light that says she’s recording turns on. “Well get on with it. I need something for the buzz bank.”

“You’re all horrid!” Harry groans. His stomach is already in knots. Niall and he woke up late for breakfast and they had to rush back to London by noon. Zayn has been carrying on for at least half an hour and Harry is done with all of it. “I was going to wait to tell you, but sod it. I have a trust fund set up in your name. Five million pounds in case your business goes under, which it won’t unless I die, because I planned on keeping you on as a money manager. Now scrape yourself off of my sodding leg, stand up, and go suck somebody else’s dick. Preferably Pez’s because she obviously wears the pants in this relationship.”

“You’re keeping me on?” Zayn looks like he’s about to start crying. He falls backwards off of Harry’s leg and stands up. His Armani suit is wrinkled and he smooths it with his hands.

“Of course I am you absolute git. You’re one of my best friends and I think if you just manage my money you can regain a semblance of a soul. And Perrie, buzz bank? Just ew. And if you leak this video I swear I will sue you into oblivion. Your wedding will be at Tescos. Nialler stop laughing. I hate all of you. Somebody go find me a bagel or something.” Harry throws his hands up in the air and sighs loudly.

Zayn and Perrie rush out of the room and Niall laughs outrageously on the sofa. “Haz you need to chill out. You’re over the edge. I’m pretty sure Pez has some weed in her purse if you need it.”

“I am chill Niall! And weed? The last thing I need is to be stoned when I go out there. I can’t start giggling when I say I’m leaving the music business forever. Or start eating crisps when they start asking questions. They’ll slaughter me. Fucking think Niall!” Harry yells. He doesn’t mean to. Bile is rising in his throat and he feels it seeping into his veins and out through his mouth.

“Fuck you Haz. Just fuck you.” Niall storms out of the room and Harry is left to fester in his own anger. He throws the water bottle he’s drinking against the wall and starts screaming. Zayn rushes into the room, but Perrie goes somewhere else, probably after Niall.

“Harry? I brought you a bagel. Onion with strawberry cream cheese, just like you like. For some weird gay reason.” Zayn whispers the last part under his breath, but Harry hears it anyway. He starts laughing. It’s stupid, so stupid, but it pulls Harry back to reality. He keeps laughing until it turns to sobs. “Harry? Are you okay?”

“No! I’m torn up about leaving this business, even though I haven’t loved it in over a year. It took my sister from me and made me into a joke. And then I found Niall, but I just chased the best man I
know away because I can’t keep myself under control. Why didn’t I just do this over twitter or something?” Harry cries.

“Because millions of people adore you and they deserve more than one hundred and forty characters.” Zayn sighs.

“I know you’re right, but I hate it right now.” Harry groans. “I’m going after Niall now.”

“No you aren’t. Pez will bring him back, but you have to go into hair and make up again because you’ve ruined them. You can’t go out there a puffy mess Harry.” Zayn steers him out the door and down the hallway in the opposite direction from where he knows Niall went. He sees Perrie talking through a door and he hopes Niall will forgive him.

The make up woman is a nightmare. She yells at Harry for ruining her hard work and the hairdresser tugs at his locks like she’s trying to rip them out. From there Harry is whisked to a waiting room to stand around until he’s pushed out in front of a crowd of reporters. He never has a chance to apologize to Niall.

“I came here with a speech on cards. I apparently can’t keep hold of them and now I have to wing it.” A small laugh rolls trough the room at Harry’s comment. It wasn’t supposed to be funny. “I know that a lot of people think I called this conference because I’m announcing my new cd. I’ve seen the tweets and the speculation online. That’s not what this is.

“I’ve been in this business for eight years already. I’ve met some amazing people, worked with some spectacular artists, and had the best fans in the world. I’ve seen the world in a way I could have only dreamed of when I was younger. The places I’ve gone and the things I’ve done are beyond perfect. But I’m done.

“There is no new cd. There is no renewal of my contract. I’m not being tapped to host The Voice UK. I’m not going to the US to change my music. I’m not taking a hiatus to try my hand at acting. The reason I called you here was to say that I am officially retiring. It’s time for me to get out of this business.” Harry comes to a stop and the room explodes with noise.

Reporters fire questions so fast Harry feels dizzy. The words came so easy before. They felt like a relief, but now he can barely stay on his feet. Zayn rushes to the microphone. “Mr. Styles will be leaving shortly. We have time for three questions.”

He points to a blonde woman. Typical. “Harry are you being forced out by your label due to the sales of your last album?” She asks.

“No. I was offered the chance to renew, but I chose not to. And my last album went double platinum.” Harry says flatly.

Zayn points again, this time to a man in a bright blue suit. “Harry, why are you leaving?”

“I’ve found a life that makes me happy. A life out of the spotlight and drama this business creates. A life that gives me a real chance to be myself.” Harry doesn’t tell the about the farm. Doesn’t tell them about Liam and Niall. They don’t get to find him so easily.

Zayn points at a short Indian woman and she quickly asks “Mr. Styles, do you have anything to say to your fans about this decision?”

“Yes actually. I love you all. You’ve been the most amazing supportive group of fans I could have ever imagined. I owe everything I have to you, but this doesn’t make me happy anymore, and you deserve better than that. I deserve better than that. I deserve a life that makes me happy. Goodbye.”
Harry sighs. He’s holding back tears when Zayn walks him away from the podium and out the door.

The news is relentless. His face is everywhere and he can’t even turn on his phone right now. Twitter has shut down twice in the hour since he’s made his announcement, unable to handle the massive quantity of tweets dedicated to him. Niall is riding back to the hotel in a separate car with Perrie. Zayn opted to stay with him. Their cars are swamped, London traffic on a Saturday is ridiculous.

“Harry?” Zayn asks. He’s been quiet, waiting for Harry to start the conversation until now. “Do you want to talk about it?”

“What about? That I just threw away my career? Or that my boyfriend snuck off and he won’t talk to me? I can’t call him because my phone is blowing up and so is yours. I can’t tell him I’m sorry for losing it on him.” Harry sighs.

“Alright let’s talk about Niall then. Do you love him?” Zayn asks.

“Of course I do Zayn.” Harry sighs.

“Does he love you?” Zayn asks again. Harry nods and Zayn smirks that arrogant smirk he does because he’s right.

“Then stop bitching, get out of the car, and get into his. We’ve been stopped for ten minutes. While you’re at it send Pez back here. Can’t have her making girlfriends with Niall. She’ll be miserable when he leaves and that means jewelry.” Zayn laughs.

Harry doesn’t hesitate. He jumps out of his car and tuns to the one Niall is in. It’s only two vehicles in front of him, but the light turns and he only has a few seconds. He pounds on the glass and the driver takes off. Harry chases the limo, suddenly grateful for his morning runs with Liam. Niall pops his head out of the sun roof and laughs at him trying to keep pace with a moving car. Other drivers are honking at him, slamming on their brakes even though he’s staying close to the limo.

When they stop at the next light Niall opens the door and Harry climbs in. “Perrie? Zayn would like you to join him at the next opportunity. Can you tell him that he’s totally fired? His ideas are terrible and I know for a fact he’s laughing.” Harry mumbles into Niall’s lap. Perrie laughs from the far seats and hops out to go to Zayn’s car.

“You’re an idiot Haz.” Niall laughs.

“I completely agree.” Harry rolls over and stares at Niall from his lap. “I was a knob.”

“Keep going.” Niall says, trying unsuccessfully to keep a straight face.

“I shouldn’t have taken out my nerves on you. I know you were only trying to help. I’m so sorry.” Harry apologizes and the words don’t feel like enough. Niall’s smile tells him they are though.

“Better. Now how about we talk about how you’re feeling? Because you look like you’re about to throw up.” Niall rubs his fingers through Harry’s messy hair and laughs.

“That’s because I had to chase a car two blocks to apologize to you. You could have asked him to pull over you know.” Harry’s heart rate is beginning to normalize.

“Penance Haz. Penance. It was either that or completely ignore you for the rest of the night because
you get so needy. I figured you’d prefer this option.” Niall keeps rubbing Harry’s locks and it’s so soothing he thinks he’ll fall asleep.

“Definitely. Can’t stand when you don’t pay attention to me.” Harry sighs contentedly.

“I know. It’s precious.” Niall says. A faint smile is etched at the corner of his lips.

“Don’t make fun of me.” Harry whines.

“I’m not. It really is cute. You follow Liam around like a puppy when he isn’t paying you any attention. I have a video on my phone somewhere.” Niall laughs.

“You delete that right now mister.” Harry tries to be commanding, instead he just sounds pathetic.

“Nuh uh. I’m burning it onto a dvd for Liam’s birthday present.” Niall smiles and pokes Harry on the nose. “And you are going to watch it.”

“I refuse.” Harry pouts and crosses his arms.

“I’ll find a way to get you to. You’ll do it in the end.” Niall giggles.

“Probably. I’m way too gone for you.” Harry says. He’s just fine with that.

“I will decide when I’ve had enough Mister Milk!” Niall slurs. “You work for my boyfriend remember? Now bring me another beer.”

Zayn sighs and walks over to Harry. “Do you think he knows you’ve been giving him apple juice for the last hour?”

“No, and don’t you tell him Zayn. Liam says he gets very- confrontational is a good word for it- when he drinks too much. I’d rather avoid him fighting you because you try to take Pez home. If I didn’t know how gay that boy is, I’d be jealous.” Harry sighs. Niall hasn’t been ignoring him per se, but he’s basically been attached to Perrie at the hip. It’s only the four of them up in the suite, Harry didn’t want a big retirement party.

Harry hears Niall’s phone go off and assumes it’s their check in call from Liam. He’ll give Niall a few minutes and then talk to him. The blond has been jittery all evening and Harry thinks it’s because he’s so far from home. He needs to talk to someone who reminds him of Ireland, even if the person in question is actually British. Niall slinks off towards the other side of the suite and Harry frowns.

“Finally! Top floor.” Niall tries to whisper but he yells across the suite. He runs across the room to Harry and does a flying leap into his arms. If Harry hadn’t been right in front of a couch he’d have a concussion right now. Niall starts to kiss on Harry’s neck and tries to whisper in Harry’s ear. “I have ordered the sexiest man in the world to help you celebrate tonight. He’ll be up in a minute. It’s amazing what you can accomplish with the internet and Harry Styles’ credit card.”

“Niall tell me you didn’t hire a stripper. Please please tell me you didn’t order a stripper.” Harry groans.

“I believe the term is escort actually. He doesn’t just stop after he takes his clothes off.” Niall giggles. Harry starts to panic a little.
Zayn lets out a bark of laughter and Perrie chimes in with “Niall showed me a picture Harry. He’s really hot.”

“My mum is going to kill me if she reads about a hooker at my hotel in the Sun.” Harry groans. Niall has really gone off the deep end. Liam will kill them both. Niall giggles again and then a sharp rapping sound echoes on the door. Niall jumps off of Harry’s lap, stumbling towards the door. Harry tries to stop him, just like his own heart has stopped in his chest, but Zayn holds him back by the shoulder.

Niall opens the door and yells “Who ordered the hot farmer?”

Liam steps through the door and Harry thinks his heart is going to explode. He leaps off the sofa and tackles Liam to the ground. Niall barely managed to avoid being hit and he leans on the door frame laughing. Harry peppers Liam with kisses over his neck and jaw. “I’m so glad you aren’t a hooker!”

Liam glares at Niall. “You told him I was a hooker? You complete arse!”

“I said escort actually. Kept it classy for you Payno.” Niall winks and closes the door. Harry rolls off of Liam and climbs onto his feet. He helps Liam up and gives him a real kiss. It’s so sweet and tender, you’d think they’d been apart for months rather than a single day. Perrie coos from the couch where Niall collapses with her.

“Am I a better present than a hooker? Sorry, an escort?”


“Maybe a snake. Maybe.” Liam says with a chuckle.

Harry whirls around. He glares at Niall. “Why didn’t you tell me he was coming? I’d have kept you mostly sober!”

“I am mostly sober Haz. I had two beers and then I kept switching my empties with Pez. Then you started giving me apple juice for some reason and I decided to play along.” Niall grins mischievously. Perrie hiccups on the couch next to him as if to prove his point.

“Well I’m going to grab my drunk girlfriend and get out of your hair.” Zayn laughs. He helps Perrie to her feet, which are very unsteady. They wave their goodbyes and both give Niall a peck on the cheek on the way out.

Harry turns to Liam and says “He’s been my best friend for years and I think they both like Nialler more than me.”

“Course they do. It’s my sweet disposition.” Niall winks and pulls out his wallet. “I’ve rented another room. I’d love to stay and have a good time with you boys, but I’m exhausted and fair is fair. I had Haz on vacation for a night, so now Liam gets one.”

“Niall stay. Please?” Harry asks fondly.

“Harry, you and Liam have never had a night alone together as a couple. Let me do this for you both.” Niall begs.

“Are you sure you’re okay with this? Because we make decisions together now.” Liam sounds confused. “I don’t want to do anything that will upset either of you.”

“Positive. I want you two to get closer. Talk. Have some wine. Shag each other until your brains
ooze out of your ears. I’ve had way more time with both of you than you’ve had with each other. It’s hardly fair. Plus I know Harry has been gagging for a good pounding Li.” Niall smiles softly and then leaves.

Harry blushes furiously. “If you want to you can go get him. I don’t mind.”

“You don’t want to spend time alone with me?” Liam looks hurt.

“I just know you’re more comfortable with Niall around.” Harry looks at his feet when he talks. “And I’m sure you missed him.”

“I missed both of you Haz. A lot.” Liam tucks his hands softly under Harry’s chin. “I feel very comfortable around you. I didn’t for a while, but that’s because I had feelings for you. I didn’t know how to express those. But I wouldn’t have consented to being with someone, wouldn’t have fallen in love with someone, if I wasn’t comfortable around them.”

Harry lifts his chin and a smile tugs at the corner of his lips like a marionette’s strings. “You want some wine?”

“Actually I was thinking about that other one Niall mentioned.” Liam smirks. He puts his hands on Harry’s hips. Harry isn’t a small man, he has more than his fair share of musculature and he’s nearly six feet tall, but Liam’s hands feel so big and strong on his body. Warmth radiates out of them and Harry feels safe. He feels calm. “Talking.”

“Wait, what?” Harry snaps out of the trance Liam put him in. His skin jumps at the sparks when Liam’s thumbs run across a patch of exposed skin. “Really?”

“I can tell when you’re upset Harry. Today was a rough day for you, and Niall told me about your row. I think you should talk about it.” Liam’s eyes are soft and Harry feels himself break. There is no build up to the sobs that wrack his body. No premonition of the way his knees buckle underneath him. He doesn’t know he’s dying until it’s already happening. Liam holds him tight, keeps him from falling onto his knees. He picks Harry up and carries him to the bed.

He gently lays Harry on top of the covers and then climbs in so they’re facing each other. He holds onto his boyfriend gently and Harry curls into the crook of his arm. He cries for what feels like hours. His head is throbbing and his eyes burn from all the tears he’s shed. Nobody talks. It’s not the most helpful thing in the world, but Harry does feel better afterwards.

“Why would you do that to me?” Harry laughs. His face is bloated and red from weeping and he has to wipe away some snot with a tissue from beside the bed. “You can’t just let me know I’m unhappy.”

“I wanted you to feel better. I didn’t realize you drain the Channel through your eyes when you’re upset.” Liam laughs with Harry.

“Sod off. I didn’t even realize I was this upset.” Harry sighs at what he’s sure is a migraine coming on. “I knew I wasn’t entirely happy, but Jesus.”

“You didn’t have to quit you know. Niall and I would have waited until you were ready. We still will if you want to take it all back.” Liam hands Harry another tissue.

“No. I love my life now. I really do. I just didn’t realize how much it would hurt to give all this up. It was my dream my whole life to sing.” Harry blows his nose and his eyes feel like they’re about to pop out. “Can you get me a-”
Liam cuts him off before he can finish with a water bottle and a bottle of aspirin from his bag.
“Thought you might need these.”

“I hate how perfect you are Liam Payne. Drives me bonkers.” Harry laughs and takes the pills. He drinks the entire bottle of water at once and Liam hands him another. “Fucking perfect.”

“Why are you doing it Harry? Why give up a dream you had in your hands?” Liam asks. He blushed when Harry called him perfect, but refuses to comment on it.

“Because having your dream come true doesn’t always make you happy. I was for a while, happy that is, but seven years of being played with like a puppet eats away at you. Only a couple of my songs were mine you know. You and I, Little Things, a few others here and there, but mostly they didn’t give me a choice in my music. They tried to sue me last year too.” Harry sighs.

“What for?” Liam’s question is simple, but the answer is not.

“I dropped almost half a tour. My sister died and I just quit for a while. I wouldn’t do concerts, wouldn’t shoot videos. Zayn and an army of lawyers saved me.” Harry says. He starts talking again quickly, because he doesn’t want Liam to ask more questions. He needs to be in control right now. “We kept it out of the news for the most part. A couple sites mentioned it here and there, but it didn’t spread.

“She died a little over a year ago. She um- She died of heart failure due to complications from anorexia. She was so strong, until she wasn’t. None of us even knew. The last time I saw her I told her she looked great. That was the last thing I said to her you know. She looked great.

“I let that life destroy me. Let it turn me into Harry Styles the icon instead of the Harry Styles the person. Let it change who I was to my core, so that I couldn’t see the truth in front of my eyes. That’s why I’m giving up my dream. Because I wasn’t careful what I wished for and it came back to bite me in the arse.” Harry feel winded. Having to tell someone this, letting himself tell someone this twice in two days, it’s heavy. He feels a weight pressing down on his chest.

“I don’t know what to say. I’m sorry. I didn’t know how bad things have been for you Haz. I’m so sorry.” Liam lays stiff on the bed, unsure whether to hold Harry or let him breath. Harry doesn’t know which he’d prefer. He opts for space.

Harry climbs out of the bed. “Don’t slip Liam please. Let me know. Tell me everything, every pressure, every fear. Just don’t let me say the wrong thing before you go.” Harry whispers. He isn’t sure Liam hears him until his arms wrap around Harry’s shoulders like a barrier against the world.

“I won’t slip Haz. I couldn’t do that to you two. Not again.” Liam nuzzles into Harry’s neck. “I promise on all that we are that I will never hurt either of you.”

“Well don’t go that far. Sometimes a little pain is a good thing. Lets you know you’re alive.” Harry sighs and leans into Liam’s touch. Their bodies slot together so perfectly. Harry’s back is flush against Liam’s torso, their breathing in perfect sync. Harry can almost feel Liam’s heartbeat match his own and he calms. His body relaxes and Liam holds him steady.

“Call your parents Liam. At least let them know you’re in the same country again.” Niall sounds like hell and he knows it. He drained the minibar after he left his boyfriends last night. There’s not enough liquor in the whole fridge to give Niall a hang over, but it did dry him out considerably. His throat feels raw and itchy.
Liam sighs. “Niall I haven’t talked to my parents in four years. There’s no reason to go changing that now.”

“Maybe things have changed. Maybe they won’t care anymore.” Niall offers. He drains his third glass of milk and pours himself another. “Maybe four years is long enough to accept that sometimes your son fucks guys.”

“Even if, and it’s a big if, they had accepted that Niall. Piling this on top of being bi would just drive them away again. I never had a great relationship with them, and I don’t particularly want one.” Liam is so stubborn sometimes it makes Niall want to scream.

“At least you have a family.” Niall mutters. Playing the orphan card isn’t fair, but it’s his best option.

“Oh no. Don’t pull that on me. I still have a family. Ruth, Nicola, and I talk all the time. I just don’t want anything to do with the parents that abandoned me when I came out.” Liam glares. “Your parents were amazing Niall. I loved them like they were mine too. Hell they practically raised me. Mine weren’t that good though. Just leave it at that.”

“Fine.” Niall pouts. “I just wanted to have a big extended family. Between the three of us we have a mother, a step father, and two sisters if you don’t want to include your parents”

“Well I guess you’re out of luck. Just like you’re out of bacon.” Liam says the last part as he snatches the last piece from Niall’s plate. Niall overreacts in a big way. He jumps out of his seat and tackles Liam, and his chair, to the ground. The wrestle momentarily, but Niall’s knee landed wrong and he quickly feels overpowered by the muscular boy. Liam sits on his boyfriend’s chest and eats the last piece of bacon tauntingly.

“Haz do something!” Niall whines. The curly haired boy has been mostly silent through the meal, not even bothering to yell at them for roughhousing.

“You got yourself into this Niall, get yourself out. I’m sure Liam will get up if you ask nicely.” Harry groans.

“What’s wrong?” Niall asks, completely forgetting the man sitting on his chest.

“My mum’s gonna be here soon. She texted that she’s bringing baby pictures. She’s going to make it ridiculously hard to leave again.” Harry sighs.

“Have her down sometime. The house will be finished by winter. She can come for Christmas.” Liam offers. He continues to sit on Niall and doesn’t even seem to notice how he’s wriggling again.

“That’ll hardly satisfy her. It’s June. She’ll want at least one more visit between now and then.” Harry groans again.

“Then take another trip. Let Liam have the awkward family dinner this time. I can manage the farm and the construction myself come September.” Niall says. He desperately trying to escape Liam’s thighs when a cruel idea comes to him. He manages to get one hand free and slams it down, palm open, onto Liam’s crotch. The effect is immediate. Liam falls to the side and Niall crawls safely behind Harry. He sticks his tongue out at Liam and says “Wanker.”

Harry glares at him and says “Apologize.”

Niall wants to argue. Liam started it after all. Harry’s eyes abruptly put a stop to that idea though. “Sorry Liam.” he pouts.
Liam just rolls over and sticks up two fingers. Niall laughs and walks over to help him up. Liam doesn’t take any revenge, not yet. Niall doesn’t know if that’s a relief or an omen of things to come.

“I’m not leaving you to manage the construction and the farm all at once Niall. It’s going to be rough for all three of us together. My mother just can’t handle that I’ve moved away, but I have. I’m not her baby anymore. I just have to figure out how to tell her that without being cruel about it.” Harry sighs and cradles his head in his hands.

“You could try being honest about it.” Niall offers.

“No. I’ve tried that route before. It cost me a new car and a spa vacation as an apology.” Harry huffs.

“Preemptively strike then. Get her on a cruise around that time or somethin.” Liam says.

“That’s- That’s a really good idea.” Harry says. He perks up and Niall feels his relief from across the table. “She might go for that. I’ll have to deal with a slide show at Christmas, but that’s better than the alternative.”

Niall smiles at Liam. Harry starts dialing Zayn and walks into the other room. “I’m going to get you back Nialler, when you least except it too.” Liam says. He’s wearing a smile that just looks terrifying to Niall.

“Anything I can do to avoid it?” Niall asks.

“Doubtful.” Liam shrugs. He goes back to his breakfast and eats while staring at Niall.

“Guess I’ll just ignore it until it happens then. No use worrying about something I can’t stop. Especially since you’re a force of nature when it comes to revenge.” Niall shrugs too. There’s a knock at the door and Niall gets up to answer it. “Hey Anne, Robin, come on in. We were just finishing breakfast, but we can order something for you if you want.”

“Do you have coffee?” Anne mutters. She’s half asleep and Robin is mostly holding her up.

“I see where Hazza gets it. We have a pot on the table. Help yourselves.” Niall waves them in and Robin practically carries Anne to the table.

Harry runs out of the room and shouts “Guess who’s going to Hawaii!”

The return flight home is fun. Since Liam showed up Harry tried to get another ticket in first class. The airline told him they couldn’t manage it because the plane was completely full. Harry opted to flaunt his wealth and secure a private jet instead. Louis is thrilled. He runs around the cabin like a toddler and it makes Niall giggle.

Harry and Liam curl up for an impromptu movie night and watch Love Actually at one hundred and fifty percent normal speed to accommodate for the short journey. Liam struggles to keep up, continually missing key moments because he prefers to watch Harry’s reactions. It doesn’t really bother him though. Harry is a much better show. His gasps and laughs and stifled cries make it seem like it’s the first time he’s watched the film instead of the thousandth, or close to it...

“Liam wrestle with me!” Louis shouts. Niall is rolling around in his seat with laughter. Louis has his leggings pulled up to his chest, leaving little (and Liam does mean little) to the imagination. He’s rolled his shirt sleeves up to mimic a wrestling singlet and he’s hunched over in a grappling stance.
“Not a chance Louis.” Liam mutters. He’s never found the boy as amusing as Harry and Niall seem to. “Don’t want the cabin pressure to change because I beat you through the floor.”

Louis laughs at that and says “You’re just afraid my crazy skills will have you begging me for mercy!”

“I’m afraid you’ll touch me with that cocktail wiener you have in your pantyhose actually. It’s staring right at me.” Liam counters.

“Ooh is the great big bear afraid of getting touched?” Louis taunts. Niall is practically gasping for air by now. Liam’s just annoyed.

“Not of a beanpole with legs. I’m just smart enough to know that I have a good thing going right now. Wrestle with Nialler, he should be enough of a challenge for you with that bum knee. You might only lose by a little bit.” Liam scoffs. Harry smiles up at him and Niall whines his protest.

“You leave my patient alone. He’s doing marvelous, aren’t you Niall?” Louis drags the blond boy out of his seat and presses him into his scrawny chest. He pretends to coo over Niall, leaving the boy laughing even harder.

“Louis you’re ridiculous.” Harry sighs from Liam’s lap. “We’re going to be landing in ten minutes. Behave yourself or I’ll downgrade your house to a flat.”

“I have a contract!” Louis squawks.

“And it says that I’ll provide you with accommodations. It doesn’t say what those need to be. I could rent you a studio with a leaking roof and be within my obligations.” Harry levels a glare at the cinnamon haired boy.

“Fine!” Louis moans. “I’ll be a good little boy for Daddy Liam and Mommy Harry. Twats.”

“One more crack like that and I’ll fire you myself Lou.” Niall says stiffly. “Joking is one thing, but don’t disrespect my boyfriends. They deserve better than that.”

“Okay Niall. I’m sorry. I get caught up in sassy bitch mode sometimes.” Louis sits down and folds his hands over his lap. “I’m sorry you guys.”

Liam just grunts and goes back to stroking Harry’s locks. Harry mutters a quick “It’s fine.”

They land not long later. Private jets are incredibly convenient in that you can disembark immediately. Harry has the luggage packed into the car and they all pile into his Range Rover. Louis and Niall take the back and Harry lets Liam drive. The ride is quiet and filled with tension, until Niall burps that is. It’s not really a burp though, more like a twenty second belch. Louis and Harry lose it halfway through and Liam has to pull over because the commotion distracts him. He only barely parks when Niall finishes.

“Holy shite!” Niall yells. “Christ my lungs feel like they’ve popped.”

“How the hell do you even do that? You’re so tiny!” Louis gasps through roars of laughter.

Harry is practically screaming in the seat next to Liam and he can’t catch his breath. Liam just sighs.

“Now can we all kiss and make up?” Niall asks. “Not literally of course. Three is plenty. Louis can kiss himself.”
“I’m flexible Niall, but not that flexible.” Louis laughs. Liam groans at the joke. In his opinion, Niall can not get well fast enough.

“I can do it you know.” Harry says over dinner. He’s been thinking about it constantly since Louis said it in the car. The other boys look up from the pizza Harry insisted on ordering wearing identical masks of confusion.

“Do what?” Niall asks with his cheeks full.

“Kiss myself, you know, there. More than kiss actually.” Harry blushing. He doesn’t know why he can’t just keep this to himself.

“No feckin way!” Niall swallows his mouthful and shouts.

Liam’s eyes go wide and he adjusts himself very obviously. “For real? Like mouth and everything? Not just the tips of your lips?”

“Yeah. Yoga is good for the body.” Harry laughs nervously.

“Show us.” Liam says. His voice is commanding, laced with lust.

“No- No I haven’t done it in ages. I’ll break something. Somebody who shall not be named, Liam, promised to do yoga with me, but never did. I haven’t stretched properly in months.” Harry blushes again.

“Come on Haz. Show us.” Niall has suddenly lost interest in his pizza.

“No, guys come on. I can’t.” Harry tries to hide behind his plate. Liam pulls it out of his hand and sets it aside.

“I really really think you should show us Haz.” Niall moans. He’s rubbing himself now through his shorts and Harry is very tempted to comply. He’s nervous though, he really has lost some of his flexibility. He doesn’t want to disappoint his boys. His lust wins out though. He stands from the table silently and walks to the bedroom.

He hears the padding of feet that tells him the boys are following him. When he reaches the bedroom he strips off his shirt, leaving himself in nothing but the briefs he’s been down to since they sent Louis home. He stretches to each side, exposing the hardened muscles rippling on his sides and back. He doesn’t look at the boys though, just teases them. When he twists and flexes he avoids their eyes.

He sinks down to his knees, reaching his arms skyward until he bends back. His body creates an odd O shape as he grabs his own ankles.

Only upon achieving this pose (the camel pose or ustrasana) does he look at the other two. It isn’t a particularly difficult pose, just a hip flexor actually, but it’s a crowd-pleaser. He bends back farther, careful not to hurt his kidneys and straightens his arms, making his body into a c shape. He transitions through several poses, trying to get his body limber enough to perform the daunting task ahead. Niall gasps and giggles with delight at each one, Liam remains stoic, his eyes are curious though.

He’s surprised at how easy this all is still. He hasn’t done any yoga in weeks, content to settle for just his runs with Liam instead. He almost talked Louis into doing it with him once, but the other boy had to take a phone call and left before Harry could convince him. When he can still do the astavakrasana he knows he’s still okay. He finishes in the lotus position, his feet folded all the way up into his hips.
He breathes slowly, almost imperceptibly so. When he feels centered he unfolds and stands up.

He shouldn’t have done the poses without a mat, the wooden floor is going to be felt tomorrow. On the bed however, all his discomfort vanishes. He straightens out and pulls down his briefs, revealing his flaccid self. “Um- I kind of calmed down a lot. Anyone care to help get me back up?”

Niall starts to move towards the bed, hypnotized almost, but Liam plants his hand firmly on the blonds chest. His eyes never break from Harry’s. “Do it yourself. I want to see how you touch yourself. Do it like we aren’t even here.”

Niall sucks air in through his teeth. “Fuck that’d be hot. You good with that Haz?”

The twitch in Harry’s cock, suddenly semi-hard, answers for him. He reaches down, hesitating only slightly, and grabs himself. He’d have liked some contact, to get swept up in passion and forget about this whole thing, but the idea of Liam and Niall watching him turns him on. He strokes at a fast pace, quickly achieving hardness. He doesn’t stop though. Liam is holding his stare, not watching him masturbating himself, but watching how the pleasure reflects in his face. Harry has rarely been more turned on.

He feels his orgasm building and it takes all of his will power to stop his hand. He knows Liam can tell. The muscular boy’s lips twitch and when he licks them Harry thinks he might cum anyway. The intensity radiating off of Liam is staggering. Niall can feel it too based on his face. He’s staring at Liam now instead of Harry, trying to figure out what is going to happen.

Harry changes positions, flips so his arse is against the headboard. His feet brace against the wall and pushes so that his back is directly above his shoulders. He bends slowly, using his elbows to distribute the weight of his body. His neck cranes up and he licks at his own head. Niall moans and that eggs him on further. He wraps his lips around his head and sucks at himself. The sensation is indescribable, even after the number of times he’s done this. He glances back to see the reactions of the other boys.

Liam has settled himself sideways in the door frame and he has his cock out. Niall is on his knees, sucking on Liam, but his eyes are on Harry. So are Liam’s. His hand is resting on the back of Niall’s head, gripping loosely through the blond hair. Harry takes in the sight and then refocuses on the task at hand, or mouth as it may be. He pulls himself down by the arse, pushing himself deeper into his own mouth. He sucks hungrily, lost in the sensation. His lips are slick with spit and his own precum.

He reaches down, letting himself fall out of his mouth, and sucks on his finger. Once it’s thoroughly coated in his own fluids he reaches back up. He pushes into himself on both ends simultaneously, his own cock brushing past his lips, and his finger into his hole. Liam groans and Harry can’t hold on much longer. He finds his prostate with practiced ease and rubs his finger in circles. His other hand pulls his arse down so he can fuck into his own mouth.

His neck is stretched to it’s limit, almost painful, but it lets him suck all the way to the back of his throat. He bobs and pulls. So much is happening with his body and he feels like he’s on fire. Liam is moaning now, the sounds of Niall sucking his cock are filling the room. It’s too much. Harry pulls out of his mouth and cums all over his own face. Streams of white obscure his vision and he closes his eyes to keep them from getting jizz in them.

Liam moans loudly a second later and Harry can tell without looking that he’s cumming. He wipes at his eyes so he can watch. Liam’s trousers are unzipped, but that’s all, they rest on his hips while his hand flies furiously on his cock. Ribbons of white are shooting into Niall’s open mouth and the blond is stroking himself too. He cums last, dribbling onto the floor between his knees. The whole scene is so blatantly pornographic that Harry blushes.
Harry gets to his feet and walks over to Liam, who’s using the door frame to keep himself standing
now. Harry grabs him by the face and kisses him deeply. When he pulls back little strings of cum are
hanging in the air between them. “Couldn’t let you be the only one with a clean face. Wouldn’t look
right.” Harry laughs.

Liam wipes a finger through the gooey substance coating his cheek and sticks it into his mouth.
“You were right Niall, definitely better fresh.” Liam smiles and Harry can’t believe this beautiful boy
with the crinkly eyes is the same person who could radiate such intensity only moments ago. Liam
Payne is an enigma and Harry wants to figure him out. He dreams about finding all the pieces of this
puzzle and putting them together so he can see the scene that unfolds.

Niall jumps to his feet and licks a stripe up Harry’s cheek. He smiles and laughs at Harry’s frozen
look of shock. “I still say he needs more pineapple juice.” Niall is not an enigma. Niall wears his
heart on his sleeve and Harry knows him like he knows himself. He is a part of Harry’s self now.
Tomorrow they start building their new home and Harry can’t wait to spend the rest of his life with
these two amazing lads.

One month in and construction is a nightmare. Harry spends half his time filling out paperwork, and
the other half running around yelling at people. Liam helped Harry find the contractor, a cousin of
Paul’s. The man is good at his job, he works easily with Niall and keeps his men under control. The
work however is another story.

They’re already nearly a week behind schedule. Rain has made the earth unstable, leaving the
foundation and the basement in limbo until they can properly pour it. The cement guy didn’t get the
memo though and Harry has been arguing with him for too long. “Listen my guy says we can’t pour
today, so that’s that. I’m not risking my foundation because you don’t want to drive out here again
tomorrow.”

The cement man, a large fellow with a gristled beard sighs. “It’s not about driving out here, it’s about
the four tons already in the mixer. I can’t keep this going all night and if it settles we’ll have a huge
problem on our hands. This is expensive stuff, and I’m not absorbing the cost.”

“Well I’m not paying for it just because you didn’t listen to the half dozen voice mails me and my
contractor left you.” Harry is livid. The man obviously knows who he is and he’s trying to screw him
on the bill.

“Cell service is rough between here and Dublin. I didn’t know I had any voice mails until I got
here.” The big man steps closer. It’s an intimidation tactic. But Harry has his own.

“Will! Come explain to this gentleman that we’re not responsible for his mistakes.” Harry shouts.
Will is his contractor, and the only man Harry has ever seen that could make Liam look like a small
child. He’s over seven feet tall and practically made of muscle. He steps out from behind the
bulldozer and the cement man blanches.

“Look here, I called you. I called four times and you didn’t pick up. This soil won’t be ready for
cement until tomorrow at the earliest. You can either remix or find a way to keep this viable, which
should be as simple as closing the hole. Your choice, but either way we aren’t pouring today and
you’re going to eat the cost if you fail us.” Will isn’t affected by much of anything. He looks
intimidating, but he’s sweet as a kitten and a total pacifist.

The cement man nods quickly and scurries off. Harry laughs and smiles at Will. “You never told me,
how was Bran’s footy match? You’re his coach right?”
“We lost, but I took all the kids out to ice cream afterwards. They didn’t seem to mind. It’s just for fun. Thanks though, my son will be happy to know Harry Styles was asking after him.” Will offers Harry a big dopey smile and wanders off.

Harry shouts after him. “Bring him over any time. We can watch him while you and Fiona go out.”

Will sticks his thumb up over his head and Harry laughs. He wants to broach the subject of kids with the boys, but between the house and the farm switch next year they already have too much on their plates. For now he’ll have to live vicariously through Will and Bran.

“You’re a total spaz Haz.” Niall laughs. Harry didn’t hear his approach, but he’s getting better about not jumping. He only flinches a little this time. He swears it’s an improvement.

“Contrary to the muscle spasm that just occurred because you’re a git, I am not a spaz.” Harry sighs.

“I’m a cute git though.” Niall squeezes Harry’s fingers and lets go. “And you go from yelling at a freaking giant to asking another one about footy matches in under a minute. I’d say that’s pretty spastic.”

“Too bad, because I’m not.” Harry pouts. “Now go away. I have four different permit forms to sign and I have to run them into town by today.”

“That’s what the contractor is for. The foreman, Ronnie, that guy you didn’t notice because we have the Hulk working for us, can take over here. Will’s job includes things like tedious paperwork.” Niall points to the stack of papers in front of Harry.

“I don’t like being useless Nialler. I’m retired at twenty four. I can’t sit around doing nothing until I die.” Harry argues. He doesn’t want to. He even knows Niall is right. But he’s irritated by this whole thing. Liam and he can’t do whole runs anymore. A fence had to be run through the property to keep the livestock away from the site and it cut their route in half. He’s been feeling exhausted all the time.

“I’m not asking you to sit idle Haz, I’m asking you to delegate so that your stress levels drop and you can actually get it up at night.” Niall smirks. And there’s that too, they haven’t had sex in over a week.

“I can get it up just fine. It’s the moving part that I have trouble with. This is draining.” Harry sighs.

“I know. Building a house is supposed to be draining. That’s why other people do the work and the owners just freak out.” Niall rubs circles on Harry’s back.


“Sure you will Haz. And I’ll win the London marathon while rainbows shoot out of my bum.” Niall jokes and walks off. Harry sighs from the loss he feels when Niall drops contact. He really does mean well, but he can’t let this project go. He needs everything to be perfect. Niall and Liam deserve nothing less.

“If you keep talking to yourself I’ll think you’ve lost it Haz.” Liam says. He jumps for real this time. Why did he have to fall in love with two ninjas?

“I hate you both so much sometimes.” Harry sighs. “I didn’t even realize I was talking out loud.”

“It’s not true you know. We deserve more yes, but that more? It’s having you around not looking like you’re about to break. Will can run things here, why don’t we all go for a day trip somewhere?” Liam wraps his arms around Harry’s shoulders and snuggles into his neck.
“Did Niall say something to you? Because if not, then you two have some weird telepathic connection that I’m jealous of.” Harry leans back into Liam, letting the muscular lad take some of the weight off his shoulders.

“He didn’t have to. We can both see how ragged you’re getting. Let us help carry your burdens.” Liam speaks slowly. Harry feels his warm breath against his neck and sighs.

“When we’re further along. I need to watch over this for now. And you need to be here for the farm.” Harry pulls himself away from Liam and turns to face him.

“The farm can survive a day without me. The impregnation is done and the ewes aren’t due for months. We didn’t even bother with the cows since we only keep them for subsidies. Paul can run the place for a day like he did when I came to London.” Liam folds Harry’s hands in his own and holds them to his broad chest. “Please Haz. Just for a day. For us.”

“Okay. Is tomorrow alright? I’ll walk to Will about it. You ask Paul.” Harry agrees. He feels like it’s a bad idea, but part of him knows it’s for the best.

“He already agreed. Niall and I were going to throw you in the car either way.” Liam laughs. Harry feels a twinge of anger, but a larger throb of affection.

“Don’t make decisions for me anymore. But thank you, that’s kind of sweet.” Harry sighs.

“We won’t unless we think it’s in your own self interest. You have to start trusting us more Haz.” Liam’s heart is beating under Harry’s palms, steady and strong, just like it’s owner.

“I do trust you. I just don’t want to let you down. Either of you. You’ve given me so much with this life, I just want to give you back something.” Harry says this quietly.

“Don’t you dare think for a second that we care about having a new house one ten thousandth of a percent as much as we care about you. Having you in our lives is the best thing you could ever give us.” Liam smiles sweetly and kisses both of his cheeks.

“Do you mean that? Like really really mean it?” Harry asks.

“I do. We love you Haz. I love you. So incredibly much that sometimes it feels like my heart is going to burst.” Liam grips Harry’s face in his hands gently but with enough force to show he’s serious. “Never doubt that for even a second.”

“I won’t. I just wanted to hear you say it. Never stops making my heart skip a beat. Now if you could go get me a cup of coffee that would be ace, I feel like I’m about to fall over.” Harry really does too.

Liam scoops him up bridal style, making him giggle with the sheer surprise. “You’re going to take a nap Haz. I’ll sleep with you. Niall is already talking to Will, but I think he’ll be more than happy to join us when he’s done.”

Niall is carried to the car in the morning, he doesn’t even manage to stay awake until they reach the front door. Harry smiles softly when Liam loads the blond into the back of the Range Rover. Harry takes the passenger seat with a travel mug of coffee in each hand. Neither are to share. Liam said he can sleep, but he doesn’t want to miss the sun coming up over the rolling emerald hills. Harry is too much the romantic to forego such a beautiful thing, even if he does see it every morning on his jogs.
The sunrise is still far off though when Liam finishes packing their bags into the car. He made Harry stay in the passenger seat so that the curly haired boy wouldn’t see their supplies. He’s been very hush hush about this whole trip. Harry doesn’t know where they’re going or what they’re doing at all. Niall has even been uncharacteristically tight lipped, although he did tell Harry to bring bug spray.

They don’t play any music once they start driving, just sit in comfortable silence. Liam’s left hand is linked loosely with Harry’s right and he occasionally looks over at Harry to smile. Every time he does, Harry’s heart warms just a little more. That could also be the copious amounts of coffee, but Harry finds it doubtful, even though the coffee is helping brilliantly.

“Going to tell me yet?” Harry asks once he finishes his first cup of coffee.

“No, you’ll just have to wait and see.” Liam smiles fondly. “So stop stressing out and look east, I’m taking the long way so you can watch the sunrise.”

“How can you be so perfect?” Harry whispers. It’s supposed to be under his breath, but Liam hears it anyway.

“Because you two make me want to be.” Liam whispers back. Harry doesn’t respond. He can’t find the words. Instead he just clings tighter to Liam’s fingers and listens to the sound of Niall snoring softly. The sun is just barely starting to come up, pink tendrils snaking across the violet sky. It’s slow and beautiful.

Niall wakes up when Liam stops for food. They’ve parked in front of a small cafe and Harry stays behind in the car. Niall sits up bleary eyed and rubs his face.

“We there yet?” Niall asks. His voice is thick and gravelly with sleep.

“Nope. Just stopped for breakfast. Liam’s grabbing you some doughnuts and a cuppa.” Harry smiles back at Niall affectionately. He’s so beautiful sometimes it takes Harry’s breath away. His hair is mussed, sticking straight up on one side of his head. His cheek has the imprints of his knuckles, from where he slept on top of his hands. There’s a small droplet of drool on his lip, but he looks so gorgeous to Harry.

“Cool. Cool. Mind if I go take a wee?” Niall asks. His eyes are lidded, barely open enough for Harry to see the deep blue.

“Go ahead. You may want to run a comb through your hair first. I have one here in the glove box.” Harry suggests. He pulls out the plastic comb and hands it to the blond who runs it quickly through his hair. It doesn’t do much, but it’s apparently enough for Niall. He hops out of the Range Rover just as Liam steps out of the cafe. Harry watches as the blond runs up to Liam, steals a doughnut out of the box in his hand, kisses him on the cheek, and runs inside. Liam shakes his head and walks to the car.

Harry opens the door for Liam because his hands are full and the muscular boy smiles his thanks. He passes a bag over to Harry and climbs in. “They didn’t have egg white flat-breads, so I decided we could be bad today and got us muffins. Two each.” Liam says with a smile that Harry thinks is as close to mischievous as the other boy can manage.

“Mm, I do love a bad boy. Wasn’t sure you’d fit the bill until now.” Harry laughs. He takes the muffin, bran, because of course Liam can’t eat proper junk food.
“Don’t be an arse. I like being healthy. I got you a banana too.” Liam hands over the yellow fruit and Harry takes it greedily. He loves how well Liam knows him.

“You are a godsend Li.” Harry moans after he takes a bit of his banana.

“Stop. I just know what you like.” Liam laughs.

“Mm yeah you do.” Harry winks.

“You are such a dork Haz. I love it though.” Liam laughs again. “Now eat your banana and drink your coffee.”

“Sure you don’t want to butter my muffin first?” Harry asks. He doesn’t think that Liam will get the reference. He’s right.

“I didn’t get any. Do you want me to run back in and grab some?” Liam asks.

“No Li. I’m good just like this.” Harry smiles. He sees Niall come back out the door and puts the box of doughnuts in the back seat along with Niall’s sickeningly sweet cup of tea. The blond climbs into the back seat and smiles at his boyfriends.

“Li?” Niall asks. “Do you mind if I have Hazza in the back seat with me? I want a cuddle buddy.”

“Oh I see how it is.” Liam smiles sweetly. “Go ahead Haz. Niall wants you instead of me.”

“No, Haz just gets distracted when he drives. Safer with you behind the wheel.” Niall says through a bite of chocolate doughnut. Liam laughs at that.

“Not a great motivator to move to the back seat Nialler.” Harry pouts. He thinks he’s a good driver.

“Sorry Haz. I love everything about you except for your driving, even your awful jokes. Especially your awful jokes actually.” Niall opens his arms wide and Harry forgives him. It’s not exactly false that he gets mildly distracted while driving. He climbs over the arm rest because he’s absolutely ridiculous and Niall laughs like it’s the funniest thing he’s ever seen. He pulls Harry into a hug when the curly haired boy’s top half reaches the back seat. “You’re so weird.”

“Just wanted to be close to you as soon as possible.” Harry whispers into Niall’s ear. He feels the shiver run up Niall’s spine. He flips over and sits in the seat and asks in his normal voice “Li babes, can you hand me my food?”

Liam passes back Harry’s muffins and banana. “Want your coffee?” he asks.

“Yes please.” Harry elongates his vowels and makes grabby hands for his cup.

Liam laughs and passes back the mug he grabbed for Harry in the cafe. “Now buckle up because I’m about to get driving.”

Harry and Niall do so dutifully after Niall slides over to take the middle seat. He gingerly puts down the box of doughnuts on the other seat before cuddling into Harry’s side. He pushes his head into the space between Harry’s arm and torso and Harry holds the smaller boy tight.

He sneaks his fingers under the hem of Niall’s shirt, tracing slow circles on the skin of Niall’s hip. Niall gasps softly and Harry puts a finger up to his lips to quiet him. Niall looks at Harry uncertainly and Harry just winks. His fingers move more now, sliding up Niall’s side and chest. He reaches Niall’s nipple and tweaks it. Niall moans into Harry’s side, unnoticed by Liam.
Harry’s fingers circle the small nub and Niall’s shorts start to tent. He’s trying to keep it quiet, but Niall is naturally loud when it comes to anything sexual. Harry loves it, but it isn’t working to his advantage at the moment. Liam glances in the mirror and Harry stills his hand. The muscular boy can’t see Niall’s shorts, which is a small blessing for now. He’ll get a show soon enough.

Liam goes back to watching the road when he doesn’t see anything worthy of note. Harry resumes playing with Niall’s nipple, using his other hand to slowly and quietly pull down Niall’s shorts. Niall’s cock springs free and Harry covers the blond’s mouth to stifle the moan he lets out. He puts Niall into an upright position and bends over.

He doesn’t take things slowly. He opens his mouth as large as possible and swallows Niall down to the back of his throat in one quick movement. Niall moans loudly and Harry starts pumping his head back and forth.

“Jesus Christ!” Liam gasps from the front seat. He starts to pull over and Harry pulls his mouth off of Niall with a pop.

“Keep driving Li.” He says with a smirk.

Liam nods and readjusts the mirror. Niall is whining so Harry pumps him with his hand while Liam pulls back onto the road. His eyes lock with Liam’s in the mirror and he smiles before taking Niall back into his mouth. Liam sucks air in through his teeth and the sound spurs Harry on. His head moves faster and his lips tighten around Niall.

Niall moans unabashedly and his hands curl into Harry’s hair. He doesn’t push, just feels Harry’s movements. Harry tastes the precum leaking into his mouth and hums his approval. Niall twitches at that and Harry pulls his head back to give room to his hand. He pumps his hand in time with his mouth and Niall’s grip tightens in his hair.

“Haz, I’m close.” Niall warns. Harry doesn’t stop. Niall always warns him, but Harry swallows every time. It’s only polite. Spitters are quitters.

Niall shoots into Harry’s mouth. The load is large and thick, the product of over a week of celibacy. Harry stills his mouth and milks Niall through his orgasm with his hand. Liam nearly veers off the road when Harry sits up and licks his lips.

“That was quick Nialler. You not been wanking or what?” Harry asks smugly.

Niall flushes and groans with embarrassment. “It’s that mouth Haz. Your lips should be illegal.”

“What about you Liam? You enjoy the show?” Harry turns to the man in the drivers seat. “Want another?”

Liam nods slowly, not trusting his voice to say the words. He watches as Harry pulls himself out of his trousers. He’s hard and leaking. Niall bends over and attempts to take Harry into his mouth, but the taller boy hold him back.

“That’s not what I want Nialler. Kiss me.” Harry says throatily. Liam’s cock twitches at the command. It’s been jumping around like a dance since Harry started going down on Niall. He can’t watch too much, his eyes need to stay on the curving road, but they dart to the mirror every few seconds. Niall is kissing Harry like the world could end any second, one of his hands fist tight in the other boy’s hair.
Harry moans into Niall’s mouth and guides the blond’s hand on his cock. The pace is slow, Harry always likes it slow at first. Liam wants to pull over, wants to climb into the back seat and ride Harry like he’s learned to love occasionally doing. Instead he watches the road and ignores the suffocating tightness of his jeans. The noises though, the sounds of Harry’s mouth dominating Niall’s, the sound of Niall’s hand becoming slick with precum and sliding up and down, the sound of his own blood rushing through his ears. It’s almost too much for him to take. He glances back again and Harry’s starting to twitch his hand a bit.

He shoots without warning, too embroiled in his battle of tongues to hike up his shirt and save it from the sticky mess. He doesn’t stop kissing Niall when he finishes, but it does become softer, less eager. It’s sweet and beautiful just like both of Liam’s boys are.

“Don’t suppose you packed any extra clothes for this sort of thing?” Harry sighs when he finally pulls away from Niall’s mouth. Niall smiles, enamored with the boy growing soft in his hand.

“I can not say that I planned for this possibility, so no. One of my flannels is in the back though, if you don’t mind the fact it smells like me and the farm.” Liam smiles. Inside he’s thrashing, absolutely mad with lust, but he keeps himself well composed.

Harry pulls off his shirt, careful to avoid getting any cum in his hair. He unbuckles his seat belt and Liam just about has a heart attack when Harry bends over the back seat with his arse hanging out in full view. Liam breathes deeply and Niall laughs and kisses the bum in front of his face. Harry laughs and hikes up his trousers. He sits back down a moment later and pulls Liam’s flannel around his arms and chest.

“Now why would I mind that? Two of the three best smells in the world. The other being Nialler of course.” Harry smiles and winks at Liam through the rear view. How could Liam have possibly gotten so lucky? He really doesn’t know how he could deserve these two boys.

There’s a tent. Harry can not quite process this fact. It’s big, red, and made of nylon. Liam set it up in a matter of minutes and the flap is blowing in the breeze like a hand clawing up from the underworld. Harry understands tents exist, he knows what they are when he sees them, but he can’t for the life of him figure out what this one is for. Liam and Niall can not possibly believe he’d be okay sleeping in this thing.

“She’s gorgeous, isn’t she?” Niall claps a hand on Harry’s shoulder and smiles fondly. Harry instinctively wraps his arms around Niall and pulls them chest to chest. Liam was right when he said that Niall’s affinity for closeness would rub off on him.

“Definitely not the word I would choose.” Harry mumbles.

“She belonged to me da. He used to take Li and me up here once a year.” Niall sighs. “The only time he didn’t was last year. Liam wasn’t around and I was too mad at the world to give him the time. He came up here alone.”

“Niall...” Harry holds the boy tighter. “I’m sorry about that. I really am. I’m still not sleeping in that thing.”

“Complete arse.” Niall laughs. “I pull the dead dad card and you reject it? Heartless wanker.”

“The best I can do is sleeping in the Range Rover. You and Liam can take that travesty.” Harry tries to bargain. He really doesn’t think he’ll survive the night. He’s never really considered himself a
diva, but he doesn’t care if that’s what he’s being right now.

“We came out here for you Haz. If you’re really so extremely against it, we can figure something else out. Connemara is just the most beautiful place in the world, and I figured camping you wouldn’t risk getting discovered by fans or summat.” Liam says from his spot on the ground.

“This was supposed to be a day trip. Those don’t have an overnight component Li. It’s why it’s called a day trip.” Harry sighs. He sees how excited Niall is, and how much work they both have put into this trip. He really does. Nothing is getting him in a tent though.

“Then I’ll pack it up and we can go home. At least you stopped freaking out for a few hours.” Liam sighs and stands up. He looks at Harry and disappointment is palpable in the air. God damn it.

“Fine I’ll stay in the tent. I want the best sleeping bag and pillow though.” Harry groans.

“Actually there aren’t any pillows.” Niall grins sheepishly. “I did pack a pad into one of the sleeping bags for you though.”

“If I die out here you two wankers get nothing.” Harry groans. “My new will isn’t finalized and you’ll be responsible for your own poverty.”

Liam looks shocked. “You put us in your will?”

“Of course. You’re my primary beneficiaries with my mum. She already knows how it’s set up, you each get a third of my money and you two get the house and farm. Niall won’t let me change the ownership paperwork, so this was the only way I could be sure you’d get it.” Harry sighs. He doesn’t know why the blond keeps resisting. Maybe he’s still planning on leaving after his contract is over and that thought scares Harry too much to contemplate.

“It’s because I trust you Haz. I trust you to own and run the place. I’ve had nothing but bad luck on that farm until you bought it. I’d say it belongs with you and not me. You can sign it with Liam though, I honestly don’t mind.” Niall blurs all this out so fast Harry can barely follow it.

“Haz keep the farm in your name. We know what you feel for us. That’s more than enough for us. Now stop being dramatic both of you. Haz, you aren’t going to die out here. Nialler get your crutches because we’re going hiking now.” Liam goes from sweet to commanding in a heartbeat and Harry loves it.

“Yes sir!” Niall giggles. He runs to the back of the Range Rover as fast as he can. Louis has been working hard to get him back to normal. He’s not there yet, he gets winded easily and he still needs regular massages, but he’s trying so hard. Harry can’t help but be proud of him.

The blond opens the trunk and pulls out three back packs and his crutches. Liam takes one of the packs and Niall’s crutches. He tosses the other pack to Harry. It’s a terrible idea. The curly haired boy can’t get his hands up in time and instead falls to the ground with an audible thud. His legs flail wildly and he screams as if it were a lion instead of a ruck sack. Niall laughs so hard he doubles over and Liam rushes to help Harry to his feet.

“I am definitely going to die here. Cormarda is going to be where I die.” Harry cries.

“It’s called Connemara Haz, and you’re fine. I’m sorry I assumed you could catch a bag that weighs no more than a stone.” Liam sighs.

“I’m not good at that sort of thing. You should see me play footy, it’s a total mess.” Harry admits. Athletic sports aren’t really in his wheelhouse, it’s why he sticks to running, golf, and yoga. Lesser
chance of embarrassment or bodily injury.

“I’ll keep that in mind. Think you can walk on a slope without dying or should we skip the mountains and just stick to footpaths and bogs?” Liam smiles.

“My vote is for eight hours in a spa with mud baths and maybe a waxing.” Harry says. “But if that’s not an option, then I say let’s head to the mountains. Unless that’ll be too hard on Niall.”

“I brought my pain pills for just that reason. They’ll probably make me a little loopy though. Louis said I’d be flat on my back without them, I want to prove that smug arse wrong.” Niall walks over and shoulders his back pack.

“Why do we keep him around again?” Liam asks. Harry doesn’t think Liam likes Louis very much.

“Because he’s a bloody miracle worker with my knee. I was barely walking without a cane last time at this point in recovery.” Niall admits.

“Fine. I still think we could find somebody else.” Liam shrugs.

“He also already knows about us, and doesn’t judge us for it. That’s a rare commodity in this world Li.” Harry offers. “Two men is hard enough for most people to deal with. Three is another story all together.”

“That’s actually a really good point Haz.” Niall agrees. “And he’s kind of a friend. Even if he does insist on torturing me some days.”

“Alright alright, you two win. We’ll keep the punk rock fairy princess around.” Liam sighs. “Now can we get going? It’s almost ten and we have a lot to see.”

Niall’s knee gives out after a couple hours, so the boys sit at the edge of a bog and eat lunch. Liam packed light, a couple sandwiches each and a few bags of crisps. They’re going to a restaurant for dinner though, so Harry isn’t bothered by the lack of food. Niall is another matter all together.

“Liam, we’ve known each other for twenty years, close to twenty one, right? So why would you only pack me two sandwiches? Why in god’s name would you be that cruel?” Niall whines. He’s famished already. His stomach growls loudly as if to prove a point.


Niall turns to Harry and glares sharply. “This is your fault. I’m going to starve by the time dinner rolls around because you wanted to put on a show.”

Harry throws up his hands. “We were in the car for another hour Nialler. You chose to cuddle up on me instead, not that I’m complaining. I liked it a lot.”

“You know how I get after you give me head. I’m blissed out for at least an hour, sometimes more.” Niall growls. “You totally did this on purpose. Trying to starve me to death so you can have Liam all to yourself.”

“You caught me. My master plan has been foiled. Now take my second sandwich and calm down.” Harry passes over his other sandwich and Niall can’t help but squeal in delight. Harry smiles at him and Niall feels his heart warm with how much the curly haired boy loves him. Hunger makes him
such an asshole.

Niall blows a kiss at Harry before starting to eat his sandwich. It's dry, just ham and Swiss cheese, but Niall devours it greedily. It's gone in four bites and Niall pours what's left of his bag of Tayto crisps into his mouth. He washes it all down with a coca cola and sighs happily.

“Content?” Liam asks. Niall just nods and Liam continues. “Good. How’s your knee?”

“Buggered to hell. The feckin pills aren’t doing much. I could use a rub.” Niall admits. He hates Louis at the moment for being right. When Niall told him about the hike he warned that his knee wouldn’t be able to handle too much. Golf is a better option, but Liam hates golf and Niall doesn’t know if Harry even plays.

Liam scoots over and puts Niall’s leg in his lap. Liam has magic fingers. As soon as he starts rubbing the throbbing in Niall’s knee begins to subside. Within a few minutes the stabbing pain that seared all the way through his hip and ankle settles down to a mild discomfort around the knee.

“Thanks Payno. I think I can probably make it back to the camp alright. Or we can keep going as long as you’re both okay with stopping again later. I’m good either way.” Niall says.

“You sure you’re not just being a stubborn sod and putting on a brave face? Because I’m fine with going back if you’re in pain Nialler.” Harry tells him.

“I swear, I’m good to go. I’ll actually use the crutches this time instead of pretending I’m at one hundred percent.” Niall sighs. He wants to be better so bad. He wants to be able to take long walks around the farm with Harry and Liam. He wants to be able to have sex in a position other than missionary without having to stop if it goes longer than ten minutes.

“Well then give me your bag. We’ll split the contents between Harry’s and mine and then that way you can take some of the pressure off.” Liam says. Niall hands over his pack and Liam hands Harry the smaller things and lashes the blanket on top of his own after he shoves in Niall’s clothes.

“You sure you want to carry all that Liam? I have a little more space in mine if you want to give me something.” Harry offers.

“I’m fine. I gave you some of the heavier stuff. It’s just smaller. It’s really not that heavy. Wanna feel?” Liam holds out the ruck sack to Harry and the other boy declines.

“It’s fine. Just trying to be helpful.” Harry smiles.

“Well stop it. This trip is about you relaxing. Let us do the work, you just look at the view and forget about the house for a day.” Niall laughs. Liam stares at him and Niall corrects himself. “Well let Liam do the work anyways, I’m not much use right now.”

“Sure you are Nialler, you make me smile and give excellent hand jobs.” Harry laughs.

“I’ll make sure to remember that for your eulogy.” Niall glares. Sometimes he’s afraid that Harry only sees him as a joke. That he’s the good time while Liam is the great guy. Liam comforts him, Liam knows exactly what to say and when to say it, Niall just takes the piss and offers his ass up.

“Just make sure to mention how pretty I was and I’ll be happy.” Harry smiles at Niall and his fears shrink back. Harry has a special smile for Niall only. Not one that Liam gets, or even his legions of fans get to see, one where his eyes catch the light and sparkle. His lips stretch farther than usual and he look so genuinely affectionate that it quells all of the doubts Niall has inside.
“I’m so going to put up that picture I took after the first day you went on the farm with Liam. The one where you’re all muddy and have grass in your hair.” Niall laughs.

“You told me I looked rugged.” Harry pouts.

“Actually I think I said ragged.” Niall corrects him.

“Well I think I looked like a cowboy so boo to you.” Harry sticks his tongue out and laughs.

“Maybe one that fell off his horse.” Niall laughs right along with him.

“You’re so mean to me.” Harry pouts exaggeratedly. “Liam save me from mean old Niall.”

“No can do Haz. I’m going hiking now. We’re too damn close to the mountain for me to settle a fight instead of climbing it.” Liam laughs.

“We’ll take the foot path thank you. You go climb your big rocks up the bigger rock.” Harry laughs. “Just be careful and don’t take any risks.”

“Will do. I’ll meet you guys up on that ledge.” Liam points. The climb isn’t too far, only about ten meters up, but Niall knows he won’t use any gear and that means he’ll go slow. He tucks his crutches into his armpits and starts hopping quickly.

“Last one there buys dinner!” He yells over his shoulder. He can hear Harry laughing and the sounds of Liam’s heavy foot falls racing up behind him. He can’t really go any faster than he is now, so Liam passes him in just a few more hops, laughing wildly as he runs straight towards a cliff face. Niall makes a beeline towards the foot path. It’s about seventy meters total in a loop that leads to the ledge. The incline may be difficult and Niall heaves a sigh, resigned to picking up the tab.

“Come on Nialler. We’re going to win this if it kills me.” Harry says from close behind Niall.

“You go ahead. I’ll get there when I get there.” Niall sighs.

“No chance I’d do that. Not leaving you behind for the world.” Harry grabs Niall’s shoulder and brings them both to a stop. “You know how much I love you right?”

“Yeah Haz.” Niall tries to pull away, tries to avoid having to be serious. Harry holds tight though. It’s not a painful tight, just a firmness letting Niall know he isn’t going to drop it.

“That thing you said earlier, about me just using you to get to Liam, you know that isn’t true right? I love you Niall, with all my heart.” Harry sounds like he’s about to cry and Niall’s heart breaks.

“I know Haz. It’s just me being a self-conscious twat. I just don’t feel like I offer you anything except laughs and brilliant sex.” Niall tries to lighten the mood. Tries to keep from being serious. “Liam told me bout London. Told me that you two just stayed up all night talking because that’s what you needed. I didn’t even see that. All I ever do is joke around and I don’t see those things.”

“You give me exactly what I need.” Harry walks around the blond. “You make me smile when I feel like I’m breaking. You give all of yourself to me without any hesitation. You give me the pushes I need to be a better and happier person. I love you more than anyone in the world Niall. I don’t care that you aren’t always serious like Li, you’re fun and sweet and you gave me the world when you started to love me.”

Niall blushes and pushes at Harry’s shoulder. “Stop it Haz. I get it already. I’m not a third wheel and you’re a sappy sod that watches too many romantic movies.”
“Don’t try to run away from this Niall.” Harry’s face is hard, but his eyes are soft. “I love you. You have to keep it a secret from Liam and my mother, but you’re my very favorite person in the entire world. Nobody else comes close.”

“Not even Mr. Perfect? Who is half way up the cliff by the way. Just in case you still wanted to win.” Niall asks.

Harry smiles. “Let him win. I get to spend more time alone with you, and that—”

“If you say that makes you the real winner I swear I’ll split your stupid sappy face.” Niall laughs. “Now let’s go beat him, I’m not paying for dinner just because you decided to declare your love for me dramatically.”

“I still can’t believe you did that.” Liam pouts. He’s a sore loser, always has been. He had a huge lead on Harry and Niall who were standing around talking until Harry picked Niall up and ran him up the path. He lost by about two seconds.

“Just be glad we picked somewhere cheap for dinner and take it like a man.” Niall laughs at him.

“You do realize that I’m the only one here without an income right?” Liam sighs. It doesn’t normally bother him because he also doesn’t have any expenses. “I still run the farm for room and board.”

“No you don’t.” Harry laughs. “I’ve been making regular deposits into your account. Don’t you ever check it?”

“You give me enough for gas and the storage locker. Why would I check it?” Liam asks.

“Liam I’ve been putting ten thousand euros a month into your account since you started working for me.” Harry smiles.

Liam is stunned. That wasn’t what they agreed on at all. He’s almost angry at Harry, but his dopey smile wipes that all away. “Why would you do that?”

“Because you’ve done three people’s worth of work for the last four months. You’ve also never complained once. I figured you noticed the deposits.” Harry shrugs.

“I don’t need charity Haz, especially not from my boyfriend. If you want to pay me for the work that’s fine, I wouldn’t fight that, but you’ve already paid me more than I’ve made the last two years combined. Be reasonable.” Liam sighs.

“It’s not charity and I am being reasonable. You didn’t want any extra hands on the farm, even when Niall was laid up and I stayed home to take care of him. So I’m paying you what I’d pay three people. It’s in accordance with the amount of work you do.” Harry says seriously. Niall is kind of watching the whole exchange, but he’s mostly focused on finishing his second plate of dinner.

“I’m handling the finances on the new farm. You’re so wasteful it’s terrifying. And Zayn is doing my taxes because I’m not explaining my sudden leap in income.” Liam grumbles.

“I’m not wasteful, I’m insanely rich.” Harry counters. “We could never need all of my money if we lived four hundred years. It’s not like we have kids or parents who need medical care. I also don’t just buy anything I want on a whim.”

“Like a farm you know nothing about in a foreign country?” Liam mutters.
“Are you complaining about the way that turned out?” Harry fumes and Liam knows he’s made a mistake. “Because if you are you need to tell me so I can shut down construction on a seven thousand square foot house for the three of us.”

“Haz that’s not what I-” Liam starts to say and then Harry storms off. Liam drops his hands on the table and cries “Damn it!”

“Damnú Liam! Can’t you ever just let things go? Always have to be the big man.” Niall glares. His fork clatters to the table and he leaves to go after Harry. Liam doesn’t know what to do so he drops all of his notes on the table and rushes out after them.

Niall and Harry are in the car and Harry is crying at the wheel. Liam can’t hear what they’re saying, but Niall looks like he’s pleading with the curly haired boy. Niall spots Liam and he shakes his head quickly. Liam doesn’t want to leave, so he sits on a bench outside the restaurant.

“Harry wait!” Niall shouts when he runs out of the restaurant. Harry doesn’t though, he just keeps walking towards the range rover. He takes out his keys and unlocks it while Niall runs around the other side and jumps in to the passenger seat.

“Go away Niall. I’m not driving anywhere, I just need a minute to cool down.” Harry says flatly. His keys are back in his pocket, but his hands are gripped around the wheel so tightly it’s making the knuckles turn white.

“Not leaving you behind for the world.” Niall tells him. Harry starts crying and Niall reaches a hand out to rub his back. “Haz, please talk to me here.”

He sees Liam walk out of the restaurant and shakes his head, signaling him not to approach yet. Harry doesn’t seem to notice him or when he goes and sits down.

“He thinks this is a mistake Niall. Somewhere inside he thinks I made a mistake coming here.” Harry says between sobs.

“You and I both know that’s not what he meant.” Niall sighs.

“But what if he does? What if one day he just wakes up and thinks this is all a mistake.” Harry looks so broken Niall doesn’t know what to do.

Niall sighs. He knows Liam wouldn’t want him telling this to Harry, but it needs to be said. “He doesn’t and he won’t. Money gets Liam all riled up. He grew up without almost any. His parents had a tiny three bedroom flat. They only moved here because his father needed a job so bad he was willing to move countries to get one.

“He started working on the farm at thirteen to help his parents. You’ve never seen his old place either. It was an awful studio that had leaks and shit. He worked odd jobs in town so he could save up. Money is touchy for him and you throw it around so easily. Private jets, luxury hotels, expensive car, the house. To him it’s just a lot of reminders of his own failures in life, not that they’re actually failures, but he sees it that way.

“He wants to be the provider, the man. He doesn’t want to be his father in any way. With you around he’s had to learn that he can’t be the provider, which I know he’s trying hard to come to terms with. Please just give him a chance to explain himself. Let him apologize, because sometimes his mouth moves faster than his head, but he loves us both so much.”
“I was just trying to give you two what I could. I don’t have much besides my money. A comfortable life is what I have to offer.” Harry cries.

“Well I guess we’re going to have this conversation from both sides today aren’t we?” Niall sighs. “Haz you are literally the kindest person on the face of the Earth. In all the time we’ve known each other, no matter how bad things have gotten, you’ve yelled at me exactly once and I was being kind of an arse. You’re sweet and beautiful and you light up the room when you walk in. You saved me when I was trying to run from my father’s death, and you’re helping Liam define himself as something other than just the hero. We need you and we love you. Your portfolio is irrelevant to us.”

Harry laughs and wipes away his tears. “Mine was more romantic.”

Niall laughs and says “Well I’m not a sappy sod with a heart bigger than my car. How about this? I love you more than the stars in the sky and the fish in the sea. You’re more beautiful than any artist could possibly capture. Honey tastes like vinegar compared to how sweet you-”

“You are so mean to me. Just shut up and kiss me.” Harry laughs. Niall follows the order gladly. He wraps his arms around Harry’s neck and kisses him on each cheek before connecting their lips in a salty kiss. He waves a hand at Liam and the other boy walks to the car slowly. Niall gets out and closes his door, walking to meet Liam.

“We’ve already done the dramatic sappy bit, just apologize and tell him you love him. He really needs to hear it from you right now.” Niall claps a hand on Liam’s shoulder and then goes to see if his meal is still there.

Liam gets in the Rover and Harry isn’t quite sure where to look. He settles on his hands.

“Niall said you already did the sappy bit, but I can do it again if you want. He’s pretty bad at it sometimes. Probably called you a sod or something.” Liam tries to start the conversation.

“He did. It’s fine though, he said what I needed to hear. Gave you a run for your money as the sweet one.” Harry smiles. He’s still looking at his hands. They’ve grown rough, even have a callus or two. His nails are filthy and he decides he really needs a manicure.

“I’m pretty sure you also need to hear that I was being the sod. I’m sorry Haz. I can’t say it enough. I didn’t mean what I said in there, I promise. Money just gets the better of me. So does my mouth. I’m not perfect, even though you keep saying I am. I lose my temper and say things I don’t mean. And I don’t tell you how much I love you nearly enough.” Liam sounds desperate and Harry finally looks at him.

“Liam stop. Like Niall said, we already did the sappy stuff. I accept your apology and I love you too. I’m sorry I’ve been such a brat today.” Harry sighs.

Liam softens. “You haven’t been a brat. A handful maybe, but not a brat. It’s not like I helped much either. I’m a sore loser.”

“Then maybe I’ll just start letting you win.” Harry laughs.

Liam pouts and says “That’s no fun. I want to win, not be handed victory.”

“Then we’ll play strip poker. That way whoever loses still wins.” Harry smiles. It’s not a bad idea actually. Liam is probably absolutely terrible at poker. He can’t bluff or lie to save his life.
“Sounds like a good time. Niall will agree for sure.” Liam smiles. “Speaking of, we should probably go get him. He’s most likely arguing with the waitress that cleaned our table.”

“Oh shite, probably. Let’s go save her.” Harry opens the door and jumps out. Liam follows suit and they walk into the restaurant together. Niall is sitting happily in the back, eating what looks to be a third meal. They walk up to the booth and the blond smiles at them.

“Don’t worry, I paid for this one myself. She’d already taken your money and the rest as a tip. I think you made that girl’s year Payno, she asked me to give you her number.” Niall holds up a piece of paper with some numbers scratched on it. “She’s probably at home getting all wet for you already.”

Harry gags and Niall laughs at him. Liam isn’t interested, he has everything he needs right here.

“Isn’t that a little close to the tent? Couldn’t it catch fire or something?” Harry is worrying at his finger nails. They’re close to nubs at this point. When he gets that manicure they’re going to kill him.

Liam sighs. “Harry I promise we’ll be fine. Three meters is plenty of space.”

“I just don’t want to die in a fiery blaze while I sleep.” Harry grumbles. Sleeping on the ground is one thing, dying is another.

“We put out the fire before we go to sleep Haz. We don’t just leave it burning.” Liam says. He sounds exasperated with Harry’s questions and comments. It’s really not fair considering Harry has never been camping in his life. He grew up posh, and he’ll probably stay posh until he dies.

“Oh. Well fine then. I suppose if we catch on fire we can just jump in the ocean anyway.” Harry smiles. They’re only twenty meters from the Atlantic and the setting sun is creating a spectacular view. Apparently Niall paid extra for several campsites so they could have their privacy. Nobody is around for at least forty meters in any direction.

“You could always do that regardless. You’d look hot in a speedo.” Niall smiles at him.

“I don’t own a speedo Niall.” Harry blushes and sighs at the same time.

“I packed the one I bought for Liam years ago. He never even wore it. Should fit if you’re interested.” Niall laughs. He waggles his eyebrows and Harry is tempted to do it, just to make Niall laugh some more.

“You going to join me if I do? Water’s awful cold to go in alone.” Harry does his best to be seductive, but he leans to far back and falls off of the log underneath him.

“If you’re worried about being cold get off the ground and sit by the fire Haz.” Liam says flatly.

“Cashmere is extremely flammable Li. Not coming near that thing.” Harry says from his place on the ground.

“It also needs dry cleaned, so get up.” Niall offers him a hand and he takes it. The second he’s up on his feet Niall presses in close. “If you wait until dark I can go in without anything on.”

Harry sucks in air like he’s dying. Liam looks at them curiously, but Niall just smiles and he goes back to trying to build the fire larger. Harry thinks it’s plenty fine as it is, but nobody seems to want to listen to him. “Stop doing that.” Harry hisses quietly.
“Stop what Haz?” Niall questions softly. He bats his eyelashes in faux-innocence and Harry wants to wreck him.

“Stop flirting with me like Liam isn’t six feet away from us.” Harry whispers.

“We aren’t hiding anymore Haz. I’m sure Liam wouldn’t mind if we took a tumble in the ocean. He’d probably join us if you pout those gorgeous lips of yours at him.” Niall says louder. Liam looks back at them and his eyes are huge.

“You two plotting behind my back? I don’t know if I can resist another show from you two. I might have to get involved this time around.” Liam smirks.

“That a threat or a promise Payno?” Niall laughs.

“I personally hope it’s a promise.” Harry says. He holds Niall close and starts kissing him. He opens one of his eyes to take a peek at Liam. His mouth is hanging slightly open and he looks like he’s going to jump up any second. Harry slides his hand down Niall’s shorts and Liam looks like he’s going to explode. He stands up and walks over to them. He grabs Niall by the shoulders and turns him around roughly.

He devours Niall’s mouth hungrily and Harry grows hard in his trousers. His mouth and hand tingle from the loss of contact, but he recovers quickly. He skirts his fingers under the hem of Niall’s shirt along where the band of his trousers meet his flesh. The smaller boy moans into Liam’s mouth, and the muscular man tightens his grip on the blond. His fingers carve grooves into Niall’s shirt and then he pulls it off.

“Tent now. Both of you.” Liam growls. It’s authoritative and Harry feels a growing excitement. Liam plants a firm smack on each of their asses as they pass by. Niall giggles, but Harry moans. The tent is pitch black once Liam zips up the flap. “Clothes off.”

Harry quickly strips off his jumper and his trousers. “You want the underwear on or off?” He asks quickly.

“Off.” Liam says forcefully. Harry does as ordered and slides off his briefs. Niall intertwines his fingers with Harry’s and the warmth is all the more intense in the inky darkness. His fingers buzz with electric energy and with the way Niall’s breath hitches he probably feels it too. Liam grabs Harry’s knee firmly and says “Now kiss.”

Harry does as he’s told and reaches through the dark to find Niall’s face. They move slowly to avoid hurting each other or themselves. Their lips find each other in the dark and meet softly. For all the intensity filling the tent, the moment is slow and sweet, like the first time all over again. There’s no hunger in it, no fire, only love. Liam doesn’t seem to get that memo though.

He grabs both of them and strokes. Harry’s body is unsure of what to do. Liam’s hand is starting to override his brain, stroking away his ability to think, but part of him also just wants Niall’s sweet kisses right now. Niall moans into his mouth and the gentleness ebbs away. Lust takes it’s place and his tongue races into Niall’s mouth.

“Niall climb on top of Haz.” Liam orders. He removes his hands and Niall whines.

“I’m not sure how well my knee will hold out after today’s little adventure. That alright?” He asks breathlessly, pulling away from Harry.

“Just let me know if it starts to hurt and we’ll do something else.” Liam says softly, betraying his authority with his kind heart.
Niall straddles Harry’s waist and leans in to kiss him again. His mouth takes control this time, dominating Harry in a way he’s never done before. Harry lets him take control and lets himself be in the passive role. He moans against Niall’s mouth and bucks his hips when the blond grinds down on him. Suddenly Niall’s mouth is gone and his torso is no longer flush against Harry’s.

“I didn’t say to do that now did I?” Liam asks roughly. A loud smack echoes through the tent and Niall yelps. Harry feels the tips of Liam’s fingers drag against his hip and he guesses that Niall received a very firm spank.

“No sir.” Niall says. His voice is full of lust and it’s driving Harry wild.

“Do you want Harry to fuck you? Or me?” Liam asks.

“Both please. I’ve been practicing.” Niall pleads. Harry’s heart stops and blood pounds in his ears with the revelation.

“Wait what?” Harry asks dumbly.

“How have you been practicing without us Niall?” Liam asks. His voice is cold and Harry shivers at it.

“Harry’s box of toys. Use em when you two go run. Been trying to work up to it fer a surprise.” Niall moans. He grinds his hips down against Harry and the curly boy thinks he may just explode right there.

“Jesus Niall. Are you ever really satisfied with us?” Liam asks.

“ Mostly. Been a while since I got to try something new and exciting though. Sex needs to evolve occasionally.” Niall sighs. It’s obvious he just wants to get to it. Harry’s pretty sure that isn’t going to happen.

“And I suppose the fact that we’ve mostly had threesomes for the last six weeks isn’t evolved enough for you?” Liam asks quietly.

“I went a long time without any sex at all Li. You lit a fire that day in the kitchen and it’s gone out of control. Not my fault. Now are you two going to fuck me or what?” Niall moans.

“Yes. But reign in that fire before you go inviting anyone else into the relationship. Three is my limit.” Liam says it forcefully and judging by the jerk Harry feels from Niall he pulled the blond in close to say it.

“All I need Li. Now shut up and put your dicks inside me or go away so I can wank in peace.” Somehow Niall has taken control of the situation from Liam and Harry feels a little confused and a lot excited.

“Bend over.” Liam says and Niall flies forward to Harry’s chest. Harry catches him, keeps it from hurting either of them, but Niall hisses from the pressure it puts on his knee. The whine is cut short my a moan and Harry doesn’t understand what’s happening anymore.

Niall captures Harry’s mouth and Harry melts into it. All the delicacy has gone out of the moment, replaced by the stink of testosterone and lust. Only when he feels Liam’s scruff on his inner thigh does he realize that Liam is eating the blond out. He hears Liam reaching around in the dark and the telltale sound of a bottle of lube snapping open. Liam’s face disappears from Harry’s leg and a moment later Niall moans filthily into Harry’s shoulder.
Niall starts rocking against him and Harry really wishes he could watch this. His eyes aren’t adjusting much to the dark. The nylon is thick and obscures the light coming from the fire behind Harry so Liam and Niall are little more than shadows. He hears the moans coming from Niall and the grunts from Liam and he feels left out. Then Liam grabs him with a lubed up hand and pulls slowly on his cock.

“Another.” Niall whines. Liam must do it quickly because Niall hisses and drops his head onto Harry’s chest. “Fucker!”

“Soon enough.” Liam snarks. “Until then give Haz some love, I can’t work both hands at once like this.”

Niall kisses at Harry’s neck and runs small hands over his chest. Harry moans. He doesn’t even mind that much that Liam let go of his cock because Niall is hitting all the right spots. He’s panting in Harry’s ear and muttering curses in Irish. Harry knows a few now, heard them enough to ask what they mean. It always turns him on.

“Bhfuil tú ceart go leor?” Harry stumbles across the words somewhere in his brain. He’s positive he is not pronouncing them correctly, but he hopes Niall understands them.

“Foc!” Niall moans. “That’s so feckin hot Haz. Scrios dé! When did you even learn that?”

“ Heard Liam ask you. You said ‘Yeah Li, I’m alright.’ I figured it meant are you okay. I’m not sure though.” Harry admits sheepishly. He feels weird for saying something he doesn’t understand.

“Exactly right. Shit pronunciation, but you tried.” Niall smiles. “Got any more stored up in there?”

“ Just curse words mostly. Hear those a lot.” Harry grins.

“Then talk dirty to me Haz.” Niall mutters. He bites at Harry’s neck greedily.


Niall moans against his neck and mutters back to him. “Those mean the same thing.”

“You say them a lot.” Harry moans. Niall latches onto his shoulder with sharp teeth. Liam moans behind them and Harry suddenly remembers they’re not alone.

“You ready for another Niall?” Liam asks breathlessly.

“Mm very.” Niall responds. Liam slips another finger in, more gently than last time. Harry only knows because Niall moans this time.

“Getting loose babes?” Harry asks. “Li’s gotta stretch you out real good. You sure you’re up for this?”

“I’ve been using the black and the purple ones Haz. This should be okay.” Niall mutters.

“Jesus Niall. You have to let me watch some time.” Harry moans.

“I make it through this alive and we’ll talk.” Niall smiles against Harry’s skin and it makes his heart flutter.

“Going for four now, then I’ll put Harry inside you alright?” Liam asks. Niall grunts his approval and Liam wraps a lubed up hand around Harry’s cock. He moans and bucks into the touch. His dick has been so ignored he feels like he’s going half mad.
The next few moments happen very quickly for Harry. Niall goes limp on top of him and his cock presses wildly into Harry’s stomach. Suddenly Niall’s body is gone from his own again. Before he can mourn the loss though, Niall slides down on him. It’s much looser than usual, his hole doesn’t shrink as rapidly. Niall rides him for a minute while Liam whispers something Harry is too distracted to hear.

He feels Liam line himself up with Harry, their cocks pressed against one another. His long skinny legs are pushed together by Liam’s muscular ones and then Niall slides down again. His fingers clench Harry’s hard, but he moans when he finally bottoms out on both of them. Liam makes it a tight fit, his huge cock pressing Harry’s into the walls inside Niall. The position honestly isn’t that comfortable, and then Liam starts to move.

Niall moans filthy strings of half finished curses in a mix of Irish and English that Harry can barely follow. He couldn’t follow much of anything right now though. Liam is frotting against him and Niall is so tight around them Harry doesn’t think he’ll last more than a minute or two. His dick is bent at an uncomfortable angle when Liam’s shadow pulls Niall’s to his chest and bends them both over.

He adjusts as much as he can and then Liam thrusts against him and it’s almost magical. Niall’s face is only inches from Harry’s and he doesn’t know whether he wants to listen to Niall’s dirty talking or kiss him. He opts for the latter and captures the blond’s mouth with his own. The sensations are almost overwhelming at this point, and when Niall shoots all over his butterfly tattoo that’s it for Harry.

His body stiffens and he drops Niall’s hands to hold the blond in close and scratch at his back. His body moves indistinctly at this point, no two brain cells seem to rub together to create any other thought than bliss. Liam cums seconds after Harry with a roar muffled by Niall’s back flesh. Harry feels the warm load coat his dick inside Niall and he doesn’t even know how to react. Liam thrusts erratically against him and his mind explodes with over-stimulation.

When the other two collapse on him in a sweaty pile it’s almost a relief. Every nerve in his body is tingling with fiery energy that pushes at the bounds of his skin. They lay like that for a little while, their breathing all slowing to a normal rate.

“That was great and all, but if you two could pull out I’d be mighty thankful. It’s pretty uncomfortable right now.” Niall laughs. Harry still can’t see Liam properly, but he knows the muscular lad is blushing. He slides out slowly, still hard against Harry until only he and the blond are linked. He doesn’t want to pull out, wants to stay inside the beautiful boy on top of him forever, Liam right there with them, but he does as asked and holds Niall steady so he can slide out of him.

“I think we need to go to the beach and wash off, how about you two?” Liam asks.

“Salt water and my arse aren’t going to be friendly right now. How about instead we just go to the cottage I rented in case Harry was too much of a little bitch to sleep in the tent?” Niall asks.

Harry’s brain throbs with realization. “Wait what?”

“I rented a cottage. I figured there was at least a fifty percent chance you would refuse to sleep in here. It’s down the road a bit, but it should only take us about five minutes to get there.” Niall smiles that stupid beautiful smile against Harry’s chest and he can’t even find it in him to be mad.

“You twat.” Harry laughs. Liam sighs in the back of the tent and Harry can tell he’s annoyed that the blond kept that secret.
“Am I always out of the loop now, or what?” Liam asks sadly.

“I’m sorry Li. I honestly hoped we wouldn’t have to use it. I think the situation calls for it though, don’t you?” Niall says quietly.

“Fine. But I am begging you two, please stop keeping secrets from me.” Liam asks it so softly, so broken, Harry doesn’t know how to respond.

“I promise Li. I promise.” Niall says sweetly.

“Me too.” Harry agrees. He’s always hated keeping Liam on the outside, and now he feels Niall’s guilt as well as his own. But his promise is a lie, for a little while longer he has something to keep from both of them. Soon though, he can be completely honest. It’s not bad, but it’s too early to ask this of them.

The cottage Niall rented is beautiful. It’s decorated sparsely to make up for the smaller space, but the view is absolutely breath taking, even at night. The cottage sits on a bluff a little above the water, and the bay sparkles with moonlight.

“I really thought you’d be the first one to fall asleep, not Haz.” Liam tells Niall. The blond has had a pretty rough day, and always enjoys a good long sleep. They’re not heading back until late in the morning, but it’s almost midnight and Liam expected to be sitting alone on the porch overlooking the water.

“Can’t. That thing in the tent woke me up pretty well. Hard to fall asleep after you’ve had two cocks in your arse at the same time.” Niall mutters from his spot on Liam’s lap. The hanging bench they’re on swings slowly in the light breeze.

“I can’t even imagine.” Liam says. He enjoys bottoming more than he thought he would, but that just seems like too much.

“I know love, I liked it though. Not sure I can do it again any time soon, but I liked it.” Niall smiles up at Liam.

“I meant what I said you know. I love Harry, and I’m glad we’re all in this together, but I don’t want anyone other than you two. And I don’t want anymore secrets, especially from you.” Liam says flatly. It’s been pressing against his mind for weeks, ever since the newness of their situation wore off and the feeling of betrayal settled in.

“I know Li. I’m sorry that I kept this from you. And that I kept Harry a secret for so long. I just wanted to wait until you were ready. Can you tell me that when I came up with the idea you would have agreed to it?” Niall glances up and his eyes are unsure.

“No, I can’t. I would’ve probably left.” Liam sighs. It’s true Liam wasn’t exactly the most receptive to the idea.

“I know. I couldn’t handle losing you. I need you in my life Liam. I hate what I had to do, but I knew that I could get you to come around to it if you’d realize how good you and Harry are together. How good we all are together. I can’t tell you enough how sorry I am though that I lied to you and manipulated you.” Niall’s eyes are full of remorse and Liam softens considerably.

“You’re lucky I’m nice, or I’d make you spend time making it up to me.” Liam smiles. “But this has turned out so great that I don’t think that’s really necessary.”
“I will if you want. I’d do anything to make it up to you.” Niall sits up and looks Liam in the eyes.

“Then go on a date with me. Just us two. I love Harry, I swear I do, but we haven’t had much time alone in the last few months that wasn’t us fucking. I want to spend some time with my best friend again.” Liam says quietly.

“I think I can work that out. You paying rich boy?” Niall laughs.

“Please, I know your second payment came in. That officially puts you well over a half million dollars, no?” Liam smirks.

“Yeah, but you’re the top. Tops always pay.” Niall smiles back at him.

“Maybe I’ll let you top then. Your knee is back in shape enough for it. I made a promise after all.” Liam runs a hand through his hair. It surprises him sometimes, he still expects it to be short. Niall hums his approval and drops back down to Liam’s lap. Liam strokes his hair gently, like the waves breaking below them on the bluff.
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Alright I meant to post this chapter last thursday, but some things happened that got in the way and I didn't start editing until yesterday. I'll try and have the next chapter up sometime this weekend. Also I feel I should say this since I haven't already, this is a completely fictional AU. I mention this because I'm sure Liam's parents are lovely people in real life, but in this story they aren't. We won't be seeing them, but they have been mentioned a few times and will be again. I don't want anyone thinking that I have some bias against them just because of the way I've written them in this story.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Another month passes and the house is well over halfway done. Will has been doing remarkable work with the huge crew Harry has hired to get the place done fast. Harry is taking a back seat now that the framework is all up and the outside is mostly finished. Rain has been an obstacle, shutting down the site for a few days at a time sometimes, but they’re somehow back on schedule.

Today is a rainy day, but the house is anything but calm. Will decided to take the boys up on Harry’s offer to watch Bran. It was a mistake. The small ginger boy is only four, but he has all the energy of a classroom of ten year old children. He’s been bouncing off the walls for over two hours and shows no signs of stopping.

Of course that’s better than the fit he starts throwing when Niall started his PT with Louis. Niall is quite obviously the boy’s favorite. Liam’s stern manner makes him unhappy, and Harry’s jokes aren’t making a dent in his rage. He’s wailing and beating his tiny hands against anything he can find.

“Lou, I’m sorry, can we do this another day?” Niall sighs in the bedroom. “The boys obviously need my help with this.”

“Sure.” Louis turns his back to the blond and lets him get dressed. Today is massage/stretch day so if Niall wants to skip it’s mostly his loss. “I can stay and help if you want. I helped raise all my little siblings. Six of them.”

“If you’re sure. I think we’d appreciate the help. I haven’t been around kids in years, forgot how exhausting they are.” Niall says. He slides a t-shirt over his thin frame and a pair of shorts over his bony legs. He notices how hairy they are and asks “Do you think the boys would like it if I shaved my legs?”

Louis laughs. “Where the hell did that come from?”

“Just wanted an outside opinion. The boys will just tell me I’m perfect the way I am and we all know that’s shite.” Niall sighs. He’s been feeling different lately, not insecure exactly, but he wishes he was more fit like his boyfriends.

“It isn’t Niall. You’re a fit bloke. I can see how living with Superman and a pop star would give you doubts though. You have to make the decision on what you want to do for yourself, but I will say that smooth legs are a total turn on for most guys.” Louis offers. He’s absolutely no help some times.
“So yes? I’m going to go with yes.” Niall decides. He’s not quite sure when he’s going to do it, the boys always shower together lately. Harry in particular has been very clingy, so Liam and Niall haven’t even gotten to have their date.

“Good for you. Now let’s go rescue your boyfriends before either the kid or the two of them end up dead.” Louis laughs.

The living room is in full meltdown mode when they get there. Liam is chasing a now starkers Bran around, but the small boy keeps wiggling out of his grasp and screaming. Harry is cleaning a complete mess of macaroni and cheese off the floor and he looks like he’s crying. Niall doesn’t know whether to laugh or retreat.

Louis, surprisingly enough, takes charge of the situation rather well, scooping Bran up with the element of surprise when he runs by the hall. He hands him off to Niall quickly and the boy squeals in delight and hugs Niall with surprising strength. Louis grabs the small pair of underwear out of Liam’s hand and slides them up the ginger child’s legs before he can protest.

“Now listen here Tiny, you’re getting dressed and then you go apologize to Harry alright? I’m sure he worked very hard on that dinner for you. If you’re a good boy then we’ll play afterwards alright?” Louis asks in his best impression of a serious adult human being.

“Yes sew!” Bran giggles and wiggles to be free of Niall’s grip. The blond places him on the ground and his mouth hangs open in surprise and awe.

“Now go put on your clothes.” Louis pats Bran on the bum and the boy skitters off to find his discarded clothes.

“I’ve been trying to calm him down for forever, while you’ve been feeling up my boyfriend. How did you do that?” Liam groans.

“First off, I wasn’t feeling him up. I generally focus on his knee and occasionally his hip and ankle. I’ve only brushed his arse by accident once and he wears briefs when we do our sessions. Second, I’m good with kids because I have six younger siblings. Now calm down, he can tell when you’re pissed off and he’s going to react to it.” Louis scolds. Liam looks taken aback with Louis’ attitude and just walks away.

“He already wants to fire you Louis, don’t give him a reason.” Niall hisses.

“Are you going to let him fire me just because he doesn’t like my personality?” Louis asks candidly.

“Not if I can help it, but I won’t choose you over him. Just try to play nice please.” Niall begs. He doesn’t want to let Louis go, but if he keeps antagonizing Liam then that’s exactly where it’s going to end up.

“Fine.” Louis groans. Bran is trying to get his shirt on, but his head is inside a sleeve and he falls. Louis rushes to his side and helps him adjust his shirt while he giggles.

“Oops!” Bran laughs. He wears a huge smile and Louis laughs at him and tousles his flaming red hair. Bran jumps up and manages to put his pants on correctly before toddling off towards Harry. He wraps his chubby arms around Harry’s leg and says “I’m sowwy Hawwy.”

“It’s okay buddy, just go play with Louis and I’ll get started on a new pot of macaroni and cheese okay?” Harry smiles. Niall can tell the curly haired boy is smitten with the child. He probably wants a herd of them.
“Okay!” Bran rushes back to Louis like a streak of lightning. “Hawwy said we could play now!”

“Alright buddy, Show me what you brought with you alright?” Louis smiles and walks off with the boy towards the bag of things Will and Fiona dropped off with him. Niall goes to Harry’s side and helps him pick up the few noodles left scattered on the floor.

“Were you crying Haz?” Niall asks softly.

“I burned my wrist on the pot when Bran pushed me. I had to keep holding on before I dropped it after he ran away, so that I wouldn’t burn him with it. It’s not that bad, but it hurts.” Harry says quietly.

“Louis! Come check Harry’s burn. I’ll play with Bran until you decide what to do about it.” Niall says quickly.

“Niall I’m fine.” Harry twists away.

“I’m a registered nurse Harry, just let me take a look at it.” Louis struts over with Bran wrapped around his leg and laughing with excitement at the ride.

“I said it’s fine.” Harry sighs, holding his wrist out revealing an angry welt. “I’ve burned myself plenty of times cooking.”

“It’s not that bad, but I should probably dress it. Niall can you go grab my bag from the room? It’s next to the table.” Louis asks. Bran clearly isn’t going anywhere so Niall goes back to the room they’ve all been sharing. Liam is sitting on the bed and he looks upset.

“Go away Niall. I don’t want to talk.” Liam says.

“I didn’t come here to talk Liam. I came here for Louis’ kit so he can dress Haz’s burn. Something you would have thought of if you weren’t busy accusing me of sleeping with Louis every time he’s around. Next time at least have the balls to say it to my face.” Niall spits. It doesn’t normally bother him, it’s the least he deserves for sneaking around behind Liam’s back. This time though, he put his jealousy over Harry and that’s unacceptable.

“Niall, wait!” Liam says a little too loudly when Niall grabs the bag and leaves.

“If you want to talk now we can do it after I give Louis his bag.” Niall says icily over his shoulder. He walks back to the kitchen where Harry is now sitting at the table with an exasperated look on his face while Louis is trying to catch Bran. The ginger boy is running around the table at incredible speed and Louis can’t keep up.

“Here you go. Can you handle him? I need to go talk to Liam, but I can stay if you need me.” Niall tells Louis. He reaches down and catches Bran on a pass around the table with his left arm and drops the bag on the table with his right.

“Yes, I have a secret weapon in my bag. Bran do you want a sweet?” Louis asks. The boy nods enthusiastically from where Niall has curled him up to his chest. “Then sit at the table while I take care of Harry’s burn and I’ll get you one from my bag.”

“Is that really the best idea?” Niall asks. Bran really doesn’t need more energy.

“Don’t worry, they’re sugar free.” Louis whispers to Niall and grins like a maniac.

Niall decides to leave the situation in Louis’ surprisingly capable hands. He heads back to the room
and braces himself for another fight. It seems like that’s all Liam wants to do sometimes, and Niall is very done with it. He pushes open the door and Liam is still on the bed, but he’s curled around a pillow and Niall is pretty sure he’s crying.

“Li, what’s wrong?” Niall closes the door behind him quietly.

“This. This whole fucking thing.” Liam says angrily.

“You have got to be more specific than that.” Niall says as he sits on the edge of the bed.

“Our relationship Niall. I don’t mean the three of us including Harry, I mean you and me. All we’ve done lately is fight. You spend all day with him, and then ignore me when we come in for the night. I’ve been going crazy because we’ve actually drifted further apart since we had that talk.

“And I’m sorry for what I said about Louis. But I have good reason to be suspicious and you know it. You cheated on me Niall, not like I did when I snogged Danielle, but real cheating. With Harry. You made me think we were together again, and you were with him behind my back. I’m not like you, I get jealous, possessive even. I’ve done my best to control it, but I’m always afraid that you’ll fool around with him some time and ruin what we all have together.” Liam starts crying again during this and Niall doesn’t know how to react.

“Liam, I’m sorry. I didn’t know that this had been eating at you. I will never cheat again, I promise. I’m sorry that you see what I did with Harry as cheating, and I know why you feel that way. I can’t make that up to you or make that feeling go away. I can say I’m sorry a million times, but unless you have enough faith in me it’s never going to do any good.” Niall sighs.

“I do have faith in you Niall, in us. But I hate having him around here. He always flirts with us and I’m sick of it. I don’t want him here anymore. I don’t want him tempting you.” Liam says flatly.

The door flies open and Louis is standing there glaring. “Liam, not that it’s any of your business, but I’m not gay. Not anywhere on that end of the Kinsey spectrum. I’ve been with my wife since I was eighteen. If you want to fire me fine, I’ll be on a plane tomorrow, but I have never been interested in any of you sexually.” Louis storms off and Niall follows with Liam close behind.

“Louis, please wait.” Niall begs.

“No. I’m done being attacked by him.” Louis spits. “I’ve been teased and bullied my entire life for being flamboyant. It’s just the way I am, and as an adult I decided not to let it get to me anymore. Liam though, Liam has pushed me past the point I can take. Send me the table, take it out of my pay. And don’t worry, I won’t tell anyone about your relationship. I don’t ever want to think about this assignment again!”

The cinnamon haired boy grabs his bag off the table and storms out without another word. Niall turns on Liam and Harry takes Bran, who’s now crying loudly, to the bedroom.

“Great job Liam!” Niall growls. “I have done the best recovery of my life because of him! I would never hurt you again, but no. Nothing I say is enough for you. You have to judge someone you barely know and accuse us both of something neither of us would do. I’ve known about Eleanor for months, so has Harry. You would too if you’d just give him a chance.”

“I did give him a chance! He pushes and pushes at me for no reason! I am a civil man Niall, but he makes me mad on purpose.” Liam yells.

“He does it because you’re a stone when he’s around! You have no sense of humour with him. He’s funny Liam. And really nice. He likes all of us, even you when you relax a bit. I have defended you
to him over and over, telling him what an amazing sweet man you are. You made me a liar though. Just go out and get pissed. Harry and I can take care of Bran. He shouldn’t be around you until you calm down or pass out. Paul can send you home in a cab.” Niall walks away from Liam, unable to handle him anymore. Another row isn’t what he wanted, but he really should have expected it.

Liam drives around looking for Louis’ rental car. It’s a bright yellow Renault Captur, so it’s pretty easy to spot in town. He’s surprised to find it parked out front of the Druid’s chair. He parks and walks in, but Louis is nowhere to be seen. The crowd cheers at his entrance and he waves them off.

“Hey me aul son, aren’t you supposed to be watching my nephew right now?” Paul asks from the bar. Liam walks over to it and glances around for Louis’ face.

“Harry and Niall are watching him. He hates me anyways. Calls me Meanie. Have you seen Louis?” Liam asks.

“I’d have to know who you’re talking about to answer that question.” Paul laughs.

“Short, bad goatee, extremely flamboyant.” Liam replies. He’s scanned every face in the bar at least three times, but Louis isn’t here. “His car is parked out front.”

“Oh that lad. He’s a feckin laugh. He went out to his car a minute or so before you got here. Said he needed to grab his wallet. Left his keys here as collateral, but he hasn’t come back.” Paul holds up Louis’ keys and Liam slaps down a twenty euro note.

“Will that cover his tab?” Liam asks.

“And a nice tip. Here’s his keys. Probably shouldn’t be giving them to you, but you know I’d beat you if you betray me or my reputation. Don’t make me beat you.” Paul hands over the keys and Liam leaves with a smile as thanks.

He looks in Louis’ car windows and doesn’t see him. That’s when a pained scream sounds from the alley and Liam decides Louis can take second priority for now. Three thugs are beating someone, kicks flying into their stomach and face. Liam can’t see who it is, but he can hear them crying. He picks up a two by four from the ground and walks up behind them.

“Stop now, or I’ll drop you.” He roars. The boys, they’re no older than twenty, turn around and sneer at Liam.

“Listen mate, we ain’t got no beef with you. Go away and let us handle this faggot. No need to get involved.” The one in the middle sneers. The one on the right starts circling and grabs something from his waist. Silver flashes and Liam immediately realizes it’s a knife. He’s in over his head, but he’s not backing down.

“I’ll give you one chance to walk away from this. Refuse and you don’t walk ever again.” Liam threatens. Truth is, he’s probably the one that won’t walk away from this. He doesn’t have a direct shot at either one, and the size of the plank in his hands requires he swing it with both arms, leaving one side vulnerable. He’s been in a fair number of bar fights, but this is different. He has to be at his best to stand a chance, and he’s nowhere near his best right now. Not after yet another fight with Niall.

The one on the left pulls another knife and Liam curses under his breath. His last night with Niall and he spends it in a row, and then dies trying to find Louis. Bloody brilliant. Everything moves fast, adrenaline pumping through his veins. If he’s going to die then it’s not going to be without a fight.
He feints to the right and the thug jumps back. The bloke on his left rushes at him and he swings. The plank catches the guy in the jaw and he flies backwards into the wall head first.

He slides down the wall unconscious, but Liam has no time to savor his small victory. The man on his right dives at him with the blade outstretched and Liam catches it with the board. The knife cuts through it easily, probably a cheap material, but it gets stuck at the hilt. Liam takes the opportunity and lashes out his leg, catching the thug in the stomach with his steel toed boot.

The man falls to the ground and Liam brings the plank down hard on his head. He hits the ground and Liam stands over him panting. There’s a deafening crack through the alley and Liam’s left arm feels like he’s been punched. He turns and launches the plank at the last man. It catches him in the face and he goes face first into the dumpster. Liam walks up and kicks him in the back of the head, knocking him unconscious. His arm still hurts, and he’s not sure why until he sees the metal thing lying on the ground next to his feet.

He ignores it for now and checks on the other body on the ground. He rolls it over and of course it’s Louis. Who else could it be? Liam just played Batman for Louis. He’ll never live this down.

“Louis?” Liam shakes the boy. “Louis I need you to wake up.”

Louis’ eyes pop open and he looks around blearily, holding his bloodied nose and probably broken ribs. “Where’d they go? They took my wallet.”

“I’ll replace it. Can you walk?” Liam asks. His vision is starting to get blurry, and he knows he’ll lose consciousness soon.

“Think so.” Louis stands up. He looks unsteady, but he takes a few steps just fine. “Need help up?”

“No, Louis, I need you to go tell Paul to call an ambulance. I’ve been shot.” Liam says and then the world goes black around him.

When Liam opens his eyes the first thing he thinks is how incredibly dry his throat is. Niall and Harry are hovering over him, but all he wants is a drink of water. He tries to ask, but he falls back asleep before he can. He wakes again after what feels like several hours and his boys are still standing over him.

“Water.” He rasps. Niall and Harry freak out. Harry runs from the room screaming for a doctor, and Niall starts crying and follows him. Based on how puffy his face is, it’s not the first time. Louis shows up in his field of vision with a cup and Liam is thankful that someone can keep their head.

“I can’t just give you a cup of water yet, hospital regulations. The ice chips will help your throat though.” Louis says. He hands over the cup and Liam tries to take it. His arm throbs with pain and then he remembers everything. He falls back against the pillow and groans. “God, sorry. I’m such a fucking idiot. Lay back, I can have Niall feed them to you. Sorry.”

“Other hand.” is all Liam can manage with his throat. The words feel like razor blades in his mouth. Louis places the cup at Liam’s side. He lifts chips into his mouth and sighs at the instant relief. His throat quickly recovers, the dry skin lubricating to it’s natural condition. “What happened to the other guys?”

“Two were taken downtown . One of them is here though, you gave him a pretty nasty brain bleed when he hit the wall. Doctors say he’ll live. I’ve decided to press charges, but they probably won’t do much time unless you do too. Assault with a deadly weapon trumps mugging any day.” Louis
“Are you alright? You were pretty beaten up when I found you. Nothing broken?” Liam asks. His concern for the other boy is unsettling to him. He took a bullet, but all he cares about is that Louis isn’t hurt.

“Concussion and half my ribs are cracked, but other than that I’m fine. Liam I just wanted to say-” Louis starts.

“Don’t. I’m sorry I acted that way towards you. If I hadn’t been such an arse then you’d be fine and so would I. Don’t apologize or thank me. I was in the wrong all the way around.” Liam sighs. Now it makes sense. He feels guilt, remorse for always hating someone who did nothing but help.

“I was going to say goodbye and recommend a physical therapist for your arm you conceited ass.” Louis laughs. “You may have saved me, but you’ve been a bitch since day one. I’d say we’re even, but I still don’t like you.”

Liam scoffs. Of course that’s how this would play out. “I don’t like you either. I think you should stick around though. Niall needs you, and so will I. If you get me back up to speed half as well as you’re doing with Niall, then maybe we won’t have to hire another farm hand.”

“Why would I ever consider working for you after the last few months?” Louis asks, cocking an eyebrow.

“Because I’m asking you to. Because I want the chance to make up to you everything that I’ve said and done. What I did doesn’t make us even, I’m still way behind.” Liam says earnestly.

“We’ll have to work something out. I don’t know how El is going to react if I tell her I’m staying longer. Her hormones are all out of whack now. She’s um- she’s pregnant.” Louis sighs.

“Oh. Oh! I guess congratulations.” Liam says surprised. Louis really is straight apparently. Bi at the least.

“Will you two twats been listening in?” Louis asks, suddenly curious as to the lack of bouncing ginger energy.

“Literally the entire time.” Harry says. His face is stained with worry and Liam just wants to hold him until it all goes away. “Go call her and tell her my baby shower gift will be spectacular.”

Louis smiles and walks out of the room with his mobile out. Harry rushes to Liam’s side and Niall stands behind him and away from the bed. His face is still wet from tears. Harry gives Liam a big kiss on the cheek and fondly asks “How are you feeling Batman?”

“How long have you two twats been listening in?” Louis laughs.

“Wishing I had that Kevlar body armor and several billion dollars. You two will do though. Where’s Bran at?” Liam asks, suddenly curious as to the lack of bouncing ginger energy.

“We left him with Paul and called Fiona to tell her what happened. Good chance we’ll never get to babysit again. Can’t tell if that’s a good thing or a bad one.” Harry sighs. Liam moves to put another ice chip in his mouth but knocks the cup off the bed.

“Damn it.” Liam sighs. “Haz I hate to ask, but can you go get me another cup?”
“Of course babes. I’ll be back in a minute.” Harry smiles fondly. He leaves and now it’s just Niall standing around awkwardly and Liam trying to find the button that controls his pain meds.

“Are you going to talk to me or what?” Liam asks once a cool stream of morphine floods into his veins. Niall bursts into a fresh round of tears and Liam feels his heart slide into his stomach. “Nialler, I’m sorry.”

“And why would you be sorry? I got you shot Liam. You wouldn’t have been there if it weren’t for me. Yeah you saved Louis, but I would die if I lost you like that.” Niall sobs.

“I would have gone after Louis either way. He happened to be at the Chair, but I was looking for him, not a drink. I wanted to ask him to come back for you. I’m the reason I was out there, plain and simple. If you’re feeling guilty then stop, please. I’m fine.” Liam reaches out his good hand towards his boyfriend.

Niall takes it and slides onto the bed gently “The last conversation I had with me da was a fight Liam. I don’t want that to be the last thing that happens between us too. I don’t know what’s going on between us, but we need to fix it. You’ve been slipping away from me for a while, and I won’t let that happen unless you want to end this.”

“I don’t. I just- I just want to feel like you love me like you used to. I don’t want to be a third wheel to you and Hazza.” Liam admits. He’s been afraid of that ever since Harry came into their relationship. It’s left him angry and afraid for months.

“Liam I have loved you since we met. First as a friend and then as the man I wan to be with until I die. Now there are two of you, but that doesn’t mean I love you any less. I didn’t stop thinking about you at all during the year we were apart. If that didn’t break us, why is this?” Niall asks.

“Because I’m afraid that if you stop loving me I don’t know what I’ll do with my life. You and Harry are as good together as we ever were, but we’ve been slipping because I can’t stop feeling jealous that you love him more than me.” Liam isn’t shouting, but his voice is raising unconsciously.

Niall jumps off the bed and raises his hands to his head. “I don’t love him more! I love him equally to you! Why is that so hard for you to understand?”

“Because he doesn’t love us both equally Niall. He loves you, and I’m just a door prize.” Harry says quietly from the door.

“That’s not true Haz.” Niall says.

“It’s not. I love you Haz. I just feel like my history with Niall has to mean something. I love you so much, but Niall has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. There’s always going to be something like that between us. I don’t know how to get over that. I feel like you stole him from me. I’m trying to get over it, I promise. I just need time.” Liam is pleading now.

“No. I’m done trying at this. I’m done pretending this is going to work when it’s clear you’ve never been invested from the start. Take all the time you need away from me. Niall I’m so sorry, I hoped it would never come to this, but you need to make a decision, because apparently for all the work we’ve done he will never be all the way in this.” Harry walks away.

“A dhiabhail!” Niall yells. “Harry come back here. If this is going to end, it’s not going to be like this. I’m not choosing between you two. This is all or nothing, so you two work out your issues or choose to end it with each other and me.”

He pulls Harry to the side of the bed and then leaves and slams the door behind him. The silence is
deafening. Harry doesn’t move, doesn’t look at him. Liam doesn’t know what to say.

“I’m going to end this now.” Harry says quietly. “I love you Liam, but clearly you don’t want this. I think I can convince Niall to stay with you. I’ll give you the rest of the money for the farm and you two can just go.”

“I don’t want that Haz.” Liam says. He doesn’t. He wants both of them. He wants to just be happy.

“Don’t call me that!” Harry spits. “Don’t call me by that name. You have no right anymore. You don’t love me.”

“Yes I do!” Liam yells. “I love you so fucking much, but I don’t think I’m built like you two. I feel like loving you detracts from what love I have for Niall. I know it doesn’t, but I can’t make myself feel any different. It takes time.”

“We’ve had months together Liam. Months for you to adjust to this. If you can’t, I think that means you don’t want to. And that’s fine, this was always a gamble at best. But I can’t be in a relationship with someone who is only staying for someone else.” Harry sighs. Tears are still running down his face, but his speech is calmer now.

“Of course I want this. I love you both. I promise I do. Just give me a chance to change. Don’t leave us. Don’t push us out. Just give me a little more time, because I don’t want to lose you. Please don’t make me pull the gunshot wound card.” Liam says.

“I will shoot you myself if you do.” Harry smiles. “I’m willing to give this another shot Liam, but you have to move past whatever this is. For Niall, for me, and for yourself. I don’t know if you need more time with him or me, but we’ll do our best to help you through it.”

“There is one thing though. I know it’s selfish and now really isn’t the right time, but I need an apology. For sleeping with Niall behind my back, for helping him cheat on me. I need it to move on.” Liam casts his eyes downward, afraid to look Harry in the face with his request.

“Oh my god, I never did that, did I? I’m so sorry Liam. I know what we did was wrong. I don’t have an excuse for it. We should have waited until you were ready to do anything.” Harry says. His voice is soft, but it feels like it lifts a weight off of Liam’s chest.

“Thank you Haz.” Liam pulls the taller boy in with his right arm and holds him as tight as he can without hurting his arm. A wave of exhaustion sweeps through him and he falls asleep in Harry’s arms.

“It barely winged you ya cunt. Louis says you won’t even need rehab, just a couple more weeks of resting it and light exercise. Put on your own trousers.” Niall sighs. Liam has been super clingy to both of them since he got home. His attitude has improved considerably though.

“I didn’t ask you.” Liam sticks his tongue out. “I asked Hazza. Please Haz?”

Harry smiles fondly and helps the other boy into his jeans. Liam laughs and wiggles his hips to get them up the last few inches. Harry plants a kiss on his cheek before zipping and buttoning them.

“Listen here you little shit.” Niall points at Harry, who’s wearing a big smile. “He’s been out of the hospital for three weeks. He’s not even still in the sling. Stop spoiling him.”

“Someone has to be nice to me. Your grumpy arse hasn’t been for days.” Liam laughs.
“Because I’m not your damn nurse. Haz took that role, so I get to do literally everything else, including runs with Louis in the morning for my knee. I’m building a house, running a farm, and trying to keep up a relationship with a doting mother and a giggly baby. All on six hours of sleep and a bum knee!” Niall yells. He’s been breaking down for days, his easygoing manner being chipped at by his mass of responsibilities, until he’s nothing but raw nerves. Seeing his White Knight, the hero who saved him so many times he’s lost count, acting like this isn’t helping.

“Niall, I can take over the house. Liam can function well enough on his own that I only need to pop in for meals and occasional visits.” Harry offers.

“No. You stayed with me while I was hurt, Liam deserves the same. I know how incredibly bored he gets. Just stop asking me to be happy go lucky while all this is going on.” Niall sighs.

“I’m sorry Nialler, I didn’t realize this bothered you so much. That my being shot, was such an inconvenience for you. Because it was a damn party for me!” Liam yells.

“Stop it both of you.” Harry snaps. “Niall, go on your rounds and then come home for a nap. You obviously need the sleep. I will take care of the house today, no arguments. Liam, he’s obviously not upset that he has to do this much, he’s upset seeing you hurt. You know how he is about talking things out. How both of you are. Breakfast is on the table, and I want a nice one now!”

Niall hangs his head and walks out to the table dutifully. Liam shuffles behind him and whispers “You made mommy mad.”

“I heard that.” Harry says forcefully. Niall and Liam both snicker and Harry pulls out a chair and sits down.

“I’m sorry. I’m just really not a morning person. Louis is going to be here soon for my run and I’m dreading it.” Niall says. It’s the truth, not the whole truth, but it’s enough for now.

“Well stop taking it out on us.” Liam pouts. “You don’t have to stay up until midnight every night watching the footy matches you missed. We wouldn’t be upset if you went to bed earlier.”

“Then I wouldn’t get to watch footy until you’re healed. Not a win in my book.” Niall sighs. “I’m already missing rugby and golf.”

“Then let me come out on the farm with you. I can still do some things.” Liam offers. He’s taken to eating more since he was shot, and he’s already finished the toast and eggs that Harry made them. It’s a startling contrast from the boy he was before this, always minding his meals to be completely healthy and proper proportions.

“Not until Louis says it’s okay. Last thing I need is to drag your body back here because you collapse from exhaustion. You’re very heavy and I’m very small.” Niall counters.

“No Liam! You’ve got four inches on me height-wise and you’re a wall of muscle.” Niall recovers. The worst thing possible would be for Liam to spin back down that way. Niall couldn’t handle that.

“Better be all you meant. Haz, let’s start our runs back up today. Apparently I’m getting fat.” Liam laughs.

“No. Today we start yoga. Haven’t done any since you watched me suck myself off. You promised to do it with me when I agreed to be your work out buddy.” Harry smiles. “Don’t worry, I already
talked to Louis about poses we can do that will be fine with your arm.”

“Nialler save me!” Liam whines.

“Uh uh, he’s the nice one remember?” Niall asks with an evil grin.

“I knew that would come back to bite me in the arse.” Liam whines.

“Your arse is flat as a wall Liam, nothing to bite onto.” Louis says when he opens the door. Niall and Harry lose their shit at Liam’s offended face.

“My arse is gorgeous and none of your business.” Liam scoffs.

“I have to second that Louis.” Harry smiles. “He has a cute bum.”

“It’s true. It’s very cute when he’s not wearing the baggy jeans.” Niall agrees.

“What about the none of his business part? Anyone going to second that?” Liam groans, dropping his head to the table.

“That too. Focus on your wife’s ass you strange hetero man.” Niall laughs.

“It’s ballooning, and not in a pretty way. Apparently one baby wasn’t enough, got the news yesterday that we’re having triplets. I’m going to have to move her here, because in a few months she won’t be able to stand up on her own. She’s so pissed off.” Louis sighs.

“Three miniature versions of you running around? That’s a terrifying thought.” Liam laughs.

“Laugh all you want. My kids are going to be born in Ireland, now that’s terrifying.” Louis snarks.

“You want to be fired? Because I can make that happen. You can go back to Britain penniless right now if you prefer.” Niall says with a glare.

“Sorry Niall. It’s my mum, every generation of her family going back as far as we can track has been born in England. She’s going to have a stroke.” Louis whines. He sits in Harry’s lap and eats the toast he hadn’t gotten to yet. “Maybe if a celebrity would make a phone call though, tell her I’m desperately needed here.”

“Handle your own mum Louis. And go make your own toast if you’re hungry.” Harry snatches the piece out of his hand and pushes him to his feet.

“Nah. I’m here for a run and that’s what I’ll do. Ready Horan?” Louis asks expectantly.

“Am I ever?” Niall asks with a pout.

“Nope. It’s very frustrating.” Louis rolls his eyes.

“I will make you children fatherless.” Niall groans. “Push you down a hill and make it look like an accident.”

“That might be a mercy. I’m not ready for three brats. Now get your arse up and let’s get going. I have to book a flight and get back to Doncaster so you’ll have a few days off from this. I’m sorry to leave you high and dry.” Louis sighs.

“It’s fine. Your wife should come first.” Harry smiles. “Let me take care of the tickets. I’ll have them waiting for you at the airport by this afternoon. First class both ways.”
“I’d say I can’t ask you to do that, but I didn’t and I’m not stupid enough to turn down first class with a pregnant wife on the return trip. Thank you Harry.” Louis smiles and it’s almost kind.

“No problem. Is the house going to be big enough, or do you need a new one?” Harry questions.

“It’s three bedrooms. It’ll be fine.” Louis laughs.

“Lets get going. Sooner we get this over with the better.” Niall groans and gets out of his seat. Irish mornings are still cold, even in summer, so he’s wearing Liam’s joggers and a jumper he’s stolen from Harry. It’s all that keeps him standing sometimes.

“Finally you bloody pain. Let’s go.” Louis walks out the door and Niall shuffles after him. Being asleep would be really great right this minute. The cold air does it’s best to wake him up as maliciously as possible, succeeding tremendously. Louis never really seems to be affected by it, even going so far as to wear a t-shirt with his usual leggings.

He’s kind enough to start them slow, walking the first lap instead of just jogging the entire time. Of course it’s Louis so he normally spends the entire first lap babbling about anything and everything that comes to his mind. Today is different. They reach the midway point of the first lap before Niall realizes he isn’t even blocking anything out, Louis just isn’t talking. “What’s up Tommo?” Niall asks, continuing his slow pace.

“Don’t know if I’m ready for this.” Louis admits quietly. “We didn’t plan this at all. El just finished working on her DVM a couple months ago, but she hasn’t found a job, and while you guys pay me really well, I’m not sure when this assignment will end. I have no idea what I’m going to do.”

“You’re going to snark and fake your way through it until you know what you’re doing.” Niall tells him flatly. “That’s the man I know.”

“I don’t think snark is a proper life plan Niall.” Louis sighs. “I need help, and I’m not too proud to admit it. What should I do?”

“You said you’re a registered nurse right?” Niall asks. “Then get a job at one of the hospitals around here. There are several to pick from. As for El, I’m not even sure what a DVM is, so I can’t make any recommendations on that.”

“Degree of Veterinary Medicine.” Louis replies.

“There are dozens of farms around here, including ours.” Niall laughs. “Is she trained in large or small animals?”

“Large, particularly horses.” Louis tells him.

“Well then I’m sure we’ll find a place for her here.” Niall grins. “I already told ya we’re switching to a horse farm come next spring. She’d be welcome to stay on as our personal vet. Flexible hours, good pay, and of course we could pay for daycare.”

“I said I need help Niall, not charity.” Louis pouts.

“It’s not charity Louis.” Niall says adamantly. “We will need a vet on our staff, and your wife is one. She won’t be much use to us until spring between the pregnancy and our current livestock, but I’ll talk to Haz and Li to see if we can work something out.”

“Wait until I talk to her at least. She may not even want to stay here after the babies are born.” Louis says quietly. “Both our families are back in Britain, so we may not be staying afterwards.”
“Oh, yeah.” Niall says, shaking his head. He hadn’t even really considered that Louis would want to leave. The cinnamon haired boy already feels like a permanent fixture in Niall’s life. It’s hard to think of one of his friends leaving. “Of course Tommo.”

“I’ll put in a few good words though. Never thought I’d love this place so much.” Louis says with a small smile. “It smells like beer and animals, but it’s kind of nice.”

“Yer such an arse.” Niall laughs. “Now let’s get going. I have too much to do to stand here and console yer fat arse all day.”

“Yes sir!” Louis laughs with a salute. He starts jogging and quickly pulls ahead of Niall, cackling like a maniac. This is going to be a really long day if Niall has to keep doing all this.

Niall’s nap is a little more than that. He sleeps for about six hours after he gets back from the ranch. Liam falls asleep on the couch while Harry cooks all alone. Will sent all the workers home for the day at Harry’s request so that Niall could sleep without all the construction noise. At this point one day isn’t going to matter much towards the completion. Niall wanders out to the kitchen with bleary eyes and his hair sticking up. He’s only wearing Harry’s sweater now and the curly haired boy smiles.

“Have I ever told you how beautiful you are Nialler? Especially in my clothes.” Harry leaves his food to simmer and goes to hold the blond. Niall’s head falls against Harry’s chest and his hands, which are completely covered in sleeves, rest by his face.

“Once or twice.” He mumbles and his eyes fall closed. “You’re so much more comfortable than the bed.”

“I like this better too.” Harry smiles into Niall’s hair.

“Sorry I’ve been such an arse lately.” Niall sighs.

“I understand it Nialler. Seeing him this way has to be unnerving for you. Especially since you were fighting right before it happened.” Harry says softly.

“Why can’t he see that?” Niall asks. “He’s been saving me my entire life. I hate seeing him weak and vulnerable like this. Especially when he jokes about it.”

“I know babes, but he has to handle this in his own way. He went through something traumatic. If he needs to be taken care of, needs to feel safe and loved, I don’t think there’s anything too wrong with that.” Harry says.

“I hadn’t thought of it that way.” Niall admits. “You really think that’s what it is? He hasn’t changed permanently? Because, right now, he is not the man I fell in love with.”

“He’ll be back to normal soon. To him, to a man like him, this is just a stumble. He won’t stay down for long. A psychologist would say it’s akin to impotence. Right now Liam is denying it, seeking comfort in the security that someone loves him. After this he’ll probably be angry for a while. Then he’ll overcome it. He’s strong enough to get past this Niall. I promise.” Harry tells him. He holds the small boy tighter in his arms and wishes he could comfort him forever, take all the pain out of his life.

“Oh god he’s going to get mad again?” Niall asks. He burrows his face tightly against Harry’s chest and sighs. “I hope that stage is short. Really don’t know if I can handle it again.”
“We’ll share that burden when it comes to it.” Harry says softly. He’d be willing to do anything for these boys.

“Speaking of impotence... You’ve um- you’ve noticed it too right?” Niall asks with a blush.

“Believe me, I’ve noticed.” Harry sighs. Not only have they not had sex all together since Liam came home, he’s blocked the other two boys at every attempt to have sex with each other or even wank. Harry has an agonizing case of blue balls.

“Think it’s on purpose?” Niall asks. Harry can feel the blond boy’s heart beat against his own and the sensation is soothing.

“Subconsciously yes. On the surface? No, I think he’s just tired. Healing takes a lot of energy. We only did yoga for twenty minutes before he couldn’t keep going.” Harry admits. It bothered Harry a little, but Liam was sweating buckets and he knew it was the right decision to stop.

“At least he’s trying.” Niall sighs in relief.

“He is, so if you could lighten up on him that would help. Come talk to me when you’re upset. I will always make time for you.” Harry smiles softly.

“Because I’m your favorite?” Harry can feel Niall smile against his chest.

“Hey I told you not to say that around anyone. You’re lucky I dosed his tea with the pills he refuses to take. He’ll be out for a while.” Harry whispers.

“You realize what that means right?” Niall giggles.

“Been waiting for you to figure it out Nialler. Food should be good for another twenty minutes or so.” Harry smiles.

“Probably won’t even take that long. I’ve been gagging for it. Haven’t even had time to wank. You okay doing the heavy lifting though? I’m still pretty tired.” Niall pulls back from Harry’s chest and smiles weakly. Harry scoops him up, hands under his bum so that the blond is straddling his hips.

“Don’t mind at all. Anything for you.” Harry says in between snogs.

Niall giggles and whispers. “Onward my noble steed.”

Harry carries him to the bedroom quickly, closing the door with his foot once he’s clear of it. He drops Niall on the bed and pushes him back into a laying position. He kneels down and kisses at the exposed skin of Niall’s legs. He looks up and sees Niall growing hard. “Do you even wear underwear anymore?”

“Nope. Got used to skipping it when I had the cast. We’re lucky I even wear trousers anymore. Now are you going to waste time questioning my clothing habits, or are you going to shag me?” Niall says impatiently.

Harry smiles and leans up to lick at Niall. His tongue runs all around the quickly stiffening cock, mouthing at the skin around the base, kissing gently at his balls. Once Niall is completely hard and leaking Harry takes him into his mouth and sucks. His head bobs up and down while his hands explore the skin hidden by his jumper. Niall starts to strip it off but Harry’s hands capture his.

“Leave it on.” he growls, pulling off of Niall’s prick. Niall’s penis is smaller than either of the other two boys, and although he’s average by most standards he seems insecure about it, but that doesn’t
stop Harry from thinking he’s absolutely perfect. His prick stands proud and pink, begging for
release. Harry wants to give it some. “Now how would you like to fuck my ass?”

Niall sucks air in through his teeth. “Wasn’t what I was planning on, but how can I say no to such a
tempting offer?”

“Don’t worry, I’ll still do the work though. You just lay back and let me ride you.” Harry stands and
tears off his clothes, shimmying out of his underwear in seconds. He climbs onto Niall and he’s
already leaking at the prospect. He hasn’t had Niall fuck him yet, the blond continually opting to
bottom. “You good with that?”

“Yeah, definitely.” Niall moans. His hips buck under Harry’s and the curly haired boy falls forward,
meeting Niall’s mouth in a heavy kiss. Their tongues writh against each other and Harry grinds
down onto Niall. He reaches past Niall for the lube on the bedside table. He isn’t surprised to find a
thin layer of dust on it. He squeezes the clear liquid onto his hand and reaches back to grab Niall
with it. The blond gasps and moans, thrusting up into Harry’s clenched hand.

“No now, I said I’d do the work Nialler. Allow me.” Harry says as he gently strokes Niall. Once
his prick is sufficiently lubricated Harry reaches for his hole instead. He doesn’t finger himself,
wanting to remain tight for Niall, just coats himself in the mixture of lube and Niall’s precum. He
lowers himself slowly, holding Niall’s cock to keep it steady.

Niall moans loudly once his head pushes through the ring of muscle. Harry licks his lips and pushes
down, quickly taking all of Niall into himself. He isn’t as big, doesn’t fill him up the same way Liam
does, but he reaches that spot inside Harry perfectly.

“Hike up the jumper. Don’t take it off, just move it out of the line of fire.” Harry orders. The blond
complies, hitching the woolen sweater up to his armpits. Harry rocks his hips back slowly, trying to
keep his orgasm at bay because it’s building embarrassingly fast. He hasn’t even touched himself yet,
has only moved a few times, but he’s leaking all over Niall’s stomach. “Don’t judge me if this
doesn’t take long okay?”

“Only if you do the same for me.” Niall laughs. Sex between them is so easy. There’s no pressure to
be perfect or mind blowing. It can be messy and funny sometimes, but they never mind. Harry
pushes his hips down and moans when Niall hits that spot in him again. This definitely isn’t going to
take long. He starts to ride quickly, rapidly pushing his hips down on Niall.

Niall’s hand flies forward and grabs Harry’s cock. It only takes a few tugs before he’s cumming all
over Niall’s stomach and chest. The orgasm is almost crippling, Harry’s body goes rigid and his
breathing stops. He can’t see or think, just feel waves of pleasure ripping through his nervous system.
Niall thrusts into him wildly, moaning as he cums with Harry, who can’t really hear much of it over
the blood pounding in his ears.

Harry finally collapses on top of Niall, landing in his own sticky mess. Niall is still hard inside him,
his cock twitching and occasionally bumping Harry’s prostate, sending little thrills through him. “I
needed that so badly.” Harry sighs contentedly.

“So it was alright? I wasn’t um- I wasn’t too small or anything?” Niall asks nervously.

“Perfect size Nialler. Kept right up on my spot the whole time. Best fuck I’ve had in ages.” Harry
tells him softly.

“Don’t lie to me Haz. I know I’m small down there. I’ve been told it’s not very satisfying.” Niall
admits. Harry lifts his head just enough to look into Niall’s eyes, which are turned away from him in
shame.

“Niall I would never lie to you. I love you too much for that. I am completely satisfied.” Harry says, tipping Niall’s chin so their eyes meet. “Whoever told you that was wrong.”

“It wasn’t just one guy Harry. Liam wasn’t my first you know. I was twenty one when we got together. Eventually I just stopped trying to be a top. I’ve never even asked Liam. He’s offered a coupla times, but we’ve never tried. I’m afraid to disappoint him.” Niall says.

“Well you didn’t disappoint me. I wouldn’t mind doing it all the time.” Harry tells him. It’s true. He hasn’t had an orgasm that intense in his entire life, although part of that probably came from the sexual drought he’s been in.

“Really? You’re not just being nice because you love me?” Niall asks.

“Really Nialler. Now can we clean up? Because my jizz is really really cold now.” Harry laughs.

“Tá grá agam duit.” Niall whispers.

“I love you too, Nial.” Harry whispers back. He peels himself off of the blond and grimaces at the sticky fluid stringing between them. “Let me get something to wipe off with.”

He searches around for a towel while Niall giggles from the bed. Finally he grabs one and turns around to find Niall with his phone in hand. He wipes off his stomach and tosses the towel to the blond. “You took a picture of my bum didn’t you?” He asks.

“Course I did. How could I resist a tempting offer?” Niall laughs. “I think I’ll set it as my new background.”

“You wouldn’t.” Harry gasps.

“Already am.” Nial says with a wicked grin.

“You really are the mean one, aren’t you?” Harry pouts. He doesn’t really mind if Niall takes embarrassing pictures of him, just the glee with which he does so. He knows Niall would never leak them or do anything to hurt him.

“You literally drugged Liam just so we could have a quickie and I’m the mean one? If I was mean I wouldn’t remind you that almost twenty minutes have passed.” Niall reminds Harry.

“I only dosed him because Louis says if he doesn’t take them he won’t recover as well. Crazy monkey sex is just a bonus. I’ll go get the food. You get the shower started. Don’t get any cum on that jumper. It’s one of my favorites.” Harry sighs.

“I know, why do you think I stole it? You love when I wear your clothes, especially your favorites. Liam gets all possessive, but you? You just love it. Get’s you all warm and fuzzy inside.” Niall says cockily.

“Also makes me incredibly horny.” Harry admits. “So find your own clothes to wear or the Great Cock-Blocker won’t be enough to stop me again.”

“Yes sir.” Niall giggles. He wipes Harry’s cum off of his stomach and stands up to go shower. Harry gives him a swat on the bum as a parting gift before going to take dinner off the stove. He does it quickly, thankful he didn’t make anything that would splatter on his still nude self. Once he’s confident nothing has burned he rushes back to join Niall.
The blonde is just stepping into the shower when Harry gets there. Niall smiles and beckons Harry to join him. Harry steps past the doors and closes them behind him. The water is hot, steam already filling the small space, and Harry revels in it. His hair hangs heavy on his head like a sheet and he lets the weight of it bend his neck. He rests his lead on Niall’s shoulder and sighs contentedly.

“I’ve missed this.” Niall mumbles.

“Me too. I love Liam, but this shower is way too small for the three of us to fit comfortably.” Harry responds. Honestly it’s probably too small for two of them, but Niall’s small frame slots against Harry’s perfectly and they don’t need much more space than one person would.

“I’m glad we went with the huge one in the new house. The bench is going to be a godsend.” Niall says with a giggle.

“Personally I’m looking forward to the giant tub. All three of us can fit with some wiggle room. It even has jets.” Harry smiles into Niall’s shoulder. Their bathroom, their large bedroom, and the kitchen have been Harry’s pet projects during the whole thing.

“You really just wanted to live in isolation didn’t you? You didn’t care about farming.” Niall laughs. “I think you just wanted to live the life of luxury without dealing with people.”

“Actually I thought I’d be like a cowboy. I had a special outfit made and everything. Turns out I’m not very good at being a cowboy. It’s rather disappointing.” Harry sighs.

“I don’t remember seeing that outfit. You buy the boots?” Niall asks.

“I left it at the London flat. Didn’t want to embarrass myself in front of the cute blond that runs the place. And yes I did buy the boots.” Harry laughs. The whole set is custom made for him, which honestly should have told him he was more interested in the fantasy of being a cowboy than the reality of farm life.

“You have to have Zayn send that outfit. I bet you look fit in it.” Niall giggles.

“No way. I have one last shred of dignity left and I am not tossing that on the fire.” Harry tells him. He pulls his head off Niall’s shoulder and grabs the shampoo from the shelf behind him. He drops a dollop onto his hands and runs it through Niall’s hair. “We need to dye your hair again if you want to stay blonde. Your roots are showing really far.”

“Will you do it for me? I hate going to the salon. Every woman there thinks that just because I’m gay I’m a gossipy slut.” Niall groans.

“Sure, I’ll call my stylist and have her walk me through it.” Harry smiles.

“I’ve been thinking of keeping it brown on the sides and back. I did it before and I liked it.” Niall mumbles.

“I’ve seen a picture. Personally I think it was your best look.” Harry smiles.

“Think you can handle the clippers to take them down to the roots?” Niall asks curiously.

“Yeah. I’ve done it before for some people. Shouldn’t be too bad. When do you want me to do it?” Harry asks.

“Is tomorrow okay? You could run into town while I’m on my rounds and we could do it at lunch.” Niall offers.
“I’ll check my date-book. I may not be available on such short notice.” Harry jokes.

“Absolute twat.” Niall laughs. Harry’s hands are still lathering up his hair and he leans into it even as he scolds Harry. His hands fiddle with Harry’s now straightened locks, combing most of it behind his ears to keep the sheer immensity of it out of Harry’s eyes and face. “Have you considered a haircut? Nothing drastic, just maybe taking it back to the length you were at in twenty fourteen. A little above the shoulder when it’s dry.”

“I have, I’ve even considered cutting it short and starting again. I’ve just been growing it for so long I haven’t really thought about what I want going forward. What would you like?” Harry asks. He’s genuinely curious. He doesn’t need a trademark look anymore, he doesn’t really care that much about it either. He wants to know what Niall wants.

“I’m kind of curious to see what you’d look like with short hair. Not like short short, but like 3 inches long or so. If I had to pick a point from your past though, it would be your curly quiff from twenty twelve or thirteen. You looked proper fit then, not that you don’t now of course.” Niall says. Harry can’t tell if he’s just trying to be diplomatic, or genuinely ambivalent. Either would be very Niall.

“That’s not very committal. I’ll call Lou and see what she has to say. She’s never steered me wrong before. She’ll fly over and do it if I ask her. Oh and I can see Lux!” Harry squeals in excitement. He hasn’t seen the girl in almost a year, she’s started school so she couldn’t come with Lou on tours. She’s probably gotten so big now.

“You just want an excuse to see another kid. If anyone gets shot this time I will beat you.” Niall grumbles.

“Do you uh- do you want kids?” Harry asks. He still hasn’t breached the subject, too afraid that the other boys will reject it.

“I know Liam does. I’ve never really thought about it too much. Being gay put a stop to the natural process for me, and until you came along I was alone and never had the financial stability to consider adoption or surrogacy. I’m just afraid to bring a child into my life I guess. I lost me mum, me da, and my brother. I don’t want to expose a child to that sort of bad luck.” Niall sighs. It’s pretty heavy for shower talk.

“Oh. I can see that. Do you um- do you still think you’re bad luck?” Harry asks. His heart drops in his chest because he thinks that the three of them finding each other was an amazing stroke of luck, a miracle even.

“You fell off a roof two days after you met me and Liam was shot just after we had a fight in a very twisted version of what happened to me da. What do you think?” Niall asks. He isn’t angry sounding, almost sad actually.

“I think shite happens. I’ve fallen off a lot of things in my life because I’m a klutz. Liam has a hero complex because he wants to avoid being like his father, whom he sees as a failure. Your father had an aneurysm and your mother had cancer. Neither of those things was because of you. Greg wasn’t because of you. Anything can happen at any time. Would having a child make you happy, or wouldn’t it not?” Harry asks forcefully. He isn’t trying to be mean, nothing of the sort truthfully. He’s just trying to force some perspective.

“Jesus Haz. You get straight to the point don’t you. If I really think about it, then yeah I think I would like a kid some time down the line. We have enough on our plates right now though don’t we? The house and the farm exchange next year. We don’t have time to try and find a surrogate who
would accept our weirdness, because three unmarried guys trying adoption is a laugh. We don’t have time to decide who gets to be the father. We’re not even in a good enough place emotionally to start that conversation.” Niall says it all so quickly. He looks completely out of breath.

“I’m not asking about right now Niall. Even I know that it’s not the right time. I just wanted to know if you want to be a father somewhere inside. I think you’d be an amazing one.” Harry smiles. He reaches up and tilts Niall’s head back into the stream of water to rinse out the shampoo.

“Why do you two do the big talks after sex? Can’t you ever just bask in the afterglow?” Niall asks. His eyes are scrunched to keep out any shampoo running the wrong direction but he just look so cute.

“Nope. It’s the best time to catch you with your defenses down.” Harry laughs.

“I am an open book Haz. You can always ask me anything. Let me have my cool down without being interrogated.” Niall sighs. Harry takes his hands away and Niall puts his head up and blinks the water out of his eyes.

“You joke your way out of the tough talks unless you’re tired, fighting, or post-sex Nialler. It’s like you’re allergic to being serious sometimes.” Harry says with a smile.

“I’m Irish. We don’t just talk about our feelings here.” Niall shrugs.

“I’m British. The repression excuse won’t work on me. We know a thing or two about it. Seriously though, if you agree to open up more then I’ll stop asking heavy questions after sex alright?” Harry offers.

“Deal. Now why don’t you soap me up and then we can go for another round in the bedroom before Payno wakes up?” Niall waggles his eyebrows. Harry decides that idea is perfect.

Liam wakes up to a voice calling his name and his shoulder shaking. He’s groggy and his arm doesn’t hurt much despite being pinned under him during his nap. He blinks away the sleep in his eyes and focuses on Niall’s face floating in front of him.

“Good god Haz, how much did you give him?” Niall asks. Liam doesn’t understand the question. He barely hears it actually.

“Just what it says on the bottle. Louis said he needs it for his recovery and he’s been a prat about taking them.” Harry calls from the kitchen. Liam still doesn’t fully understand, but he has a good idea what’s going on now.

“You drugged me?” Liam slurs.

“I gave you the pills that both a nurse and a doctor say you need to take. Muscle relaxants help your body heal after a bullet makes a tunnel in your arm. I’m sorry though. I should have just talked to you instead of dropping them in your tea.” Harry sighs. He looks guilty and Liam can’t really be mad.

“You drugged me?” Liam slurs.

“I gave you the pills that both a nurse and a doctor say you need to take. Muscle relaxants help your body heal after a bullet makes a tunnel in your arm. I’m sorry though. I should have just talked to you instead of dropping them in your tea.” Harry sighs. He looks guilty and Liam can’t really be mad.

“Just ask me next time. I’ve only been a prat when you ask because I’ve been taking them in the mornings. Did you not notice the bottle is half empty?” Liam asks. He didn’t want the boys to know he’s been relying on the medicine. It seems so weak to him.

“Wait you have? Oh god I’m so sorry Liam.” Harry cries.
“It’s fine I guess. Should have told you I was taking them. You’re too much of a mother hen to let that go.” Liam sighs. The fog in his head is starting to clear up just a bit.

“Actually I’m pretty sure I shouldn’t have drugged you. I can’t tell you how sorry I am Li. I should have just told you to take your pills.” Harry looks like he’s on the verge of tears.

“Did you learn your lesson?” Liam asks. Harry nods furiously. “Then let’s say it’s over and move on from this. You finish dinner?”

“Yeah. You sure you’re okay?” Harry asks worriedly.

“I’m fine. I’m a little grumpy, but you didn’t do it maliciously. You did it because you care about me.” Liam sighs. He’s fully prepared to move on from this conversation, but Harry seems to want to beat the dead horse until his arm gives out.

“Okay you two can keep playing out this soap opera. I’m digging into the curry.” Niall says from the table. Liam didn’t even notice he’d left.

“Where’d you learn to make curry Haz?” Liam asks. It’s not exactly British cuisine.

“Zayn taught me. Actually his mother taught Pez, and she taught me, because he hates to cook. It was Zayn’s idea though.” Harry shrugs. He helps Liam up and they take their seats around Niall. The meal is spectacular, but it burns Liam’s mouth and he ends up drinking three glasses of milk just to dull the pain. Harry and Niall spend the whole time having a stupid joke contest.

“What’s brown and sticky? A stick.” Harry laughs. Niall loses it and Harry throws his hands in the air. “You laughed! I win!”

“That was the worst joke I’ve ever heard Haz. They’ve sent people to prison for less.” Niall gasps through bouts of laughter.

“Whatever Horan, you’re just jealous I won.” Harry smiles triumphantly. He snatches the last bun up from the basket and dips it in his curry. “I accept my trophy graciously.”

“Graciously my arse.” Niall sticks his tongue out. Harry takes a big bite out of the bun teasingly and smiles with his mouth full. “You’re lucky you got that pretty face. Keeps me from getting too mad.”

Harry smiles cockily and tosses the rest of the bun to Niall. “Take the rest. I have my sweet sweet victory and that’s enough for me.”

“Yes!” Niall hisses. He scoops up what’s left of his meal and then shoves the bun in his mouth. Liam can’t help but smile. It’s such a reversal from this morning and that’s a massive relief.

It’s the end of August but Liam hasn’t really been paying attention. Niall and Harry have taken advantage of this fact and set up a party for tonight. Not many people have been invited, just the few that know about their relationship, but it should still be fun. Eleanor is coming so Louis will be on his best behavior, Will and Fiona have left Bran at home, and Paul is bringing enough liquor to drown themselves in. Zayn and Perrie are even flying in, though Harry isn’t sure why considering they haven’t really met Liam, but the more the merrier.

“You never told me, are you cooking or ordering take away?” Niall asks. Liam has started doing rounds on the farm again, his arm nearly back to one hundred percent, so they can talk freely.
“Pizza. Don’t have time to cook and hide food for ten people.” Harry laughs.

“Makes sense. Just remember, no pepperoni or pork for Zayn, Pez and Will are vegetarians, and Paul is lactose intolerant.” Niall reminds him.

“I remember. There’s a list of pizzas in my back pocket if you wouldn’t mind ordering. Make it for eight please?” Harry says. He’d do it himself, but he’s currently trying to hang a banner that will roll down when they start the party. Niall fishes around in Harry’s pocket and gives him a quick slap on the bum before going off to order the pizzas.

Harry just barely finishes hanging the banner when his pocket starts vibrating. He steps down and grabs his mobile out of his pocket. A picture of Zayn drinking out of a funnel and tube pops up and Harry answers it. “What do you want Malik? I’m kind of busy.” Harry grumbles.

“What’s up your ass Styles? Or is it a lack of that that’s making you grumpy?” Zayn laughs.

“I have a surprise party to throw and I didn’t know until six days ago that it’s Liam’s birthday.” Harry sighs.

“That’s okay. I can never remember Pez’s birthday and we’ve been together for years.” Zayn laughs and then yelps. Harry guesses that she gave him a good smack for that one.

“I’m guessing you’ve landed in Dublin then?” Harry asks.

“Yeah. We have to pick up the car and then we’ll be on our way. Where did you hide your key?”

“Under the mat. Do me a favor and park down the road a bit though, towards the shed. It’s not a long walk but it should help keep the surprise for Li. I’m trusting you to pick Paul up first though. If you come without him Thor and Loki will probably eat you alive.” Harry warns the darker boy.

“I’m sorry, you have comic characters guarding your farm?” Zayn laughs.

“They’re wolf hounds you arse. They’re also about eight inches taller than me when they stand up so it’s fair to say you and your fiance won’t last a minute if you don’t bring someone they know.” Harry snarks.

“Yeah yeah, I got the email Styles. I’ll pick up the Hulk and we’ll be on our best behavior.” Zayn sighs.

“Wait until you see Will. Paul is the runt of the family.” Harry laughs.

“Well now I know what I’m getting you for Christmas. I wouldn’t have figured you’d be into the Jolly Green Giants. You do you though.” Zayn says with a giggle.

“Shut up and grab your rental Malik. We’ll be gone by the time you get here.” Harry sighs and hangs up without a goodbye.

Niall walks back in with a smile. “Seven pizzas ordered and ready to go. They’ll be here at eight. Speaking of, why aren’t we gone yet? We only have like two hours until the party and we still have to get Liam out of here.”

“Zayn just called to let me know they’ve landed. We can go now.” Harry smiles. Everything is set up and his present is hidden, so he’s good to go.
“Then let’s go grab our birthday boy and get on our way. Got your first gift?” Niall asks.

“First gift?” Harry asks. He’s not familiar with the term.

“We’re taking Liam out on his birthday. Don’t you think he’ll notice if you don’t give him a gift at dinner? You’re too rich to pull off saying sex is a birthday present.” Niall rolls his eyes.

“I only bought him one.” Harry cries. “If I give it to him at dinner then I have nothing to give him at the party.”

“It’s okay. I kind of figured that would be the way it happened. I got you a matching gift with mine just in case.” Niall smiles.

“What is it?” Harry asks cautiously.

“Steering wheel cover.” Niall shrugs.

“What? What exactly did you get him?” Harry asks. He’s deeply confused.

“A new truck you sod.” Niall laughs.

“You- you bought him a truck?” Harry is dumbfounded.

“You bought him a custom Rolex with a Batman symbol made of diamonds. I had to compete.” Niall says with a shrug.

“How did you know that?” Harry gasps. He’s hidden it really well. Niall shouldn’t even know it exists.

“You left the site open on your laptop. If I hadn’t closed it Liam would have seen.” Niall flashes a bright smile. “Can’t wait to see what you’ve got for two weeks from now.”

“What happens two weeks from now?” Harry asks. There aren’t any important holidays coming as far as he’s aware.

“My birthday is September thirteenth Haz.” Niall says with a flat expression.

“Son of a banana! Why don’t you two ever tell me this stuff with more time to prepare?” Harry groans. Now he has to plan another party, but that one won’t be a surprise because how could it be?

“I know your birthday.” Niall pouts. “It’s February first.”

“Yeah but you can look my birthday up on Google if you forget.” Harry sighs. Niall looks offended so Harry recovers with “I’m sorry. I’m shite at dates. I don’t even know the date of our anniversary to be honest.”

“Well that’s complicated at least. Liam and me had October third originally, and then it was March fifteenth we started talking again and all of us met, but March thirtieth when we started shagging again. You and I started up on April eleventh and talked to Liam on June sixth about the relationship. So it’s June sixth if we’re being proper about it.” Niall explains.

“How can you possibly remember all that?” Harry asks flabbergasted. He can barely keep his mother’s birthday down, let alone anniversaries and things.

“Dates are easy for me.” Niall shrugs. “I can write all the important ones down for you if you want.”
“That would be a life saver.” Harry sighs with gratitude.

“Alright, let’s get going though. Liam knows we’re going to dinner and I’m having the truck delivered to the restaurant, so I need to be there to sign for it.” Niall says. He grabs his wallet off the table and waves Harry over. Harry obliges and gives him a kiss before scooting out the door. Liam is sitting in the range Rover with a big grin on his face like he’s a child. “Your present is being delivered with mine by the way. And it isn’t really a steering wheel cover. It’s a hanging Tiffany window ornament with a picture of the three of us inside.”

“Well at least you didn’t make me seem like a complete arse.” Harry smiles.

“I couldn’t. Liam deserves a good birthday after the whole sweet sixteen thing. I could never afford to get him anything good until this year. He’d be crushed if he thought you only got him a steering wheel cover, even if it was only until he got his real present.” Niall says.

They climb in the car and Liam squeals with excitement. Niall has never seen him this excited about a birthday, especially when he think it’s just dinner. He’s bouncing around in the front seat and practically jumps on Harry when he gets behind the wheel.

“I’ve been waiting for forever.” Liam says. There’s no trace of resentment in his voice, just a simple statement of fact. “I want a steak!”

“You cute little sod, sit down and let Hazza drive.” Niall says fondly.

“Alright, alright. We’re still going to the Restaurant at Wineport Lodge right? Paul says they have the best steaks.” Liam smiles.

“That’s the plan.” Harry laughs. He pulls out of the gate and onto the road that leads to the city of Mullingar, he’s had an electric opening mechanism installed so nobody has to get out. Once he’s on R392 proper he says “Now we’ve got a forty minute drive to the restaurant so pick what you want to play.”

Liam squeals again, probably because Niall never lets him pick the music. He plugs in his mobile and scrolls down to a song. One chord in and Harry almost drives off the road. Niall immediately starts singing along with Liam.

“You’re insecure!” They sing.

“I hate you both.” Harry glares. He’s always hated this song, even if it did give him his start.

“Don’t know what for!” They continue. “You’re turning heads when you walk through the do-o-o-or!”

“I’m going to drive us into a barrier!” Harry growls.

“Don’t need make up, to cover up. Bein the way that you are is e-nou-u-ugh!” Niall and Liam sing louder.

“I am canceling Liam’s birthday!” Harry cries.

“Don’t be mean Haz. It’s my birthday.” Liam pouts. Harry’s own voice continues to croon the inane song at him through the speakers and he feels like his brain is about to explode.

“Just sing along Harry. It is your song after all.” Niall says.
“I have sang this song over six hundred times Niall. Six hundred and forty eight I believe is the actual count. I will never, and I mean never, sing it again. It’s from when I was pretending to be straight so my label could secure the teenage girl market. Hate this crap.” Harry grumbles. His own voice seems to be haunting him from the stereo, blaring catchy bubblegum pop at him like a curse.

“You can remember that, but you can’t remember our anniversary? That’s just plain rude.” Niall says. Harry ignores the accusation and glares forward. Liam changes the song once they finish singing the chorus because Harry’s knuckles look like they’re about to snap off.

“Can I play You and I or is that taboo too?” Liam asks.

“That’s fine. At least that was actually my song.” Harry sighs.

Niall sings the first part and his voice stuns Harry. He’s heard the blond boy sing a few times and his voice is beautiful, but until he hears Niall sing his words and the strength in his voice is actually presented, Harry had no idea it would be so fantastic. His voice was made for this part.

Liam takes the second part and surprises Harry even more. He’s never heard Liam sing before, never pressed him for it. Liam’s voice is strong though, he may even sing this part better than Harry does. Harry joins in on the third part and they sing the rest of the song rotating parts, Liam again on the fifth part and Niall on the sixth. Harry takes the choruses and they all sing the end together. It feels more natural than when he sang it alone.

“You two should have gone into music.” Harry declares once the song ends. Liam hasn’t picked a new song so his voice is the only thing that’s filling the car now.

“We used to talk about it, but we never did anything about it. Played at the Chair a few times, but never really put ourselves into it.” Liam says casually.

“Oh my god!” Niall shouts. “You haven’t told him have you?”

“Niall shut up!” Liam growls.

“Told me what?” Harry asks.

“Liam auditioned for X-Factor. Got to the judge’s house twice.” Niall says proudly.

“Niall please. Don’t bring that up.” Liam begs.

“When? You never told me that.” Harry says. His interest is peaked.

“Once when we were fourteen, and the second time the year you won.” Niall says. Liam looks like he’s about to wring Niall’s neck. He’s completely red and his eyes are bulging.

“They made a mistake then. You should have made it way past that. You would have beaten me for sure.” Harry says. It’s probably true. Liam has an amazing voice and Harry can’t believe he doesn’t remember meeting him there.

“No they didn’t. You deserved it Haz. I realized it probably wasn’t the life for me and I moved on.” Liam says. He looks extremely done with the whole conversation.

“Why didn’t you tell me? Did we meet there?” Harry asks. He thinks he would have remembered meeting someone that fit.

“No, we never met. I didn’t even recognize you when the show started airing. I did like you though,
much more than Matt Cardle. And I didn’t tell you because it was irrelevant. I lost and looking back I don’t really mind. I have everything I want.” Liam shrugs. Harry doesn’t think that’s the whole story, but he’s not going to push it. Liam can tell him when he’s ready.

“Okay then. What’s next?” Harry asks. Liam puts on a mix of hip hop and classic rock that shouldn’t work as well as it does. They drive in relative silence, occasionally singing with the playlist Liam put on and they reach the restaurant just in time. Niall parks the car while Harry takes Liam in for their reservations. The hostess looks like her eyes are about to bulge out of her head when Harry walks up.

“I- um- How can I help you today?” She asks. Her nerves are palpable in the air.

“I have a reservation for three under the name Payne. We requested the table out by the Lough I believe. If you could show our other member out when he gets here that would be perfect. He’s a little blond guy in a black suit.” Harry smiles. He’s thankful the girl hasn’t asked for an autograph or anything. That would probably be salt in the wound for Liam after their last conversation.

“Of course sir. Let me just find someone to seat you.” The girl says almost too quickly before running off. The restaurant is in a hotel, but it’s the best place to eat in County Westmeath. A small man comes and shows them out onto the patio where they have the entire space to themselves. Niall joins them a moment later with a glint in his eye.

“This place is gorgeous.” Liam marvels. His eyes span over the lough, only meters from their table, up the sides of the old Lodge, and settle on Harry and then Niall. “The view is great.”

“You absolute cornball.” Harry laughs. Of course Liam would say something that cheesy.

“Complete sap.” Niall giggles.

“I get to be a sappy cornball. I have two amazing boyfriends and I’m eating at the best restaurant in the county. On top of that it’s my birthday and it’s not being ruined by work or my parents.” Liam beams. It’s really too precious for words.

Harry scans over the menu and settles on an extremely appetizing salad while ignoring the way Niall and Liam try to engage him with childish footsy games under the table. Niall is gentle, trying to hook his foot behind Harry’s like holding hands. Liam is more excited and therefore less careful, his foot spasms and he occasionally lashes out harder than he probably means to. His giggling and profuse apologies make up for any sore shins though.

When the waiter come Liam orders the biggest steak on the menu and Niall orders an Irish beef burger. They also order an expensive bottle of champagne to celebrate. Liam does the honors and pours the bubbly and Niall does the toast. “To love, to our own little family, and to our hero, Liam Payne.”

Liam blushes deeply and Harry smiles at how cute and modest he is. Harry flags down a waiter and slips him fifty quid to leave them alone unless signaled once their meal comes. He doesn’t want any nosy people eavesdropping on their night. Liam doesn’t even notice because he’s tearing through his steak like it’s the best thing he’s ever tasted. Niall smiles at him around a mouthful of burger.

Liam scarf's down half of his steak and then puts down his fork. He doesn’t say anything, but he smiles expectantly. Niall looks at Harry and giggles before asking “Have something you want to ask Payne?”

“Well I know it’s not very polite to say, but I really want to see my presents.” Liam says with a sly
“Presents? I thought dinner out in a restaurant as a trio was the present.” Niall says with the best straight face he can manage.

“And maybe a little fooling around when we get home.” Harry adds, playing along with Niall’s joke. Liam’s face falls. “Oh. Yeah that’s good. Thank you guys. Really, this is great.”

“You knob.” Niall laughs. He sneaks Harry a box under the table and Harry pushes it across the table. Liam squeals and rips off the paper revealing a small blue box. Liam opens it and pulls out a beautiful silver ornament on a silver chain.

“Open it up.” Harry smiles.

“It’s the picture of us on the couch at the hospital.” Liam smiles. “And the one I took of you two when I thought you were sleeping.”

“It’s to hang in your truck.” Harry tells him.

“We always use your Range Rover now though.” Liam says quizzically.

“Well that’s probably going to change.” Niall says with a smile. He puts another box on the table and slides it to Liam.

The muscular boy tears open the box and pulls out a shiny new key. “What the hell Niall? You bought me a truck?” Liam groans.

“The one you’re driving is as old as we are Liam. Eventually it’s going to die. I got you a backup.” Niall tells him like it should be obvious.

“Isn’t that a bit excessive though?” Liam asks.

“Don’t you think you should see it first? Maybe it’s a piece of crap.” Niall laughs.

“The key says Toyota Hilux 2018 on it Nialler.” Liam says flatly.

“Well shite then. I just tried to do something nice.” Niall sighs. “If you don’t want it I can send it back tomorrow.”

“I’m sorry. I love it Nialler, even if I haven’t seen it yet. Thank you. Thank both of you so much. Nobody has ever done something so nice for me in my entire life.” Liam says. He stands up and walks around the table to wrap both Niall and Harry up in a hug. “Can I go see it now?”

“Finish your dinner first.” Niall laughs.

“Oh right. I forgot. Well you two hurry up too, I want to see it.” Liam laughs. He hangs Harry’s ornament around his neck and sits back down. He cuts off chunks of his steak as fast as possible and shoves them into his mouth. Even Niall usually eats more politely than this.

Harry plays along and eats his salad as quickly as possible. He’s sure that anyone who glances at them thinks they’re crazy. Niall is swallowing half his burger and Harry is shoveling salad in his mouth like it’s his last meal. He signals the waiter and asks him to bring the check. Liam apparently doesn’t want any dessert.

Harry slips a few hundred euro notes into the billfold and waves away the waiter. Liam finishes the
last bite of his food and jumps to his feet. He raises and eyebrow at Niall who shakes his head and points back at Liam’s chair. Liam sits down with a pout and Niall tries to swallow his mouthful of food. Finally it goes down in a large gulp and Niall stands up.

“Alright you dope. Lets go. Try not to embarrass Haz too much on your way out.” Niall smiles. Liam rushes out of his chair and back through the restaurant. Harry smiles and shakes his head.

“I don’t think my Rolex is going to make much of a dent in that level of excitement.” Harry sighs. Liam barely even payed attention to the gift Harry gave him. It shouldn’t bother him that much, considering he didn’t even actually buy it, but he does feel a little left out.

“He’s going to love it Haz. He’s just excited because a truck is very large and shiny.” Niall squeezes his hand and follows Liam through the restaurant. Harry follows behind the blond and keeps his head down, hoping nobody will notice him. Between his suit and his signature hair he gets a few knowing glances, but nobody stands up or says anything loudly enough to hear.

When they get to the parking lot Liam is running excitedly around a large black truck with a bow on the windshield. Harry laughs, he’s never seen anyone so giddy in his entire life. Liam jumps on the hood and hugs the truck like it’s a long lost sibling. Niall runs up and smacks him on the bum.

“Try getting in the bloody thing Payno. The leather is jealous.” Niall laughs. Harry runs up and opens the door for Liam. The muscular lad hops off the hood and climbs into the large cab while Niall slides into the passenger seat. Liam touches every surface almost reverently, sliding his fingers like he’s afraid this is just a dream. His other hand clasps at the ornament around his neck, but he doesn’t take it off.

“Is it okay if I keep this on as a necklace?” Liam asks Harry softly. “I can hang it in here, but I’d rather keep you two close all the time.”

Harry feels his heart swell. Once again, he shouldn’t, it isn’t really his gift. Niall smiles and nods at him though and Harry doesn’t feel so guilty. “Whatever you want Li. I can get a better chain for it, something less tight and breakable.” Harry offers.

“Sure. That would probably be best.” Liam smiles. He wraps Harry up in a hug and whispers “Thank you so much Haz.”

“Love you Li.” Harry whispers back. “Now I’m guessing you want to drive this home. Do you want Niall to go with you or stay with me in the Range Rover?”

“I’ll stay with you Haz. Let’s let Payno drive like a loon in his new baby.” Niall laughs. “Plus I have some ideas to run by you for when we get home.”

“You don’t want to be my first passenger?” Liam pouts.

“We’ll all take a ride in it when we don’t have two cars. And like I said, I have some ideas about what we should do for you when we get home.” Niall waggles his eyebrows.

“Like birthday cake?” Liam asks. It’s so innocent Harry can’t help but giggle.

“Sure Payno. If you want cake then we’ll bake a cake. I was personally thinking about fucking until we can’t move anymore, but I can totally get behind baking a cake.” Niall laughs.

“Can we do both?” Liam asks giddily.

“It’s your birthday. We can do whatever you want.” Niall winks. He climbs out of the truck and
blows a kiss at Liam, which of course Liam pretends to catch and put in his pocket, and then they leave him to play with his new toy.

“Olympic level birthday sex is going to be a little difficult with like seven other people in the house Niall.” Harry sighs once they get in his Rover. Niall slides his fingers between Harry’s and giggles.

“Well yeah, but at least he definitely doesn’t think there’s a surprise party now.” Niall laughs.

“I guess there is that. I’m kind of disappointed though. Crazy sex sounds better than a party now.” Harry laughs.

“Well maybe we can do both. Pez can entertain the guests while we shag our brains out.” Niall offers.

“Absolutely not. I would die if Zayn or somebody heard us all going at it.” Harry gasps. Just the idea makes him flush.

“We could always invite him to join in a rousing game of hide the prick. He’s fit enough.” Niall laughs. “That would be some special birthday sex.”

“I could kill you right now.” Harry growls. It’s not like he’s never considered sex with Zayn. The dark boy is absolutely flawless, both in looks and the kindness in his heart. He’s covered in tattoos like Harry too, which is a huge turn on if he’s being honest. Zayn has even offered before, but the man is also his best friend which makes that sort of fantasy awkward, especially after finding Liam and Niall.

Niall’s phone erupts with noise and he pulls it out to answer, completely ignoring Harry’s response. “Hey Pez, we were just talking about you and your boyfriend.” Niall laughs. “Nothing important. You’re all at the house? Perfect, you guys just pick a movie and settle in. We’re about to head out from the restaurant so we’ll be there soon. You too, no you’re the prettiest, no you, no-”

Harry grabs the phone from Niall and sighs loudly into the speaker before hanging up. “We have to go now. Liam can’t get there first or the surprise will happen without us. If Louis jumps out at him and we aren’t there, someone is going to end up dead.” Harry sighs. He pulls out of his spot and races out of the parking lot. Liam follows close behind until they hit the highway. Where Harry pulls away.

Liam drives responsibly, even when Harry appears to be challenging him to a race. He’s not risking hurting his baby. The truck is gorgeous, it even has a touch screen built into the console. He’ll always love his old truck, the one Bobby taught them to drive in, but it really was time for a change. Niall probably spent way too much on this and Liam’s stomach knots with guilt at that thought.

Things have calmed between Niall and him, they don’t fight very much anymore, but they still aren’t back to their old selves. This though, this gift, shows that Niall still cares about him as much as ever. If Liam can just push past his jealousy things can still work. Now if he can just figure out how to do that he’ll be in the clear.

He doesn’t really understand it at all. He adores Harry, spends as much time as he can with the curly haired boy. His smile makes Liam happy, and when he’s sad it hurts inside Liam’s heart. He just can’t wrap his head around the way they kept everything secret from him. Liam understands that it wasn’t an affair, Niall and him had never even agreed upon what they were to each other. Niall was his though, the love of his life until he had two, and he was willing to risk that for somebody he
barely knew.

Every time Liam thinks about it bile raises in his throat, not because he’s angry at them, but because he hates himself for not being able to accept it. He fell for Harry even before he knew that Harry could love him back. He wanted him even when he thought it would hurt Niall. That’s the source of his guilt, the source of all his anger. It’s really not fair to be jealous that they love each other too. All three of them belong together, not any two of them apart, because they each give each other something that they need.

This realization, the epiphany, hits Liam like a train. He has to pull over because he can barely breathe. He sits on the side of the road and makes a noise somewhere between a sob and a laugh for almost a full minute before his phone starts ringing. He picks it up and tries as hard as he can to be calm. “Hello?”

“Li is something wrong?” Niall asks. “We saw you pull over.”

“Nothing is wrong Nialler. I just realized I’ve been daft for a long time. I’m sorry.” Liam smiles into the phone. “Don’t worry, I’m on my way.”

“What was that all about?” Harry asks. Niall honestly has no clue how to answer the question. Liam was particularly vague.

“No idea. He said he was daft and then said he’s on his way. That boy is so weird sometimes.” Niall sighs. Harry squeezes his fingers and he squeezes back. The gesture is almost habit now. Harry and Niall have spent most of their free time together over the last several weeks. Liam has been calmer, but relatively withdrawn. Their sex life hasn’t really recovered either, but it’s not quite as dead as it was before.

“You know he loves you right? He’s really bad at showing it, but he loves you so much. He’s afraid he’s going to lose you if you don’t both come to some kind of understanding.” Harry says. His tone is soft, almost as if he’s afraid to tell Niall this.

“Of course I know he loves me. I just need him to get past all of this. He’s jealous of you, of what we did. He thinks I’m picking you over him, but that’s not what’s happening. No one of us can be everything to each other or this whole relationship falls apart.” Niall says. He feels like it’s obvious, but Liam just doesn’t seem to get it.

“He’ll get there. He only loved you for so long. My guess is it was longer than you even know, like long before he was willing to admit it to himself. Seeing you with someone else has to hurt him.” Harry admits.

“Why though? It doesn’t bother me seeing you two together. I love it. You’re beautiful together.” Niall says. Nothing in this world gives him more pleasure than seeing his boyfriends kissing or laughing or laying together because they fit together like a beautiful puzzle.

“Liam isn’t you. He needs stability instead of excitement, a strong base to build a life off of. We’re not exactly in the most stable of relationships. It’s beautiful and amazing, but it can always fall apart if any one of us can’t handle it. Liam is just readying himself for that.” Harry tells him.

“So what are you saying? He needs a sign of commitment or something?” Niall asks. He’s considered it for a little while, but Harry only came into their lives a few months ago. It seems so fast.

“That might work. Would that be something you’d be okay with?” Harry asks nervously.
“I mean, it’s not something I’m opposed to. I just don’t know how we’d go about it. It’s not like we can get married or anything. Even if gay couples could get married in Ireland, we’re not a couple, we’re- I don’t even know what to call us. A trio? Bigamy is illegal and probably will be for long after our deaths.” Niall sighs. The issues facing their relationship are monstrous. Public opinion would condemn them for sure, especially in the second most Catholic country on earth. Harry is a very public figure and that means eventually their relationship could be cannon fodder for the entire world.

“That doesn’t mean we can’t commit to each other. Marriage and civil unions aren’t the only things there are. We could have a commitment ceremony just for us and those close to us.” Harry offers.

“Harry if this is you proposing, you’re doing a really shite job of it. I figured the great romantic in you would burst out. I mean Liam isn’t even here for it.” Niall laughs. Harry blushes and turns away from Niall, gluing his eyes to the road.

“Of course that wasn’t a proposal. It was an idea you arse. Bugger off.” Harry grumbles.

“I’d rather bugger you.” Niall laughs.

“Of course you would. You’re completely incapable of having a serious conversation.” Harry says flatly. It stings like a slap in the face.

“I’m capable Haz, I just don’t think this is a conversation we should be having just the two of us. Feels like we’re hiding things from Liam again.” Niall pouts.

“Oh, well that I can see. You’re right, I’m sorry.” Harry sighs.

“It’s fine. You’ll make it up to me somehow.” Niall smiles. “Once everyone goes home we can still have birthday sex.”

“Do you ever think about anything else?” Harry groans.

“Yeah. I think about pelting you with snowballs come winter. I think about watching you ride horses next summer. I think about Liam cooking Nialler cakes in our new gourmet kitchen. I think about a lot of things, but nothing is as beautiful as you soaked in sweat and moaning my name like a prayer.” Niall says bluntly.

“Christ in heaven! Do I really do that?” Harry questions.

“Almost every time.” Niall laughs. “When you’re not saying Liam’s instead that is.”

“You’re just trying to embarrass me aren’t you?” Harry laughs.

“Nope. I really think it’s beautiful Haz. You look like an angel, you know that right? You’ve got the heart of one too. You’re by far the most amazing person I’ve ever known.” Niall says quietly.

“You think I’m the sappy romantic one? I have news for you Mister Horan, you are the romantic one. Completely and totally sappy. I love you.” Harry smiles.

“You take that back. It’ll ruin my reputation of being an aloof arse hole.” Niall groans. God forbid somebody thinks he could be sweet all the time. Too much responsibility.

“I’ll keep your secret.” Harry laughs. “But if you ever pelt me with snowballs I will tweet it to the world.”
“You’re a bad sport.” Niall pouts.

“Not really. I just hate the cold.” Harry shrugs.

“Why on earth did you but a farm in Ireland instead of like, an island or something?” Niall asks.

“I told you I wanted to be a cowboy. Zayn showed me a lot of places, but I felt drawn to yours. Thank god he’s a cold-hearted son of a bitch for me.” Harry laughs.

“Do you ever regret it? You aren’t exactly suited to the life of a farmer.” Niall asks cautiously.

“Not for a second. I may not be a farmer, but I am suited to living my life with you two. You make me feel complete.” Harry says with a smile.

“I think your title as King of Sappyness is safe for now.” Niall laughs.

“Better be. I’ve worked hard for that position.” Harry beams.

“Well suck it back inside because we’re almost home. Can’t let everyone see you like this. Makes it less special.” Niall giggles. “I have a surprise waiting at home that should suck out the romance and make you more of a slut.”

“What is it?” Harry asks.

“Had Pez swing by your flat and grab a few things.” Niall says with a wink.

“No. No, you didn’t. You wouldn’t have.” Harry hisses.

“Yup. And once I have Liam ask you to put them on you can’t refuse. Just think of it as payment for letting you have my other gift.” Niall giggles again.

“Fine. But I’m wearing jeans with the chaps. I learned my lesson the last time I tried that.” Harry grumbles.

“Oh my god, please tell me you have pictures. I have to see you in nothing but assless chaps.” Niall almost yells.

“I was wearing underwear with them you sod. And a vest.” Harry tries to salvage his dignity. From where Niall’s sitting it doesn’t work.

“Of course you did. God Haz are you trying to get me all riled up before we get there or what? Because if you are it’s definitely working.” Niall moans. He’s already hard in his suit. He really can’t afford the looks of judgment if he leaks precum and has to get them dry-cleaned.

“You’re always riled up. You molested me the other day because I was eating a banana. I wasn’t even eating it teasingly or anything, just eating a banana.” Harry says back.

“Can’t help it. You wouldn’t understand because only Liam is drop dead gorgeous out of the two of us. But for me I have the two hottest blokes in the world around all the time. And you were nude while you ate that banana, or don’t you remember?” Niall asks. It’s not really surprising. Harry is naked about half the time now.

“I should have known you wouldn’t have been desensitized to that by now. You know I think you’re beautiful though right? I mean mind-bogglingly, breath-takingly, my-heart-skips-a-beat-every-time-I-wake-up-in-your-arms beautiful.” Harry sighs.
“You pack that right up Haz. We have two minutes until we’re home and I will not let all our friends see me crying.” Niall sniffs.

“Alright alright. Just tell me you know it’s true.” Harry bargains.

“I do now. Thank you Haz.” Niall says with a small smile. “Now get excited because we have a party to host and Liam deserves to have all the focus on him.”

“I can do that. I’ll direct all my powers of romance at him as soon as we get home. Until then I’m going to stare at you like a sap.” Harry says with wide eyes and a sweet smile.

“You keep your eyes on the road. My brother died right back there because he wasn’t paying any attention.” Niall sighs. Playing the dead brother card isn’t fair, but it is helpful.

“Don’t you play that game Niall. I can see where I’m going and look at you at the same time.” Harry says. As if to prove a point he stops clicks the button on his sun visor that opens the gate and turns in flawlessly, all while staring at Niall adoringly. Harry stops and waits for Liam before closing the gate behind them. When they pull up to the house there are no cars in sight, thank god.

Liam hops out of his truck and is immediately jumped on by the dogs. They whine and lick at his face desperately and he falls back against the truck laughing. They’re probably upset by all the strange people in the house, but Liam just seems to think they’re excited to see him. Niall is content to let him believe that.

Harry rushes inside, not even bothering to say anything to Liam before he closes the door behind him. “What’s wrong with him?” Liam asks.

“I told him I think we’re out of vanilla extract. We aren’t, it’s just fun to watch him panic.” Niall lies.

“I um- Can I talk to you for a second before we go in?” Liam asks quietly.

“Of course.” Niall tells him. He really hopes Liam isn’t about to tell him he’s glad there wasn’t a surprise party. Can’t really turn back now.

“I wanted to apologize. On our way home everything just kind of clicked for me. I’m not everything to you, but you aren’t to me either. Harry gives us both things we need, that we don’t give each other. Same for each of us with him. We belong together, all three of us. And loving Harry doesn’t mean that I love you any less or vice versa.” Liam beams.

“Oh Li, some things do get through that thick skull don’t they?” Niall laughs. He jumps into Liam’s arms and peppers kisses across his face and neck.

“I told you I just needed time. Thank you for not giving up on me.” Liam whispers.

“How could I? You’re one of the loves of my life.” Niall giggles. “Now come on, let’s go bake a cake.”

Niall takes Liam by the hand and walks him to the door. He sees Louis’ face retreat from the window and thanks god silently that the dogs are distracting Liam. He gets to the door and pushes it open. He knows it’s coming, and yet the roar of “Happy Birthday!!!” still makes him flinch.

Liam just screams girlishly for at least four seconds before falling on his arse. It has to be the funniest thing Niall has ever seen. He doubles over, laughing so hard that his lungs feel like they’re going to burst. Louis is rolling on the floor, clutching his sides and screaming with laughter. Paul and Will are sitting on the sagging couch and roaring. Harry lifts Liam up and plants a kiss on his cheek as an
“Does this mean no cake and sex then?” Liam whispers to Harry.

“Later babes. Later.” Harry laughs

Everyone is drunk and the party is an absolute mess. After Niall practically begged, Liam convinced Harry to put on the outfit he had made. It’s hilarious and startlingly hot all at the same time when Harry steps out in a pair of exceedingly tight jeans covered in black leather chaps, a blue and white plaid flannel with only the bottom two buttons done, a loose black leather vest, and a pair of American style black cowboy boots.

“At least I didn’t buy the damn hat.” Harry sighs after the hoots and catcalls die down. Niall is practically drooling from his spot on Liam’s lap, and judging by the stirring in Liam’s pants, his own cock seems to agree. Harry saunters over with a smirk on his face and drops onto the couch next to Liam. “Have you had your fun embarrassing me in front of almost everyone we know?”

“We all know you have nothing to be embarrassed about in that outfit Hazza.” Niall giggles.

“I have to agree with Ni here. You look fantastic.” Liam admits. Part of him wants to take Harry right here and now. He doesn’t care who’d watch the show. “One question though, why did you buy the chaps? We don’t have any horses to ride.”

“Yet. We don’t have any horses to ride yet. And I didn’t know that’s what they were for.” Harry mumbles the last bit.

“What did you think they did then?” Liam asks. He’s genuinely curious. Harry mumbles something and presses the heels of his hands into his own eyes. “I didn’t hear that.”

“I thought they helped keep your pants clean.” Harry says with an embarrassed groan. Niall laughs so hard he falls off of Liam’s lap and even the muscular man can’t suppress the giggle in his throat.

“That is incredibly cute.” Liam says. He takes Harry’s hand in his own and gives him a reassuring squeeze. Niall is still rolling with laughter, apparently unphased by his dropping onto the hardwood. Liam gives him a soft kick in the arse with his bare foot. “Stop being mean. He didn’t know any better, and that’s a decent guess considering how gross our clothes get out there.”

Niall tries to get control of himself, and mostly succeeds. He calms down, only letting a bark of laughter out every few breaths. “I just forget how urban he is sometimes. Liam’s right, it’s really cute.” Niall laughs.

“Yeah yeah, city boy can’t handle the rural world.” Harry tries in his best attempt at a south-western American accent.

Liam can’t even try to keep his laugh inside this time. He laughs until his chest hurts and Niall resumes his previous activity, gripping his sides and laughing so hard it’s silent. “Please for the love of god, never do that again.” He begs at Harry.

“Why not? I think I sound pretty good.” Harry says, the affectation still bleeding into his voice. He’s wearing a goofy smile that doesn’t quite fit with his rugged outfit, but looks amazing on him regardless.

Niall breaks into a fresh round of giggles and Liam rolls his eyes at how ridiculously happy the blond
is when he drinks. He nurses his own beer, his third of the evening, and drops his head onto Harry’s shoulder. Letting himself be held still feels a little strange sometimes, but he’s come to enjoy the comfort he feels from it. Harry seems to know this and wraps his arms loosely around Liam’s shoulder and cards his fingers through the muscular man’s hair.

After a short while Paul, Will, and Fiona leave. They’re already late to get back to the babysitter apparently so Niall has a taxi at the front door in minutes to take them where they need to go. Harry and he had apparently planned this night extremely well. Pizzas arrived minutes after they got home, much to Liam’s delight. His meal was delicious, but the portions were a bit small considering the price they paid for them.

Louis is stroking Eleanor’s hair on the couch now. She’d fallen asleep about twenty minutes before. Liam offers to carry her to his old bedroom and Louis smiles and thanks him with a uncharacteristic lack of snark. He tucks the pretty brunette into the bed and a part of his heart tugs for what Louis has. He loves Harry and Niall, but he really does want a child someday.

When he gets back to the living room Harry is laughing at Zayn trying desperately to tug Niall off of Perrie. The blonds are intertwined, arms and legs wrapped around each other in an extremely intimate pose. “What do you say Pez? Run away with me. Leave pretty boy behind.”

“Oh yes Niall!” Perrie screams. “I’ve just been waiting for you to ask!”

Harry collapses in a fit of giggles and Liam just stands there dumbstruck. A tickle in the back of his drunken mind tells him that it’s just a joke. Niall is extremely flirtatious when he has a few too many, hitting on pretty much anything with legs. Zayn looks like he’s about to cry.

“Fine.” Liam says, walking over with a wry smile. He wraps his arms around Zayn’s waist and picks the surprisingly light boy up into a bridal style carry. “We’ll just make a trade. Zayn is prettier anyway.”

Niall gasps, his face coated in faux outrage. “How could you Payno? You always told me I was the prettiest one around.”

“Well apparently they breed them better in Britain than I thought. Just look at the three of us together.” Liam laughs. He sits next to Harry with Zayn laughing in his lap.

“Very hot, I have to agree.” Perrie giggles.

“Traitor!” Niall cries. “All of you are treacherous swine! Only Louis really loves me!”

“You’re on your own you slut!” Louis laughs. He’s digging around in the pile of pizza boxes for something to eat and Liam laughs.

“Those are the empties Louis. The rest is in the fridge.” Liam tells him over his shoulder.

“Thank god, I thought Niall’s fat arse had eaten it all.” Louis giggles.

Niall doesn’t respond though. Some time in between his shouting, and Louis’ insult, him and Perrie fell asleep in a pile. It never ceases to amaze Liam how the boy can do that. He should really be tested for narcolepsy or something. Zayn wiggles off of Liam’s lap and pulls a blanket on top of their significant others.

“Harry if you don’t get that flirt under control I’m going to have to take back our decision.” Zayn sighs.
“What decision?” Harry asks, he hasn’t stopped smiling since Liam sat down and now he’s laying across Liam’s lap on the love seat.

“Pez and I are moving here. Well Dublin actually, but still.” Zayn mumbles. He takes a pack of cigarettes out of his pocket and holds it out to the other boys. Harry shakes his head furiously, but Liam takes one after Zayn lights it for him.

“Liam Payne we will talk about this!” Harry gasps. “But first, what? You’re moving here?”

“Dublin.” Zayn says flatly.

“Why?” Harry rolls over on Liam’s lap and stares curiously at the dark boy.

“No sense staying in London when my only client doesn’t even live in the country.” Zayn shrugs. He takes a deep drag, the tip of his cigarette burning bright orange even in the glow of the fire Liam built for Harry. “Besides, I missed my best mate.”

“But you love London!” Harry cries. “What would you even do in Dublin?”

“Got my eye on a sweet little flat twice the size of what I got in London for the same price. It even has an office space for me to work out of.” Zayn says.

“Not that I’m not excited or anything, but are you sure you want to do that?” Harry asks. His eyes are so big Liam can’t believe they haven’t fallen out of his head yet.

“Yup. I get to be closer to you, with a respectable distance between so you don’t just show up on my door with hot bloody muffins like last time. Pez is excited too. She practically begged to be closer to Niall.” Zayn admits.

“Oh I’ll find a way.” Harry smirks. “We’ve got to find a way to get between those two. I’m starting to get jealous, even if he is gay as heck.”

“I hear that.” Liam sighs. He knows nothing would happen between the two blonds currently snoring on the couch, but he still has a tingle of jealousy. Then again, with the way he can’t draw his eyes away from Zayn as he wraps his lips around his cigarette, he doesn’t really have the right. Liam takes a deep drag off his own fag and Harry sighs. “When did you start smoking?”

“Years ago. I do it occasionally when I’m out on the farm.” Liam explains. He tries to keep it a secret. Niall knows because he does it too, but Harry seems to detest the habit. Right now though, he’s riding the high of his birthday and a little too tipsy to care.

“I have never seen you smoke. Never.” Harry glares up at Liam and it’s more than a little unsettling.

“I know. I only do it when I’m alone. You always whinged about Zayn’s smoking so I never did it around you.” Liam shrugs. He takes another drag and flicks the ashes into the fireplace.

“Well quit it. Filthy disgusting habit.” Harry pouts.

“Maybe. Niall will be a harder sell though. He hates being told what to do.” Liam laughs.

“I know. I only do it when I’m alone. You always whinged about Zayn’s smoking so I never did it around you.” Liam shrugs. He takes another drag and flicks the ashes into the fireplace.

“Niall smokes too? Is there anyone in this house that cares about their body other than me?” Harry cries indignantly.

“Nope.” Louis says. He plops down on the floor next to Zayn and steals the cigarette dangling between his fingers to take a drag.
“I don’t like you.” Zayn glares.

“You will.” Louis laughs and a cloud of smoke flies out of his mouth. “If I can get the big oaf of a birthday boy to like me, then you will too.”

“Louis, I don’t like you either.” Liam laughs. “I tolerate you.”

“Close enough for now Payno. I managed to score an invite to your party. You must like me a little bit.” Louis smirks.

“Harry and Niall didn’t consult me. That’s generally how it is with surprise parties.” Liam says casually. Louis has grown on him to the point where Liam doesn’t want to wring his neck with every word, but that’s about it.

“Well excuse me for being here then.” Louis laughs. “I did bring a pretty awesome present though.”

“You gave me a framed picture of my bullet wound! How is that a good present?” Liam asks. He was horrified when he unwrapped the gift, the bare flesh of his shoulder red and bleeding staring up at him, like a bloody smile with two of his moles acting as eyes.

“Excuse me if I couldn’t afford a new pickup or a custom fucking watch for the man who hates me. Bullet wounds are awesome!” Louis laughs. “They scar up so cool and you always have a story to tell.”

“You got shot?” Zayn asks. His eyes show concern even though he only met Liam properly a few hours ago.

“Trying to save his stupid arse from muggers yeah.” Liam sighs. He really doesn’t like reliving that night. It’s securely in the number one spot of worst night of his life, even over the night his parents disowned him.

“Don’t let him lie, he loved playing the hero.” Louis says before he takes another drag.

“Louis is right though.” Harry interjects. “The scar is pretty sexy.”

“I said the scar was cool, not sexy.” Louis corrects him.

“We all know what you meant.” Zayn laughs.

“Have you met my very pregnant wife?” Louis asks, clearly frustrated that the tables seem to have turned and he’s the one being teased.

“Doesn’t mean anything. Look at Liam, he likes blokes and birds.” Zayn chuckles.

“Well I don’t. I can appreciate how blokes look, but I have zero actual interest in them.” Louis sighs. He’s obviously had this talk many times.

“Your loss.” Zayn shrugs. “Give me back my fag or I’ll hit you.”

Louis sighs and rolls his eyes dramatically before handing back the cigarette. He then decides to try and fit an entire slice of pizza in his mouth at once and fails miserably. Zayn chooses to focus on his cigarette and Liam on stroking Harry’s loose hair.

“Let’s play poker.” Louis says suddenly. “I’m bored off my arse and two of you have millions in the bank and I could use the cash. With the pittance Harry is paying me I can’t afford triplets.”
“I’m paying you a good amount Louis.” Harry huffs. “You don’t even have to pay for your house or food.”

“Yeah, well my kids are all going to Oxford so I need more money.” Louis snarks.

“I’ll talk to the dean of admissions.” Harry laughs. “He owes me a thing or two.”

“Really?” Louis perks up.

“Of course not!” Harry bursts into a fit of giggles. “Why would I know the dean of admissions at Oxford? I didn’t even go to university. We can talk about renegotiating your salary some other time.”

“What about the poker though?” Louis asks. Zayn shrugs and Harry starts giggling again until Liam nods.

Zayn and Louis head to the table, but Liam pulls Harry aside. “What are you laughing at?”

“Remember when I kicked your butt in that race? I said we could play strip poker so you’d feel better about being a loser.” Harry smiles.

“No. For one thing I meant you, Niall, and I, not those two and us. And for another, I really don’t want you to take off that outfit until I take it off for you.” Liam says. He feels a blush creeping into his cheeks when Harry leans in and puts Liam’s hand on his smooth chest.

“You like?” Harry asks, his voice feigning innocence.

“Very much.” Liam licks his lips.

“Well then take advantage of it.” Harry moans. He leans in and kisses at Liam’s neck. Liam shivers and runs his hand down Harry’s chest, stopping to circle his finger around Harry’s nipple.

“Oi! We’re right here!” Louis yells from the table. “Now grab a deck instead of your dicks and get ready to owe me some money.”

“In your dreams Tomlinson.” Harry laughs. Apparently he’s completely forgotten that Liam and he were right on the edge of something just seconds before. “I took fourth place in a celebrity poker tournament for charity a few years ago.”

“Out of five celebrities Harry. The only one you beat was Tara Reid and she was unconscious almost the entire time.” Zayn says with an eye roll.

“You weren’t supposed to tell him that Zayn!” Harry cries. “You’re an awful best friend.”

“We both know you have no poker face, and unless he really is as stupid as he looks he’ll figure it out pretty quickly.” Zayn laughs. Liam is really beginning to like Zayn.

Harry pouts and Liam lifts him over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes. Harry giggles and smacks at Liam’s bum while the muscular man carries him to the table. He gently places Harry in one of the chairs and pecks a quick snog on him before rummaging through the cabinets for Bobby’s old poker set. He finally finds it in a drawer covered in dust and missing a few chips, but otherwise intact.

He sets it on the table and hands out the chips while Zayn shuffles the deck. Harry takes them giddily while Louis sighs at the small pile in front of him. “I can’t afford this much. I maybe have three hundred pounds to work with, not five thousand.”

“We’re working off euro cents Louis.” Liam laughs. “The most you’ll lose is fifty euros unless you
want to buy in more. No sense in bankrupting an expectant father, and it keeps anyone from getting
too bitter if they lose too much.”

“Makes sense.” Zayn shrugs. “Plus then I can breathe happily knowing I didn’t help unleash your
spawn on the best university in the world and my Alma Mater.”

Liam is really really beginning to like Zayn. He gives the dark boy a smile which is returned with a
wink. Liam finishes his task by placing a small pile in front of his own seat while Louis huffs and
squawks indignantly at Zayn. Harry just smiles lazily and rubs at the swallows on his clavicles to
taunt Liam.

“Alright Malik, you deal.” Harry smiles. Zayn flicks cards in front of each of them almost masterfully
and Liam begins to think he may be in over his head playing with the black haired boy. His face is
almost unreadable and he never seems to display much emotion if he doesn’t want to. Liam is
definitely going to lose this game.

Liam looks at his hand before tossing two twenty-five pieces into the center of the table. He has two
kings, a seven, a nine, and an ace. It’s not a great hand, but at least he has something. Harry smirks
and matches Liam, with Louis and Zayn doing the same right after. Liam puts down his two
numbered cards and Zayn trades them out for two new ones. Liam almost lets out a smile when he
sees another ace in them, but he catches himself and slides them into his hand with a straight face
before anteing up.

Harry smiles again and matches him. Louis proceeds to fold tossing down his cards childishly. Zayn
had given Harry one new card and Louis three, while he himself took none. His face is still, not a
muscle moving while he looks over his cards. He matches Harry’s bet and they call. Liam lays down
his hand with a smile and a little shimmy of his shoulders. Harry groans and drops his hand which
has three queens. Zayn calmly lays down his hand which has another two pairs of kings and aces.

Liam’s other card is a four, but so is Zayn’s. The chances of this are mind boggling and Louis loses
his shit giggling. Harry’s eyes bug out and his mouth forms an O shape. “Well what are the chances
of that?” Zayn asks with a small smile.

“I have no idea whatsoever.” Liam sighs. He really thought he’d win, so the excitement of such a
once in a lifetime thing happening is lost on him. “I was shite at math.”

“I’ll play you for it Leeyum.” Zayn says calmly. Liam shivers at the way his name sounds from
Zayn’s mouth. Guilt coils in his stomach because he really likes it.

“S-Sure.” Liam says quickly. Zayn places the deck between them and then flips over a ten from the
top of the deck. Liam flips over the next card and it’s another ten. “This is entirely too weird. Just
take the pot.”

“No. I want to see how in sync we are.” Zayn laughs and then flips over a five. Liam sighs before
flipping over another card and almost screams when it’s a five. Zayn mutters under his breath.
“Fascinating.”

Harry squeezes Liam’s hand before they flip again and Zayn finally wins with a six over his two.
Liam can’t help but sigh. The problem is he can’t tell if it’s relief at the madness finally ending or
sadness at having lost that makes him do it. Zayn cackles and scoops the pot towards himself. It’s
strangely endearing.

They play two more hands, Liam losing both to Zayn again, before anyone talks about anything
other than the game. Zayn looks at Liam and asks “So how does this whole thing work exactly?”
“You’ve won every hand Zayn, I’m pretty sure you know how to play.” Liam laughs.

“Not poker, you three.” Zayn rolls his eyes.

“Zayn!” Harry squawks. “What the hell?”

“Relax Curls, I’m not trying to be rude. Liam just doesn’t seem like the type is all. He seems pretty inflexible.” Zayn says as if Liam isn’t sitting right between them. Liam can’t even be mad though, until a few hours ago he wasn’t sure it would all work out either.

“Harry’s been working on that actually.” Liam giggles. “He makes me do yoga with him.”

“That is- um, not what I meant. We’ll go with that.” Zayn sighs. “I just mean you seem like the type to settle down with one person, like me.”

“I’ve actually been wondering that too.” Louis buts in, suddenly reminding Liam to breathe after the way Zayn had phrased that last sentence. “Liam has such a big stick up his arse, how does that work with you two being so fun?”

“The only stick up my arse is Harry’s, Louis, and that’s not very often.” Liam glares

“Did not see that power dynamic coming.” Zayn smiles. “Harry’s such a bottom.”

“Rude.” Harry pouts.

“You act like I don’t know from experience Harry. I lived with you during your slutty phase and no top sounds like that when they shag.” Zayn laughs

“Slutty phase?” Louis asks curiously.

“You two lived together?” Liam asks. He feels like the air has been knocked from his lungs. He had no idea about this aspect of their relationship.

“Yeah. Pez broke up with me for a bit back a few years ago and I stayed at Harry’s flat for about three months. Haz hooked up with any bloke that blinked at him and I had to hear it through my wall.” Zayn rolls his eyes.

“I was not that bad!” Harry cries. “I only had sex with maybe, like, six guys.”

“Christ, maybe I should have been into guys.” Louis sighs. “That’s more people than I’ve been with in my whole life.”

“That surprises nobody.” Zayn snarks. Liam laughs, but Louis glares venomously at them both and he aborts it.

“What about you pretty boy? What’s your number?” Louis asks angrily.

“Eleven.” Zayn says with a small shrug. “Liam?”

“Um- Seven.” Liam blushes.

“Thirty three!” Harry blurts. All three other boys turn to him with eyes wide and unblinking. “I was a pop star okay? I was hot and famous, that means I pulled quite a bit before I moved here.”

“I was expecting more.” Louis shrugs. “Seven years of fame and you only hook up with thirty one blokes before you started shagging these two? That’s like four and a half guys a year.”
“It’s still more than six times what you’ve got in your belt Tommo. And it wasn’t thirty one blokes, it was thirty one people. Taylor Swift and alcohol do not mix well for me.” Harry sticks his tongue out at Louis.

“Fine, can’t argue with that.” Louis sighs.

“I don’t even know why we’re talking about this.” Liam sighs.

“Well my best friend said I’m a slut in front of my boyfriend and then apparently I had to prove it because liquor makes me stupid.” Harry grins dopily.

“I don’t think you’re a slut Harry.” Liam says. He doesn’t, he’s also surprised the number wasn’t higher considering how gorgeous Harry is. Thousands of people all around the world must have fantasized about it. “Liquor does make you stupid though.”

“And sleepy.” Harry smiles. “I think I’m gonna go to bed now if that’s alright.”

Liam nods and gives him a kiss before he leaves, waving his goodbyes to the other two boys. Louis shifts around before he says “Me too actually. Which room is Eleanor in?”

“First door on your right when you get into the hall.” Liam points.

“Thanks. Don’t stay up too late you two, Eleanor will want to say goodbye in the morning.” Louis says with a smile.

“Mind if I go outside?” Zayn asks. “I’m dying with that fire going. Need some cool air.”

“Sure. Do you care if I join? I’m not ready to go to sleep yet.” Liam asks.

“It’s your house mate.” Zayn says.

He stands up and walks outside with Liam padding close behind. The cool air of nearing autumn feels great against Liam’s skin. There’s a slight breeze and the sound of the dogs snoring on the porch. Loki and Thor don’t even stir at the sound of them and Zayn takes a seat on the bench. Liam walks to his old truck and grabs his cigarettes out of the console. There’s one in Zayn’s mouth before he can even turn around.

Liam walks back and takes the seat next to the dark boy. Zayn holds up his lighter and Liam uses it without a second thought, his hand curling around Zayn’s to protect the flame from the breeze. He never smokes two in a day, but midnight tricked past while they were inside playing poker, so he still technically hasn’t broken his rule of self restraint.

“Can I see it?” Zayn asks once Liam has smoked down about half of his cigarette.

Liam chokes on his smoke. “See what?”

“Your bullet scar. It’s okay if you don’t want to show it to me.” Zayn shrugs and refocuses on his cigarette.

Liam hesitates before trying to hike up his sleeve. The damn shirt is too tight to get up his bicep. He sighs before unbuttoning it and sliding it off his shoulder. Zayn stares, expression unreadable, at the bright pink scar lining the inside of his arm. Liam hates it, hates the way it glares at him. It’s ugly and hateful and a literally aching reminder of the most traumatic thing he’s ever been through.

Zayn’s fingers stretch forward slowly. He stops before touching it, but only barely. He looks to
Liam, his eyes silently begging the question his mouth doesn’t seem to want to ask. Liam gulps and nods, his tongue darting across his lips because suddenly they’re too dry. Zayn’s fingertips are hot against his skin when he presses that last few centimeters. He trails across the thick pink line until it disappears. His fingers don’t.

“Does it hurt?” Zayn asks. His eyes don’t meet Liam’s, staying instead on his scar.

“Not anymore. It did for a while, but not anymore.” Liam admits. He doesn’t even know what he’s feeling right now. Zayn is beautiful, his touch a dull fire on Liam’s skin, but he’s finally in a good place with Niall and Harry. Every dirty thought racing through his mind just fills him with guilt, but that doesn’t stop them from coming. He comes to his senses and pulls his shirt back up.

“I’m surprised you’re inked.” Zayn says casually. He doesn’t seem to mind the abruptness of Liam’s actions. He points to the feather lining the inside of Liam’s right arm. “That’s good.”

“The idle fancies of youth I guess.” Liam shrugs. He hasn’t put the needle to his skin in years.

“You regret it?” Zayn asks curiously.

“Not really. Just don’t have the best ideas when I get them. The feather was to commemorate when my parents left. It was some teenage version of freedom. I got this one when I was drunk.” Liam points to the arrows on the other side. “I still can’t figure out what they’re for.”

“I see.” Zayn says vaguely. Liam isn’t positive, but he thinks the dark boy really does understand.

“When you said earlier that Louis was missing out, did you mean- are you-” Liam isn’t sure how to phrase the question without being rude.

“Bi, yeah. Harry said you are too, right?” Zayn asks.

“Um yeah. Sorry, I have to ask though. Have you and Harry ever-” Liam starts.

“No, no. I wanted to once, when I was living with him. He said it would be a mistake, said I’d regret it if I lost Pez because we shagged. Turns out he was right, but I still regret missing out on shagging Harry bloody Styles sometimes.” Zayn says with a laugh.

“You should. He’s mind-blowingly good.” Liam smiles.

“Shite. I’m sorry mate. I keep forgetting you’re with him like that. Blows my mind he found someone like you two. I mean, what are the chances?” Zayn says.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Liam asks. He can’t tell if that was supposed to be rude or not.

“I know who you are mate. Harry may not have recognized you when you met, but I watched X-Factor religiously when I was younger. I rooted for you and threw my phone into a wall when you got let go. You’re talented, you grew up looking like Beckham, only hotter, and you actually have a lick of sense in your head. You’re basically perfect. Harry generally goes for guys that aren’t good for him, but you two are. You both are so good for him, even if you’re outside the realm of normalcy.” Zayn sighs. It’s by far the most he’s spoken at once to Liam.

“Oh.” Liam says. His cheeks pinken with the compliment. “Thanks.”

“No, thank you. I’m glad he found you, even if I am a little jealous.” Zayn laughs.

“You should be. I have a lot to be envious of.” Liam smiles brightly. His life is in a good place now,
Niall and he are back on track and Harry is amazing. Their lives are starting to come together and it’s perfect. And then it isn’t when Zayn talks again.

“It’s not you I’m jealous of. It’s Harry.” Zayn tells him. Suddenly Liam realizes how close they are. He can feel Zayn’s arm around his shoulder, weighing heavy with something Liam can’t describe. When did that get there? Then Zayn is on him. His pink lips moving against Liam’s own and his hands on Liam’s chest.

Liam can’t think, can’t react. Some part of him wants this, has since he saw the other boy in the glow of the fire. Zayn is absolutely perfect in some ways. His mind works quickly though, tells him it’s a bad idea, and he knows it’s right. Zayn is beautiful, but Liam doesn’t love him. He loves Niall and Harry, Harry and Niall. They belong together and this is a bad idea.

“Stop-” Liam mumbles against Zayn’s mouth. “Zayn stop!”

Zayn pulls back and falls off of Liam’s lap. “Oh my god, Liam I’m so sorry. I don’t-”

“It’s fine. I won’t say anything to Perrie. I have to tell Harry and Niall though.” Liam sighs.

“They’re going to be happy.” Zayn smiles.

“Wait, what?” Liam asks. Zayn is staring up at him from the floor.

“Harry told me about the fight you three had. I wanted to make sure you weren’t going to hurt him again. There’s almost nobody I care about more in this world than that boy and you hurt him really badly.” Zayn says like that should clear everything up.

“You were testing me? Did they know about this? That you lied and manipulated me in my own home on my birthday?” Liam spits.

“They didn’t, not at all. I didn’t lie though. Everything I said tonight was true. Manipulated yes, but I didn’t lie. I am jealous of Harry, because you really are perfect. I’m not sure I would have been able to resist if the situation was switched. For what it’s worth, I’m really sorry” Zayn says quietly.

“You fucking better be. How far were you going to go until you decided I wasn’t worthy of him, of them?” Liam glares.

“I have a condom in my back pocket and a packet of lube in the front.” Zayn smirks. “I told you I probably wouldn’t be able to resist.”

“What about Perrie?” Liam asks. His mind is reeling. Zayn is like this strange vortex pulling him in.

“I love her, I really do, but I haven’t been shagged by a bloke in literally years. Bloody miss it sometimes. This probably wasn’t my brightest idea, but I was betting on you being the good guy Harry used to tell me about on the phone late at night.” Zayn admits.

“I don’t understand you at all.” Liam sighs. He doesn’t know whether to be mad or not. Zayn manipulated him, but it was to try and protect Harry. Liam would have done the same thing for Niall even before they started dating. Well maybe not the same thing, but the same basic idea.

“I just don’t want him to get hurt. Harry saved me once. I’ll do anything to keep that debt.” Zayn says flatly.

“Including ruining your friendship with him by seducing me? How do you think Harry will feel when he finds out about this?” Liam almost yells.
“He forgave me once for it. I know it’s not the best idea in the world, but it’s the only way I know to see if you actually love him or not.” Zayn shrugs.

“That’s absolutely mental.” Liam grumbles. “What does it even prove? What if you just weren’t my type?”

“I’m everyone’s type.” Zayn says with an infuriatingly cute smirk.

“Well not mine. I have two types and they’re both sleeping in that house right now.” Liam tells him. “Now put the horny sex-god act away and go sleep in Niall’s old room. It’s the second door on the right down the hallway.”

“Yeah mate, sure. Listen I know this was awful of me, but I only did it because I love him and I want him to be happy. I really hope we, as in you and I, can still be friends.” Zayn says calmly.

“You ever pull anything like that again and we won’t be, and if you make a move on Niall, I’ll beat you to a bloody pulp.” Liam warns. “But for now yes, I think we can still be friends.”

“I don’t need to with Niall. I saw before how much he loves Harry.” Zayn admits. “You were the one who almost broke him.”

“I’m doing the best I can to make that up to him.” Liam says quietly.

“I know. He told me all about it. I just had to check for myself. I really am sorry.” Zayn apologizes again and it helps just a little bit. He gets up and grinds his cigarette under his heel before walking inside without another word.

Liam sighs and only goes in once he hears the door to Niall’s room close. He walks silently back to the room and strips before climbing into bed across from Harry. He doesn’t cuddle up to him per usual. He feels dirty.

“You have a good time?” Harry mumbles sleepily.

“Harry, there’s something I have to tell you.” Liam says softly. Harry stirs and turns over. “When I was outside with Zayn, he um- we-”

“Oh god, this again.” Harry moans. “He kissed you didn’t he? Tried to see if you deserved me?”

“So he really has done it before?” Liam asks.

“Unfortunately yes. He’s overprotective in the extreme. I assume you passed his test considering you’re telling me about it.” Harry says.

“If you mean did I kiss him back, then no.” Liam grumbles. He doesn’t tell Harry how close he was to failing though.

“All right then, nothing wrong. The last guy failed miserably and Zayn almost tossed him off my balcony. Do me a favor?” Harry asks. “Don’t tell Niall about this.”

“I can’t keep this a secret Haz.” Liam says.

“Niall doesn’t need to know though, it’ll just remind him of your break up. He told me about your little revelation earlier. Please just let him have that, it’s not like you did anything wrong.” Harry tells him.

“I um, I wanted to though. I’m so sorry Harry.” Liam admits. He’s on the verge of tears from the
guilt he feels over it.

“Don’t be. You know how hard it was for me to pull back when he asked me to do it with him? Extremely. He’s fit as heck.” Harry laughs.

“How can you forgive me so easily?” Liam asks.

“Because you chose us. Zayn is almost perfect, but you chose us.” Harry smiles. “Now, how about you take this eyesore off of me and we have that birthday sex?”

“It’s not my birthday anymore.” Liam says with a small smile.

“Well then belated birthday sex. We haven’t done anything alone in ages and Niall won’t mind.” Harry smirks.

“Well then, let’s.” Liam smiles. “There any chance I can convince you to take of the jeans, but leave on the chaps?”

Harry glares at him and pouts. “I already told Niall I wouldn’t do that.”

“Alright alright, just thought it would be hot if you rode me in them.” Liam smiles. “You don’t have to.”

“Fine, I will. Would you like anything else to stay on, or just the chaps?” Harry acquiesces.

“The vest and the boots please.” Liam asks. Harry stands up to start taking off his clothes but Liam scoots across the bed and stops him. “Let me?”

Harry nods and Liam undoes the last two button on Harry’s shirt while he kisses at the smooth skin of his stomach. Harry starts to moan and Liam reaches a finger up to quiet him. Harry, being the man that he is, sucks Liam’s finger into his mouth and swirls his tongue around it. Liam hisses and bites at the skin under his lips. “There are four other people in this house besides Niall. They don’t need to hear us having sex Haz.” He moans.

“I’ll be quiet then.” Harry giggles, pulling off Liam’s finger with a pop. “We’ll see about you though. I bet you’ll get loud tonight.”

Liam smiles up at Harry and palms at his cock through the jeans he’s still wearing. “You gonna make me?”

“Take off my pants and see.” Harry smiles. Liam does exactly that, quickly unlacing the chaps before unbuttoning the jeans and dropping them to his feet. Harry’s shirt hangs loose and open and Liam massages the thin layer of fabric surrounding the lanky boy’s cock with his mouth while sliding the shirt off his shoulders. Harry steps out of the jeans, careful not to interrupt Liam’s ministration. Finally he hooks his fingers under the waist band and pulls them off in one quick fluid motion. Harry’s cock springs out and Liam gives it a small kiss before scooting back on the bed.

Harry smiles and puts back on the articles of clothing that Liam requested. The vest hangs open, revealing Harry’s multitudes of tattoos. The chaps take Liam’s breath away when Harry turns around, He’s seen Harry naked so many times by now, but still he looks so beautiful, especially when his arse is basically framed for Liam’s pleasure. The curly haired boy tugs on his boots from their place by the door before walking back to Liam.

“Your underwear are still on. Why?” He asks with a cocky grin. Liam quickly slides the offending fabric off and tosses them somewhere to the side. Harry looks so beautiful standing there in the
moonlight streaming through the window, Liam doesn’t trust himself to speak. “Good. Now lay back.”

Liam does as he’s told, somehow having lost control of the whole situation. Harry climbs on top of him and straddles his stomach. The cold of the leather burns like ice against his heated skin, but it feels so good he doesn’t want it to stop. “So you want this cowboy to ride you?” Harry asks, grinning like a fool.

“Please.” Liam says. It sounds desperate, pleading, but he isn’t embarrassed. All he wants is Harry around him right now. His cock is painful and leaking, practically begging for attention. Harry reads his face and reaches behind himself, rubbing the palm of his hand against the the head to slick it up before he wraps his long fingers around it and pulls. Liam moans loudly and Harry smiles.

“I was right. You’re definitely going to be loud tonight.” He says. Liam can’t even deny it, he’s too busy panting and moaning and proving him right. Harry runs his free hand up Liam’s abs and chest, tracing the muscles with the tips of his fingers. It just turns Liam on more, egging on his groans of pleasure.

Harry’s strokes are painfully slow, almost as bad as nothing at all. The fingers and palm moving in an excruciatingly deliberate manner, dragging against the sensitive skin over the span of what feels like hours. Liam feels desperate and overstimulated all at once. He’s starting to go crazy, bucking his hips into Harry’s hand for friction, Harry teasing him by loosening his grip to reduce it. It’s a cycle of torture.

“Easy Li, I want this to last. We haven’t had sex in a week.” Harry smiles. “If you go off too early, where’s my fun?”

“You could use the ring.” Liam offers.

“Do you want that? I know how tight it gets on you.” Harry asks the question, but he obviously already knows the answer. His confident smirk and the slow pull of his hand show how sure he is.

“Yes. Yes please. Anything.” Liam gasps. Harry owns him right now. He reaches across to the bedside table and rummages round until he comes up with the lube and a small rubber circle. He climbs down from his spot and settles between Liam’s legs. When he stretches the cock ring around Liam, constricting both his dick and balls, Liam almost screams with how hard it makes him.

Harry decides to rile him up even more by wrapping his mouth around Liam’s engorged prick. He has to pull a pillow over his mouth just to keep from waking the house. Harry sucks and twists around him and Liam can feel everything like it’s magnified tenfold. When Harry starts moaning around him it’s almost enough to make him blow, unfortunately that is not a possibility at the moment.

He lifts the pillow and sees Harry’s hand reaching back and fingering himself open. He can’t help it. He cums inside Harry’s mouth, the aching feeling of ejaculation without orgasm eating him alive. Harry pulls off after swallowing his load and sighs.

“I can still go. I didn’t orgasm, I promise. I came, but it wasn’t an orgasm. I’m still good to go.” Liam whines.

Harry smiles and says “If you’re sure.”

He swallows Liam back down and the muscular man’s cock twitches furiously in Harry’s mouth. He’s desperate for release and just wants Harry to climb on top of him. As if he’d shouted this
telepathically Harry lifts his mouth off of Liam and pulls his fingers out of himself before sidling up the bed. “You ready then?” Harry asks.

Liam moans and nods as hard as he can, nearly giving himself whiplash in the process. Harry wipes his hand off on a rag and then drips more lube onto it. His grabs Liam, soaking his cock in lube before sinking down on him hungrily. Liam moans loudly and Harry drops a hand over his mouth to smother it. “Shh now, you’ll wake everyone up.”

Liam bites his lip hard enough that he almost draws blood and nods. Harry begins moving and it’s so tight he’s pretty sure he’s going to literally explode. Harry pants and whines, but keeps it at a low volume, for only Liam to hear. His hands brace themselves on Liam’s stomach and he pushes his hips back hard. Liam grabs him by the shoulders and pulls him flush against his chest.

His feet brace against the mattress and he fucks up into Harry while simultaneously devouring his mouth. The cold leather of his vest heats rapidly between them and his chaps stick to Liam’s thighs. Harry moans into him, filling him with the urge to fuck harder and faster. His hips snap up rapidly, nearly bruising his pelvis, but he doesn’t care. Harry breaks the kiss and drops his head onto Liam’s chest. He bites into the tender flesh, not hard enough to draw blood, but hard enough to leave a mark.

Liam flips them over, pinning Harry under him and finally retaking control of the situation. Harry wraps his legs around Liam’s waist and moans filthily into his shoulder. “Fuck Leeyum.” Harry gasps, mimicking the way Zayn says his name.

That does it for him. He pulls out of Harry and rips off the piece of rubber constricting him. He pulls Harry over to the edge of the bed and stands up. Harry’s hole gapes at him greedily and he pushes back in to appease it. His hand wraps around Harry’s leaking cock and he tugs in time with his own hard thrusts. Harry’s hands fist at the sheets, pulling them off the corners of the bed with the force of Liam fucking him.

“Oh fuck Leeyum, I’m gonna-” Harry screams before shooting all over his stomach and chest. Liam pulls out and pumps himself the last few times he needs before coating Harry in even more cum. He smiles down at the mess, jizz covering his torso and vest.

“I think you should clean that up. The leather might shrink.” He smiles. He grabs a rag off the ground and tosses it to Harry who just lays boneless. The curly haired boy slowly rubs the cloth over his chest, soaking up as much as possible. “Oh, and if you ever say my name that way again, I will literally fuck you through a wall.”

“Oh come on, it turned you on.” Harry laughs.

“Don’t.” Liam growls. “I didn’t want him, Harry, I wanted you.”

“Good. Now let’s sleep.” Harry mumbles. Liam climbs in next to the already snoring boy and marvel’s at how beautiful he is until the grip of sleep drags him under.

“Christ in Heaven!” Niall yells when he finds the two boys sleeping, naked, and intertwined in bed. Normally he’d just join in for a cuddle and fall back asleep, but considering the crowd behind him, that’s not really an option. They startle awake and Harry falls off the bed with his arse hanging in the air. Louis collapses into a fit of giggles. Eleanor slaps him on the shoulder while also laughing. Perrie walks away with Zayn in tow, his eyes wide with interest.
Niall walks in and slams the door shut behind him. “I was going to ask you to make breakfast. A meal and a show however is a bit much this early don’t ya think?” He hisses.

“Niall, why would you bring them all back here?” Liam asks.

“They followed me because they’re hungry. I wasn’t aware you two decided to have a birthday sex without me. Thanks for that by the way. Really nice.” Niall grumbles. He picks up two pairs of joggers from the dresser and tosses them at his boyfriends.

“You fell asleep with Perrie.” Harry shrugs. “Besides you said you don’t care if any of us just has sex with one of the others.”

“And you said you wouldn’t wear the chaps without pants again, yet here we are. I don’t care if you two shag, but it would be nice to be invited for special occasions.” Niall glares. He’s not that mad, but the other two deserve to feel guilty.

Liam shrugs on his joggers and gives Niall a kiss on the cheek. “I’m sorry Nialler. I’ll make it up to you. How about Nialler cakes?”

“For everyone? That’s not really sensible Liam.” Niall huffs.

“I meant tomorrow. Today Harry can make something because you two invited a bunch of people to sleep over without my knowledge. It’s your mess to clean boys.” Liam laughs before walking away and closing the door behind him.

Harry sighs and unlaces his chaps while Niall watches. “So unfair. Liam doesn’t even have the cowboy thing like I do.” He whines. “Did you at least tape it so I could see them in action?”

“Nope, but I’ll make another exception sometime as an apology.” Harry winks. “Just you and me whenever you want.”

“That works. Now let’s go make breakfast for the crowd out there. After seeing you two I’m pretty sure Zayn is hungry for something other than eggs, but everyone else wants food.” Niall sighs.

“Ignore him. He hasn’t had any dick in years. Pez is great for him, in a way, but he really liked being with guys sometimes.” Harry explains. “I’ll talk to him and have him back off.” Harry offers. He pulls on a jumper, Niall’s favorite jumper, and Niall melts.

“You remember that thing?” He asks, pointing at his mother’s creation.

“You wore it the day we met.” Harry grins. “I should take it off though. It’s small on you, and positively skintight on me.”

“My mum made it for me when I was almost nineteen. It was um- it was just before she died.” Niall says. Tears well up in his eyes and he isn’t sure why until it hits him that she died seven years ago in just a couple days.

“That was right before your birthday, right?” Harry asks. Niall nods and Harry continues. “So it was a few days from now? I’m so sorry Niall.”

He starts to peel off the jumper before Niall stops him with a steady hand. “Don’t take it off please. Wear it. It would make her happy, even if she wouldn’t approve of or understand our relationship. It would make me happy.”

“Okay Nialler.” Harry smiles and clings to Niall in a fond embrace. They don’t move for several
minutes, Niall just trying to recover from his sudden burst of emotion in Harry’s arms. Finally he feels better and gives Harry a peck on the cheek to let him know.

“There’s going to be a riot if we don’t go now.” He mumbles. Honestly he could care less about the rest of them. Harry is the only person he wants to be around right now. Harry who doesn’t have to say anything and just soaks up his sadness instead.

“Well then I guess we should go make some food so we can kick them out and spend the rest of the day cuddling yeah?” Harry asks. Niall swears Harry can read his mind sometimes.

“Sounds good to me.” Niall giggles.

Once everyone leaves things get quiet. Liam sneaks out to the farm and Niall stays inside with Harry instead of monitoring the construction. They laze around doing nothing for most of the afternoon except cuddling and watching movies. They’re half way through Avengers: Age of Ultron before either of them moves. Niall rolls over from his spot next to Harry and says “I saw them last night you know. Zayn snogged Liam, and then Li pushed him off.”

“You knew?” Harry asks.

“I was about to join them out on the porch for a fag and then he jumped Liam’s bones. Once Liam pushed him off I just decided to go back to sleep. Didn’t want to process it until now.” Niall admits.

“Did he tell you about it?”

“Last night. I asked him not to tell you about it. I didn’t want Zayn’s mistake to ruin what you two finally got back.” Harry tells him. This is extremely awkward, not helped any by the dramatic speech Captain America is giving in the background.

“Well don’t do that again. I’m a big boy and I would have let him explain this time. I’ll never make that mistake again.” Niall glares.

“I’m sorry. I promise it won’t happen again.” Harry says. He wants to sigh with relief, but Niall might take it the wrong way.

“Good. Our relationship is so fucked up some times. Secrets and lies everywhere. Any more and we’ll start tripping on them.” Niall sighs.

“Then we should come clean.” Harry smiles. “I think you should go back to brunet.”

“Well that was sudden. Okay um, I wish you’d call Lou already to cut your hair because you said you would forever ago and sometimes you look like a woman from behind.” Niall laughs.

“It bugs me that I have to do all the cleaning and cooking around here.” Harry counts. This experiment is going to either end very well or very very poorly.

“Most of the time I prefer you to Liam in bed.” Niall says. Right now it’s looking like well.

“Your smile still takes my breath away after all these months.” Harry admits.

“I never get enough of how romantic you are, even though this is the only time I’ll ever admit that.” Niall smiles. Harry leans in for a kiss and it’s as sweet and slow as the first time. Every time is.

“I want us to have a commitment ceremony. I already bought rings because I want us to be together
forever.” Harry tells him. This is the big gamble.

“Wait what?” Niall pulls back. This gamble does not look so positive now. “You did what?”

“I bought rings because I want to propose.” Harry says again.

Niall backs off the couch and walks to the center of the living room. “God, Haz, why would you tell me that? Liam isn’t even here. You want me to keep that from him until when?”

“Until I’m positive you’ll say yes to me, I guess.” Harry says. At the moment he’s not sure when that will be. He’s just hidden this secret for so long, he couldn’t keep it inside anymore. Since the day he met Niall he knew he wanted to be with him forever, and it may be fast, especially considering he bought the rings before Connemara, but he knows he wants this.

“Of bloody course I’m going to say yes!” Niall yells. “I want to spend the rest of my life with you too, ceremony or not. I wish I could spend every second for the rest of eternity right by your side. And yes, I’m completely aware of how much sappy bullshit is flying out of my mouth right now. You make me think in sappy bullshit now though. Every day is like some amazing fairy tale when I’m with you and apparently I’m turning into a complete queen!”

Harry doesn’t even know what to say. Niall basically just said he wants to marry him. Even if the words were less than perfect, coming from Niall, they may be the best thing Harry has ever heard. He flying leaps into Niall and snuggles into his chest when they fall to the floor. Harry makes sure to twist their bodies in midair so that he takes the brunt of the impact. If the fall knocked the air out of his lungs he doesn’t notice. Niall had already done that anyway.

“I love your sappy bullshit.” Harry giggles.

“Not as much as I love yours. Now you need to figure out how to ask Liam and still make this a surprise for me. I’ll be damned if my proposal is in the middle of a game of truth or dare without any dares.” Niall rolls his eyes.

“I have a few things in mind. You’ll just have to wait and see. I know we said no more secrets, but can you keep this from Liam for a little while longer?” Harry asks. It’s not fair, but he really wants everything to be perfect.

“Well I suppose I have to now, don’t I?” Niall mumbles.

“Thanks Babes. I’ll make it worth it, I promise.” Harry smiles. Soon enough he’ll have everything he could possibly want, even if he doesn’t actually know that yet.

Liam doesn’t want to go back inside. He can’t yet. He can’t face Niall after last night, the guilt of what happened with Zayn eating him up inside. He stopped it and he knows that should count for something, it even might for Niall, but to him it doesn’t change anything. Once again, even though he’s truly happy, something from outside came along to try and ruin that.

“Hey stranger.” Niall’s voice sounds from outside the window of his new truck. He tries not to visibly startle too much, but he still flinches. “You want to let me in?”

Liam unlocks the door and Niall hops into the cabin. He really hadn’t been expecting to see Niall until he went back inside. Harry seemed more than happy to occupy the blond and give Liam some space. “What are you doing?” He asks cautiously.
“I’m trying to see why you’ve been avoiding us all day.” Niall says knowingly. Shit, did Harry tell him anyway?

“I haven’t been. I’ve been admiring my presents in solitude.” Liam says with a fake grin. Niall probably sees right through it, he always has, but that doesn’t stop Liam from trying.

“You’re a shite liar Payno.” Niall sighs. “If this is about last night, what happened with Zayn, it’s okay.”

“So he did tell you then? What thefuck! He specifically asked me-” Liam starts yelling.

“Liam!” Niall yells, placing a hand on Liam’s arms which are slamming down on the steering wheel. “I saw it. I saw him kiss you through the window. I also saw you push him off. All Harry told me was why Zayn did it and that he asked you not to tell me, which I’ve already had words with him about. Zayn will get an earful about testing you the next time I see him too.”

“Niall, I’m so so sorry.” Liam feels like he’s on the verge of tears.

“Well stop it.” Niall laughs. “You picked me and Harry over that male modeling son of a bitch, that’s all I care about. If you had told me about it I would have understood. Besides who wouldn’t want at least one good snog from him? He’s gorgeous.”

“He’s nothing compared to you two.” Liam smiles. It’s true. Zayn was something new and shiny. He really is gorgeous, but he doesn’t have the same shine that Niall and Harry do. He doesn’t make Liam blink when he looks at him because they’re almost too much to take in at once.

“True enough. I am fantastically beautiful and Harry is basically an angel.” Niall giggles. “Now will you come inside and stop avoiding us?”

“Sure. I suppose there’s no reason now.” Liam admits.

“There was never any reason. When did I become the mature one in any relationship?” Niall laughs. “I literally laughed at a poop joke the other day, but I’m the only one not running away any more.”

“It’s because you’re stronger than we are.” Liam says as he starts up the pickup. The engine is so quiet compared to his old one he has to double check to make sure it’s really on.

“Well I can hardly lift a bus Payno, I just know that you two are worth fighting for. Now let’s go home. Hazza is making pot roast stew and it smelled amazing when I came out here to get you.” Niall gives a dazzling smile.

When the anniversary of his mother’s death rolls around again Niall can’t seem to stop crying. Not unless Harry holds him that is. Liam is usually the one who comforts him, Liam or Bobby, but this year all he wants is Harry. Liam seems to understand and gives them a wide berth and manages the house for the day.

His head is throbbing by the time Harry gets back from using the loo. It hasn’t even been that long, a few minutes at most, but as soon as Harry walked out the door the tears just started back up. He’s not even sure why it’s this intense this year, but his grief over his mother feels like a knife in his chest.

“Oh Nialler.” Harry coos. He takes his spot behind Niall and brings the blond to his chest. “I was only gone for a minute.”
Niall manages to stifle his sobs again and sniffles. The sleeves of his jumper are coated in mucus and it’s disgusting. He doesn’t care as long as Harry doesn’t, and the curly haired boy hasn’t said a word about it. “I missed you anyways.” He says with a watery voice

“I missed you too.” Harry smiles sweetly and snuggles tight against Niall. Harry’s long limbs combined with his position leave Niall completely wrapped up in the taller boy’s body. It’s the most comforting thing possible right now. His sadness seems to seep out of his body and Harry soaks it all up and puts it away.

They stay curled up in each other and completely aware of time’s flow until Harry falls asleep. His gentle breathing soothes the monster inside Niall’s chest. Something pokes Niall in the stomach and he smiles into the bare skin of his boyfriend’s long neck. That leads to a quick kiss and then a few nips. Harry stirs under him and moans in his sleep.

Niall sneaks a hand up Harry’s shirt and glides his finger up the tattooed chest underneath. The nub of Harry’s nipple is still soft so Niall tweaks it a little and continues mouthing at his boyfriend’s neck. Harry moans more and his eyes flutter open. “Well this is better than the crying I suppose.” He mumbles sleepily.

“Don’t be mean Haz. I was trying to thank you.” Niall giggles.

“Napping with me would have been a good thanks too.” Harry smiles.

“Better than sucking you off?” Niall asks. He removes the hand from Harry’s chest and moves it down to Harry’s crotch, only to find that he’s completely soft. “Oh, never mind then. It must have been your hip I felt poking me.”

“Sorry babes. I’m just bony I guess. I wouldn’t mind that though.” Harry offers.

“It’s fine Haz, you just go back to sleep. I won’t bug you anymore.” Niall sighs. He’s not upset, just disappointed. He’s been such a mess all day and this seemed like the best way to show his gratitude to Harry for dealing with him.

“Only if you stay and sleep with me. I want you close to me right now.” Harry says. He’s trying to blink the sleep out of his eyes and it’s incredibly cute.

“Sure Haz. Can we move to the bed though? The couch isn’t as comfortable.” Niall asks. If he’s going to sleep, he might as well do it with a pillow under his head.

“Promise you’ll stay all cuddled up with me if we do?” Harry asks.

“I thought you didn’t like that?” Niall questions. Harry still spends most nights on the far end of the bed, leaving Niall to snuggle up with Liam instead. After Liam’s gunshot things got really difficult for Niall because he wasn’t able to cuddle with either of them until the muscular man was more healed.

“I do today. Gift horse and all that Niall.” Harry smiles softly.

“Then yeah, I promise.” Niall nods. They get up and walk to the bedroom, Harry cloaking Niall with his body and clinging tight the entire way. He only lets go once they reach the bed so he can crawl in first and hold his body open for Niall. Niall climbs into Harry’s waiting arms and tangles their legs together so close that they’re basically one person.

“Niall?” Harry asks.
“Yes?” Niall responds. He’s starting to get sleepy, so he hopes Harry hasn’t changed his mind about the blow job.

“Do you really think I look like a woman sometimes?” Harry questions.

“Sometimes yeah. You wear your hair so long that from behind it’s a startling resemblance.” Niall admits.

“I’ll call Lou tomorrow. Sorry I put it off for so long.” Harry mumbles. “She can do yours too.”

“Nope. I want you to do mine. She already told you what to buy and everything right?” Niall asks.

“Yeah she did. It’s all in the bathroom. As long as you’re okay with her instructing me over the phone then I’ll do it.” Harry agrees.

“Good. My hair looks bloody awful. It’s long and my roots make up more of it than the dye does.” Niall mumbles. “Unless you still want me to go back to brunet.”

“Would you?” Harry asks.

“I would for you. I kept it like this as a memorial to Greg, but it really doesn’t make any sense. He wasn’t blond and he probably would have yelled at me for doing what I did to my family when I ran away and came back like this.” Niall admits. It’s almost scary, the idea of changing something he’s done for over a decade. “This house makes a much better memorial like you said.”

“Then yeah, I’d like to see you that way.” Harry says. “If you hate it you can always go back to blond.”

“That’s true I guess.” Niall smiles into the fabric covering Harry’s chest. “Hey Haz?”

“Yes Nialler?” Harry mumbles sleepily.

“D’ya think Liam’s mad that I’ve wanted you all day instead of him?” Niall asks. The possibility has been eating at him for a little bit.

“Sad maybe, but not mad. We can’t help what we want when we’re upset. Just let him know you still need him too. He likes to feel needed.” Harry tells him. He obviously just wants to go back to sleep so Niall just nods. They fall asleep shortly after.

“Will you make me those Nialler-cakes now?” Niall asks. Liam’s not sure when he woke up. Ten minutes ago he was sleeping in a pile of limbs with Harry. Liam snuck a quick picture and then left.

“You sure you want me around right now?” Liam asks. He doesn’t mean for it to sound as bitter as it does. It was just supposed to be to make sure Niall wouldn’t prefer Harry at the moment.

“I knew you were mad. I’m sorry Liam, really. There’s just something about Hazza that calmed me down today.” Niall admits softly.

“I’m not mad. I just hate feeling like you don’t need me.” Liam replies.

“When are you going to get it through your fool head that I will always need you? Even when it’s something like today, where I needed Hazza to hold me, I still need you. I. Will. Always. Need. You.” Niall says each word as hard as he can, as if he’s trying to hammer them into Liam’s brain. As if to prove Liam’s point Niall smacks the palm of his hand against the muscular man’s forehead with
each word.

“Apparently it’s going to take ten seconds because you’re an arse.” Liam grins. Niall’s reassurances help and he feels a little better.

“Better than being a complete knob like you.” Niall laughs. “Now make me Nialler-cakes.”

“And what if I don’t want to?” Liam asks. He’s wearing a shit eating grin and he knows Niall can see he isn’t serious.

“Then I’ll have to remind you that you excluded me from birthday sex and promised them as an apology.” Niall glares. His mouth betrays him, twitching in a small smile.

“Fuck, I did, didn’t I?” Liam groans. He had completely forgotten about promising that.

“Yes, now go cook me some and wear nothing but an apron. I like the way your arse looks like that.” Niall laughs.

“I’ll cook you the Nialler-cakes, but I’m staying clothed.” Liam tells him. He’s already on his feet and rummaging around for the ingredients.

“Why will nobody fool around with me today?” Niall whines. “I swear I’m on the verge of calling that slut, Zayn, just to have some fun.”

“You wouldn’t.” Liam turns and glares. Niall backs up against the table, his arms thrown up in mock surrender.

“Christ, no alright?” Niall stutters.

“Don’t make jokes like that. It hasn’t been long enough for it to be funny.” Liam growls. He finds it hard to believe it will ever be funny.

“We both forgave you Li. Just let it go. Who cares if he wanted you to plow him like a cornfield? You didn’t do it.” Niall mumbles.

“I care. I care that he thinks I’d abandon you two just because he’s bloody gorgeous.” Liam tells the blond.

“He really feckin is though, isn’t he?” Niall laughs. “I agree though, you really aren’t easy. Took how bloody long to get you into my bed?”

“Three months isn’t that long Niall.” Liam groans.

“It is in your twenties Liam. Then again maybe you are easy, you jumped into bed with Haz the minute we started dating.” Niall giggles.

“You are not going to throw that in my face are you? Because-” Liam groans.

“I’m not saying it was a bad thing Payno. I like how much you’ve loosened up when it comes to sex. Maybe one day you’ll actually be kinky. Fucking Haz in the chaps was a good start.” Niall says, putting a stop to Liam’s entire train of thought.

Just the memory of it stirs something in Liam’s pants. He really has become more sexually liberal since Harry came along. Both him and Niall bring out this animal side that Liam can’t, or maybe just doesn’t want to control. They make him want to try things that he’d always locked up in dark corners of his mind, afraid that those things would make him disgusting to anyone else.
“Do you want pancakes, or do you want to fuck me? I don’t have the concentration for both.” Liam asks.

“Depends whether or not we can actually shag if I say that’s what I want.” Niall cocks an eyebrow as both a question and a challenge.

“We can if that’s what you’d prefer.” Liam says back. He keeps his face and voice flat.

“Good. It’s been fucking ages since it’s been just us.” Niall smiles smugly.

“I suppose we should use your old room then? Since Haz is still sleeping.” It’s not really a question, more Liam directing Niall on where to go.

Niall takes the hint and runs off, giggling under his breath the entire way. Liam rolls his eyes and follows behind quietly. By the time he gets to the bedroom Niall is already stripped starkers and standing with his hands on his hips and a proud smile on his face. It’s a stark contrast to the tear-soaked and snot-stained Niall of this morning. Something is different now though, and Liam can’t quite put his fingers on it until, oh, Niall is completely shaved. There’s not a hair on his legs, stomach, chest, or groin. Niall spins around and confirms Liam’s suspicions that there aren’t any on his arse either.

“When did you-” Liam starts.

“Yesterday in an attempt to distract myself. It kept me very occupied for at least two hours. This was hard work Payno, trying not to cut myself and all. You going to waste it?” Niall arches an eyebrow in challenge. Liam is in fact not going to waste it. He pins Niall against the bed post, trapping the blond’s fragile wrists under one of his enormous hands. The other slides down the silky skin of Niall’s newly hairless thigh. The flesh is insanely smooth, almost like satin under the pads of Liam’s fingers.

He feels dirty with how turned on this makes him feel, but the way Niall moans under each touch helps alleviate that. The smooth curve of Niall’s arse feels amazing cupped in his hand, he slides his hand around to find that Niall even shaved the inside of the cheeks. “You went all out didn’t you? How’d you manage all this?”

“Mostly a razor. Some hair removal cream for the bits I can’t see so well.” Niall says.

“Get on the bed. I want to taste you.” Liam orders. He releases his grip around Niall’s wrists and the blond jumps onto the bed giddily. Liam strips off his shirt and trousers before climbing over him. He starts at Niall’s slim ankle licking a stripe up his shin, over his knee, and onto the soft flesh of his thigh. He wants to bite at it, mark it, but not without Niall’s permission. Niall is suppressing a moan and Liam takes a second to realize that it’s because he’s trying not to wake Harry up on the other side of the wall.

“Let him hear. He doesn’t know what he’s missing.” Liam smiles.

Niall shakes his head furiously and whispers “I offered him a chance first, he turned me down. He doesn’t get to know until after you’ve fucked me so thoroughly I don’t want any more.”

“Well we haven’t got two months Nialler.” Liam grins. “Maybe an hour at most.”

“Are you going to waste it all talking back then?” Niall sighs and rolls his eyes. Liam takes that as his cue to get back to work. He drops his mouth over Niall’s hairless groin and kisses at the skin between his balls and leg. That eggs a moan out of Niall and Liam rewards it with a tug on the eager cock twitching next to his cheek. He runs his tongue over the smooth skin, bathing Niall as
thoroughly as he can. He occasionally tugs on Niall’s needy prick which elicits something between a whimper and a moan. He’s breathing in short pants now and that spurs something from the dark recesses of Liam’s mind.

“Be a good boy for Daddy and roll over.” Liam says. Niall looks at him curiously but follows the order dutifully. He looks amazing all spread out and hairless. Liam can barely breathe at the sight. He ducks his head back down and kisses at the cheeks of Niall’s bum before licking a line up the crack.

“Fucking Christ Li.” Niall moans. It’s exactly what Liam was hoping for. He draws one of his hands away and brings it down with a not-too-hard smack. Niall yelps in surprise and turns to him with wide eyes.

“Language.” Liam scolds. “We don’t say words like that.”

Niall laughs and wiggles his bum, as if to ask for more. Liam brings the hand back down and Niall moans this time, surprising giving way to pleasure. “Mm please Daddy, I’ll be good.” Niall moans.

The stirring in Liam’s cock when Niall calls him that almost makes him feel guilty. Instead he gives himself over to the part that likes it. He smacks down one more time for good measure, in case he doesn’t get to act out this particular fantasy any further. Niall gasps and moans, spewing the naughtiest words Liam knows in Irish. Liam sits up on the edge of the bed and pulls Niall onto his lap. He traps the thin boy’s torso under one arm and smacks harder than before at the growing red spot on his bum.

“I. Said. We. Don’t. Talk. Like. That.” Liam says, punctuating each word word with a spank. “Irish still counts Niall.”

“Mm Daddy, I’m not sure I’ve learned my lesson.” Niall grins. Liam’s cock jumps again, and Niall knows it by the way it pokes into his stomach. “Is that for me Daddy?”

“If you’re a good boy.” Liam says. It feels filthy when he says it, but in a good way. At least he thinks it’s a good way. He really doesn’t care much anymore.

“Yes Daddy. I want to be a good boy for you. Want you to give me that present.” Niall moans. Liam pulls the smaller lad into a sitting position. He takes Niall’s mouth with his own, licking into his mouth and gulping down all the moans as if they give him life.

“First you’re going to have to play a little game.” Liam breaks the kiss and says. “Gonna have you lick Daddy’s cock. Think you can handle that baby?”

“Oh yes Daddy.” Niall moans. Liam lays back and flips Niall around so that he has easy access to lick at his bum. Niall pulls off Liam’s briefs and sucks greedily at the cock that he’s released. Liam groans, throwing his head back in pure pleasure. His body is running almost entirely on instinct now. Each touch, each sound, each taste is completely out of his mind’s control now.

His tongue dives, pointed, into Niall’s tight pink hole. The small boy moans around Liam’s leaking cock, vibrations from his throat tingling their way up Liam’s spine like a wave. He laps hungrily into Niall, occasionally sticking his tongue into the ring of muscle, but mostly flattening his tongue and stimulating the blond’s whole entrance at once. Once Niall is thoroughly coated Liam asks “Can you get me the lube baby?”

Niall leans over, reaching into his night stand and grabbing the small bottle, then handing it back to Liam without ever removing his mouth. Liam gives Niall’s yearning prick a stroke in thanks once he’s coated his hand in lube. Niall practically screams around Liam, his moans echoing even with his
mouth full. The blond’s fingers dig into the muscle’s of Liam’s thighs, almost painful, but not quite.

Liam works quickly, fingerling Niall open. The blond likes it tight, and that plays particularly well for this dark kink Liam is letting go. Once he’s finished with the second finger, Niall having long abandoned his cock in favor of whimpering into Liam’s hip at the sensation. “You ready baby? Want to ride Daddy?”

“Yes Daddy, please. I want you Daddy.” Niall moans. He pulls off Liam’s fingers and twists his body around eagerly. Liam helps guide his hips, but it isn’t necessary. Niall sinks down on him expertly, familiar with every sensation of Liam’s body. He practically takes all of Liam at once, which never ceases to mystify the muscular man. Even the women he’s slept with couldn’t do that, and Niall is so much tighter than they ever were. “Oh Daddy, you’re so big.”

Liam’s hips buck up at that. He’s not going to hold back any more. Niall rocks on him and he thrusts up. They fall into a quick rhythm, Niall panting and moaning on top of him. Liam bats away the blond’s hand whenever he tries to touch himself. “Daddy’s going to suck you off after this baby. Want to taste you, lick you.”

His orgasm is slow to build, pushing past the disgusting feeling this particular fetish gives him takes some effort. The sight of Niall’s cock, bouncing, hairless, and eager helps though. It helps so much. “Doing so good baby, just like that. So good for Daddy.”

Soon after that he’s cumming. His whole body tightens, muscles stretching to their limit to try and release all the energy flowing through him. Niall keeps going, riding him into the mattress and milking him to the last drop. Liam’s eyes squeeze tight when his orgasm ends and pleasure gives way to over-stimulation. Niall immediately stops once he sees. “Did I do good Daddy?” He asks.

“So good baby. Want your reward?” Liam asks. Niall nods eagerly and pulls off of Liam. He flops down on the bed with his legs spread open. It takes some effort, but Liam pulls himself between them and pulls Niall into his mouth.

“Oh Daddy!” Niall moans. “That feels so good Daddy.”

It comes easier for Liam after that. He sucks almost eagerly, even with most of his body demanding rest. Luckily Niall was near to bursting even before Liam started working on him. It doesn’t take more than a few minutes before Niall is tugging at Liam’s hair and moaning “Daddy, oh Daddy- I’m gonna- I-”

Liam takes it all, swallowing every drop Niall squirts down his throat. He sucks Niall through it all until the blond’s entire body starts thrashing underneath him and the tugs on his hair become more insistent. “Li stop!” Niall cries.

“Sorry, just really wanted to taste you.” Liam grins. “Still want Nialler-cakes?”

“An honest to god Daddy kink.” Niall laughs. Harry looks completely shocked, and honestly Niall was too.

“That’s- that’s weirdly hot.” Harry says. “Like I’ve never really been into that. At all. But it’s still hot.”

“I know, right?” Niall says with a smile. “I never knew he had it in him. He was always so vanilla before. Don’t get me wrong, the sex was always great, he could pound me like a piece of veal. But it was never anything close to kinky except for that one threesome. And he was so drunk I thought he
was going to completely freak out in the morning.”

“And you don’t think it’s weird? The orphan boy and the man with more daddy issues than anyone I’ve ever met acting out that little fantasy?” Harry asks cautiously.

“Hey I’m not digging into the pit of psychosis that comes with kinks. He spanked me and I went with it.” Niall giggles.

“He spanked you?” Harry asks.

“For cursing.” Niall nods. “The mark is still there. Want to see?”

Niall doesn’t wait for a response, instead turning around and dropping his trousers to give Harry a good look at the bright red hand print glowing on his arse. Harry traces it with his fingers and it stings a little. “You didn’t mention that you’d shaved your bum.” Harry giggles.

Niall turns and drops his jeans completely, letting Harry see the full range of his shaving efforts. Harry’s eyes ghost over it all, from his ankles up all the way to his smooth crotch. “I shaved everything. You really missed out when you took that nap.” Niall grins wickedly and then pulls back up his trousers.

“Well if I’d know I would have jumped at the opportunity.” Harry groans.

“Your loss. I’m satisfied now.” Niall laughs. It’s not entirely true, he’s satisfied to a point, but the way Harry stared at him so hungrily is starting to arouse something again. How can he be so fucking horny all the time?

“Really? I can’t even have a little taste?” Harry asks. He’s batting his eyelashes and pouting just a little. Niall won’t budge on it though.

“You rejected me. Deal with the consequences Haz.” Niall says completely deadpanning it.

“Well at least let me rub you down with Benzoyl Peroxide. If you don’t it’s going to itch like nobody’s business when the hair starts to grow back.” Harry offers.

“You can do my legs. I’ll take care of the rest so you can’t seduce me.” Niall giggles.

“We’ll see. I can be very convincing.” Harry says. He’s wearing an easy smile, but Niall knows his intentions are anything but innocent. He gives a wink and then scampers off to the bathroom to find the container of salve he’d wisely bought when he got the hair removal cream and women’s razors. By the time he heads back to the bedroom Harry is stripped all the way down to an extremely tight jock strap and a flirty smile.

“Didn’t want to get any on my clothes. That stuff can stain you know.” Harry says cockily. Yeah, Niall is probably going to have sex with him. Definitely going to have sex with him actually.

“Jesus Christ you two!” Liam groans. He’s standing there with two boxes of pizza in his hand and Niall is getting pounded by Harry. “I literally leave for twenty minutes to go pick up dinner and you’re already fucking?”

“You can join if you want Li.” Niall smiles. Harry’s hips came to an abrupt stop when Liam started talking. Niall’s did not. He’s pulling Harry into himself and looking straight into Liam’s eyes.
“I’m good. Once an hour is plenty for me. You two finish up and come join me for dinner.” Liam sighs. He should have known what would happen. They never seem to get enough. It doesn’t bother Liam anymore, it’s just shocking to walk in on.

He sets the boxes down on the counter and dishes up the pizza for each of them. Two slices of veggie and feta for each him and Harry, three of extra meat for Niall. Niall hates feta. He sets them down on the table next to a cup of green tea and a can of Coca Cola respectively. Once he grabs the remote and turns on the Justice League film he takes his seat. Pay-per-view is a really nice benefit to living with Harry.

Niall and Harry exit the bedroom a few minutes later, fully clothed and sporting sheepish grins. Each take their place in front of their meals and say nothing. Liam lets them stew in their guilt and watches the movie intently. Neither of them talk, instead exchanging glances and trying to communicate solely by some sort of eyebrow based telepathy.

“As lovely as it is having a quiet night at home, you two obviously want to talk. Do you want me to go sit on the couch so you can have your conversation with more than just body language?” Liam asks. He’s more than fine to let them have the table to themselves. He can’t really hear what’s being said in the movie anyway.

“No. Niall is just trying to tell me he doesn’t want anything for his birthday, and I’m calling him out on it.” Harry grumbles.

“I’m just saying it isn’t necessary. I have everything I want already.” Niall fires back.

“I know, you said that already. That doesn’t mean I can’t get you a present and throw you a party though does it?” Harry sighs.

“I don’t want a party. I want you two and me to have a quiet night at home with Niall-cake and beer.” Niall glares.

“Bull.” Liam says. “You used to love a party, especially one dedicated to you. Paul will gladly set aside the second room for us and some friends. He already has actually. I asked him the night of my party.”

“The one with the piano and two tables with absolutely no space?” Niall asks.

“That’s the one. He’s even offered to set up the stage for us to do karaoke. We won’t be able to fit many people, but the same ten people from the other night should be fine.” Liam smiles.

“Actually that sounds good. I’ll punish you both by singing What Makes You Beautiful on repeat for three hours.” Niall throws a glare at Harry.

“You evil little bastard.” Harry glares right back. Niall laughs maniacally and throws his hands up like the villain that just appeared on screen in Liam’s movie. It’s extremely unnerving how perfectly timed it is.

“If that’s what he wants, then by all means let him do it. We’ve basically become recluses shut up here on the farm.” Liam sighs.

“Because if anyone sees me they could call the press. There have been six articles in the last two weeks speculating what I’ve done with myself since I retired. Zayn has had offers from every major talk show from Sydney, Tokyo, London, New York, Paris, Los Angeles, hell even a show in Dubai has asked for me. If nobody knows where I am then they can’t invade our lives.” Harry sighs. Liam knows he wants to keep them safe, but he feels like a shut in most days.
“I know, which is why I’ve asked someone I trust to help us go out without putting us at any risk of that. Paul will keep our secret.” Liam tells him. He trusts Paul more than anyone in this world except Niall and Harry.

“Well that works then. At least we can have a party. The damn cake is going to have to be huge though.” Harry sighs.

“Have fun baking it.” Niall sneers. He’s really being a brat about the whole thing and Liam isn’t sure why until after Harry goes to bed for the night. Before they join him Liam pulls him to the side.

“What’s your problem with the party?” Liam hisses. Niall and Harry kept arguing for at least twenty minutes after his comment about the cake. It’s really strange as the boys never seem to fight, ever.

“I wanted to do the song for him. The one we’ve been working on. My birthday is almost exactly six months since we met, so I wanted to do something special because, next to us, this is the longest relationship I’ve ever had. Now though I have to sing it in front of people.” Niall groans.

“Niall you have an amazing voice. There’s nothing to be worried about.” Liam tries to sooth him.

“I know I have a good voice Liam.” Niall rolls his eyes. “That’s not the point. Grand romantic gestures lose their sincerity in front of an audience. I wanted to show him how much we love him, not seem like I’m trying to please a crowd.”

“Oh.” Liam says stupidly. He never would have guessed that was the reason. Then again Niall has never seemed to have the self confidence issues Liam has. “Well then make it clear that it’s about him beforehand. Make a little speech or something.”

“I’m shite at speeches.” Niall sighs. “I can’t write for shite either. That’s your forte, even if you spell every third word wrong.”

“Then we’ll make a speech together. I’ll even write it for you.” Liam offers. Spell check is a blessing.

“Fine, but don’t make it too sappy. People are already going to think I’m some hopeless romantic, don’t give them too much fodder.” Niall laughs. He kisses Liam on the cheek and hurries off to bed leaving the muscular boy to do the dishes.

“Is that what you’re going to wear?” Niall asks jokingly. It’s been two days since the anniversary of his mother’s death and he’s feeling a little better. Tonight Harry has graciously let them have their date alone and gone into Dublin to see Zayn’s new flat. Niall is sure it’s upset the curly haired lad a bit, but he’ll make it up to him. He’s gotten to have so many nights out with Liam, but Niall hasn’t lately.

“No good?” Liam asks with a pout.

“I mean, you look good. Damn fit actually, but I just thought you’d dress up a bit more for our first real date in years.” Niall says with a shrug.

“No good.” Liam sighs. He unbuttons the red flannel he’d chosen and grabs one of Harry’s nicer shirts instead. It’s a snugger fit on him than it is on Harry, but Niall likes the way it clings. “How about this?”

“Looks bloody brilliant on you Li.” Nial grins. “I always thought blue was your color.”
“I prefer red.” Liam smiles.

“I know you do.” Niall laughs. “It’s bold, just like you. Blue just looks great on you though.”

“You did set the reservations for eight right?” Liam asks for the third time tonight.

“Yes Li.” Niall says dutifully.

“Sorry, sorry.” Liam mutters. He pulls on a leather jacket and then walks over to Niall, splaying out his long fingers on the blond’s lower back. “I’ll stop asking that now. You ready to go?”

“Yes.” Niall says with a nod. “I’ve been ready for an hour. You’re the diva that’s tried on two dozen outfits.”

“Well you kept shooting them down.” Liam pouts.

“One.” Niall says flatly. “I shot down one, and it was twenty seconds ago.”

“Wanna look good for you.” Liam mumbles.

“You always look good Li.” Niall says back. “It’s a little infuriating sometimes. Can’t compete with you two at all.”

“Wrong.” Liam says and then imitates a buzzer from a game show. “You’re absolutely gorgeous.”

“If you and Haz keep that up I may actually believe that one of these days.” Niall grins. “Now let’s get out of here before I decide to blow you instead.”

“We’ve got time.” Liam says with a smile.

“No we don’t.” Niall says, twisting Liam’s wrist over so he can get a good look at the Rolex. “We have like twenty minutes.”

“Plenty of time.” Liam grins. He presses his mouth forward and bites at the skin under Niall’s ear. Niall does his best to stifle a moan, but per usual he cannot. Liam’s hands slide down Niall’s back and cup his arse. Niall’s hands wander up and when he finds Liam’s hair he tugs.

“Afterwards.” Niall says when Liam winces. “You wanted a bloody date, and that is what is going to happen. Dates end in sex, not start with it.”

“Oral isn’t really sex though.” Liam pouts. He pats his hair back into place and looks at Niall with big sad eyes.

“Whatever.” Niall rolls his eyes. “We don’t have time for this if we want to make our dinner.”

“Alright.” Liam sighs. “Are you driving, or am I?”

“I will.” Niall grins. “You can get bloody pissed and I’ll drive us home.”

“Are you trying to get me drunk so you can take advantage of me, Niall Horan?” Liam asks cheekily.

“Not taking advantage if you’re practically begging for it now is it?” Niall asks. “Personally I’m just glad you’ve finally got your libido back.”

“What are you talking about?” Liam asks as they walk out the front door.
“What am I talking about? The fact that we didn’t have sex for weeks.” Niall laughs. “You just kind of sat around like a rock for the last few weeks. Don’t know what Hazza did to recharge your batteries, but I’ve got to thank him for it.”

“I didn’t even realize.” Liam says softly. They climb into Niall’s blue car and Niall starts the engine.

“It’s alright Li.” Niall smiles. “You were healing. Haz and I worked around it eventually, even if you were blocking us for a while.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Liam asks.

“You just kind of interrupted us every time we got started.” Niall says, trying to keep it delicate. He’s shoving both feet in his mouth now and it’s really not a good start to things.

“Why didn’t you just tell me you guys wanted some alone time?” Liam questions.

“Because it was always for a good reason.” Niall shrugs. “It was time to feed the dogs or Haz’s dinner was burning. One time you were just so excited about the film you’d found and it was too precious.”

“You should have said something.” Liam pouts.

“I’m sorry Li. I shouldn’t have brought it up.” Niall sighs. “Can we just start over? I want tonight to be good for you.”

“Yeah, alright.” Liam smiles. He puts a hand on Niall’s knee and squeezes it soothingly. It’s strange somehow, the way tension can just vanish between them, but also amazing. Niall prefers to keep things simple and fun, but sometimes he says the wrong thing. Liam almost always forgives him though.

They reach the restaurant just in time to make their reservations, and are seated and given a couple menus before being left alone. The restaurant is busy, which Niall can tell Liam likes. He’s been going stir-crazy locked up at the house, even if Niall and Harry don’t seem to mind much. “So, are there any ground rules for tonight?” Niall asks casually.

“Like what?” Liam asks.

“I don’t know. No mentioning Hazza, or the Zayn incident? A full four courses are required to qualify as dinner?” Niall offers.

“I like the four courses one, but it’s not really fair for either of us not to be able to mention Haz.” Liam says. “He’s important to both of us.”

“Alright then.” Niall nods. “Do you want to split an appetizer or order our own each?”

“How big are the courses here?” Liam asks.

“Never been.” Niall shrugs. “Louis suggested it.”

“Louis came here?” Liam asks. “Why?”

“Trying to convince El to want to stay here.” Niall shrugs. “Oh, I’ve been meaning to bring this up forever, but it completely slipped my mind. Do you have a vet in mind for the new farm?”

“There’s one I’ve been trying to lure away from another farm, but he doesn’t seem interested.” Liam sighs. “Why do you ask?”
“El just got her license and she specialized in horses. If she had a job lined up, it might make things easier for her to stay.” Niall tells him.

“Would that mean seeing more of Louis?” Liam asks flatly.

“Maybe?” Niall squeaks out in response.

“I’ll check her out, but I’d really prefer someone with more experience.” Liam says diplomatically.

“I think you’ll like her.” Niall grins. “She’s a total sweetheart. Louis is batting way out of his league with that one.”

“Louis is out of his league with any human being.” Liam scoffs.

“Be nice.” Niall sighs. “He’s my friend.”

“I know, I know.” Liam huffs. “Don’t know why you choose to get yourself get mixed up with him though.”

“Because he’s funny and really nice.” Niall explains. “And because he wouldn’t sleep with you unlike my last best friend.”

“Josh?” Liam asks.

“Yes.” Niall says a little too harshly. “About that appetizer, share or no?”

“Share is good.” Liam nods, letting the subject drop much to Niall’s relief. “Stuffed grape leaves sound good?”

“You read my mind.” Niall grins.

“Brilliant.” Liam smiles. “I’m thinking of getting the fettuccine with mushrooms and clams. You?”

“The sea bream is catching my eye.” Niall says.

“You don’t like fish though.” Liam says with a small smile.

“I do sometimes. Besides, I’ve been broadening me horizons.” Niall says proudly. “Didn’t think I’d like curry either, but I did.”

“Well don’t think that you’ll be stealing off my plate if you don’t like it.” Liam says with a smirk.

“Oh you’ll give it to me anyways.” Niall laughs. “You always do.”

“Yeah, but you don’t usually turn me down for sex first do you?” Liam asks.

“I thought we had started over.” Niall pouts. It’s really not fair to use that against him now.

“I’m terrible at starting over.” Liam grins wickedly.

“Fine.” Niall huffs. “I’ll get the bacon cheeseburger and keep my horizons narrow.”

“Don’t worry, tonight we’ll widen something else instead.” Liam says quietly as the waiter approaches. Niall nearly chokes on his tongue when Liam says that. He’s never that direct, especially in public. He orders for the both of them because Niall can’t seem to find his voice when he remembers that Liam had hinted he wanted Niall to top when they had their date. Hopefully Niall
can back out of that, because it’s not what he wants at all.

“You alright there Nialler?” Liam asks completely innocently once the waiter leaves.

“Just need to excuse meself for a minute.” Niall says, making a beeline for the restroom. It’s weird the way his heart is constricting in his chest. He’s normally the flirtatious one, so a bit of sexy banter shouldn’t make a difference to him at all. It’s just the expectation that’s giving him palpitations. Harry is one thing. The curly haired boy always makes Niall feel like more than he is. He’s earnest to a fault, so Niall believes every word Harry tells him.

Liam though, Liam gets his hopes up too high, and when something isn’t everything he wants Niall can see how much it hurts him. He tries so hard to be perfect that he forgets not everyone else is. Of course he never says anything, because he’s Liam and therefore kind as can be. Niall just doesn’t want to disappoint him, and he knows he will.

“Hey gorgeous.” Liam says from behind him. He was so lost in his own head he’d never even heard the door open.

“Hey.” Niall replies with a small smile. “What are you doing here?”

“Wait, that wasn’t a meet-me-in-the-bathroom-so-we-can-shag-real-quick exit?” Liam asks, looking utterly confused.

“No, Liam, it was, in fact, not.” Niall groans.

“Oh.” Liam blushes. A sheepish grin spreads across the muscular boy’s newly shaven face. “Are you okay then?”

“I am.” Niall nods. “We should get back out there before the waiter thinks we’ve left or summat.”

“So still a no on the shag then?” Liam asks.

“Is it that hard to get through a date with me before we fool around?” Niall asks dejectedly.

“I just thought that’s what you wanted.” Liam mutters. “You were saying how annoying it was that we weren’t shagging anymore, so I thought you were trying to send me a message.”

“I wasn’t annoyed Li.” Niall says gently. “I was concerned. You’ve gone through so many different stages since this relationship started, I’m just waiting to see where you settle.”

“Have I been that bad?” Liam asks cautiously.

“It’s not bad. You’ve just changed a bit.” Niall says, trying to comfort the other boy. “I think we both have. Two years ago we wouldn’t be caught dead having dinner in a place like this. We’d have bought a burger somewhere and walked around town talking about nothing. And then we’d have ended up at the Chair drinking until we almost fell down and snogging our faces off in your booth.”

“That sounds infinitely better than this honestly.” Liam smiles.

“We could you know.” Niall suggests. “I could go pay for the meals and then we could have a date that was more like us.”

“Would you be alright with that?” Liam asks quietly. “You picked the restaurant and everything.”

“Because I thought you’d want a proper date.” Niall says.
“So neither of us really wanted this then?” Liam laughs.

“Guess not.” Niall grins. “I’ll pay while you get the car from the valet?”

“Perfect.” Liam smiles. They walk out of the loo together, getting their fair share of quizzical looks, and separate when Niall finds the waiter. Liam gives Niall’s hand one last squeeze before heading out to the valet. Niall quickly pays for the meals that haven’t even been made yet and then leaves to find Liam waiting for the car to show. It pulls up about twenty seconds after Niall walks out and he swipes the key before the valet can hand it off to Liam.

They get in and drive to the closest fast food place, a Supermac’s to grab some food. Niall shoves down a cheeseburger while Liam munches happily on a satchel of chips. “Oh my god.” he groans happily. “Forgot how good this greasy shite can be.”

“Right?” Niall asks with a laugh. “I mean, I love Haz’s oven baked chips, but sometimes a greasy packet of salty chips is exactly what you need.”

“Don’t tell him I said that though.” Liam laughs. “He’d get that look.”

“Where he frowns just a bit and his eyebrows-” Niall cackles.

“Exactly!” Liam says with a big grin. “He looks like Maura used to whenever you’d sneak an extra cookie.”

“He does, don’t he?” Niall giggles.

“Totally.” Liam says happily.

“Okay, now I can officially say I am the most fecked up person on Earth.” Niall sighs.

“Why now?” Liam asks. “Why at all?”

“Between your daddy kink and Harry reminding us of me mum, while I’m an orphan, something must be seriously wrong with me.” Niall explains.

“Maybe a little bit.” Liam smiles softly. “I can stop my part if it helps.”

“Not on your life.” Niall laughs. “Never seen you so into a round of sex in all our time together.”

“Did it uh- did it bother you?” Liam asks quietly. He sounds almost afraid that Niall will shoot him down.

“I thought it was hot as hell.” Niall grins. “It may not be something I would have picked, but seeing you so revved up, knowing how into it you were, turned me on so feckin much.”

“That doesn’t really answer the question though, does it?” Liam says quietly. “I didn’t gross you out or anything? You don’t think I’m disgusting or a monster for thinking like that or wanting that?”

“I could never think that of you Li. A kink is a kink, not something horrible.” Niall shrugs. “I have a thing for boxing and boxers. It riles me up like you would not believe, but that doesn’t mean I want to beat someone to a bloody pulp and bite off their ear.”

“Alright then.” Liam says quietly.

“Payno, tell me you believe me please.” Niall sighs, pulling into an abandoned parking lot near the Chair.
“I do.” Liam nods. It’s not at all convincing.

“Terrible feckin liar.” Niall groans. “What do I have to say to convince you that I liked it? That I don’t think any differently of you just because you have a particular kink?”

“Just tell me you love me.” Liam mumbles. “Tell me you love me no matter what.”

“Liam James Payne, I love you. I have loved you for almost my entire life, and I will love you until the day I die. You are the best friend I could have ever dreamed of, and the love of my life no matter how many of them there are.” Niall tells him firmly. “I love you and I trust you more than anyone in this world. Nothing could ever change that. Not kinks, or Zayn, or anything. If you know one thing for the rest of your life, know that.”

Harry is sulking, and he knows he’s doing it, but he doesn’t want to stop just yet. Niall and Liam left him behind for a night to themselves and it hurts. It doesn’t really matter to him that he himself has had plenty of times out with Liam while Niall wasn’t there. Nor does it grab his attention that Niall and he have taken more than their fair share of private time. All that matters is he was excluded and he doesn’t understand why.

“If you’re going to be like that all night, then you can just go home.” Zayn says, taking a seat next to Harry on the balcony of his flat. “This is supposed to be exciting.”

“Why did they not want me to be with them?” Harry asks quietly.

“Did they specifically say they didn’t want you with them?” Zayn asks with a huff.

“They said they wanted to have a night without me.” Harry tells him.

“In what words?” Zayn questions, already guessing that Harry isn’t telling the whole story.

“I believe the exact phrasing was something along the lines of ‘We don’t love you and don’t want you to be with us so we can talk about how horrible you are.’” Harry says. That earns him a quick strike to the back of the head.

“Don’t get smart with me Harry.” Zayn scolds him. “What did they say exactly?”

“Niall told me that Liam had requested a date because he felt like they’d grown apart and he wanted to reconnect.” Harry sighs.

“Then that’s all it is.” Zayn says with a huff. “I’m not claiming to understand the inner-workings of your relationship, or even like a threesome relationship in general, but sometimes you need space. Pez and I have broken up so many times because we don’t know how to do that properly. Well that and a few other reasons, but that’s not really relevant. They’ve been friends for their entire lives, so sometimes they’re going to need just each other.”

“Ugh, stop being a rooftop philosopher you jerk.” Harry whines. “Besides, you and I need to talk about something much more important.”

“Had a feeling this was coming.” Zayn says flatly. Harry has known him for years, but sometimes he’s infuriatingly hard to read. “Well Pez is out getting the food, so we might as well.”

“What would possibly make you think it was a good idea to try and seduce my boyfriend?” Harry asks angrily.
“I suppose saying it’s because he’s fit as all hell isn’t the right answer?” Zayn asks, lighting up a fag.

“Not remotely.” Harry glares.

“That’ fine. In all honesty I’d much prefer Niall anyways. He’s much more my type.” Zayn says with a cheeky grin. Harry doesn’t hit people very often, but he can’t help it when his hand pulls back and smacks itself across the back of Zayn’s head. “Ow, you blighter!”

“Stop trying to get with my boyfriends Zayn.” Harry spits. “You have a perfectly lovely girlfriend.”

“Sure.” Zayn says with a roll of his eyes. “Listen, I didn’t think it was a good idea, but you always have this habit of picking toxic men. I shouldn’t have to remind you about Grimmy.”

“We’re not talking about me right now. We’re talking about you and your need to try and interject yourself into my relationships.” Harry says angrily. “I can make my own decisions.”

“I just don’t want to see you get hurt anymore.” Zayn mumbles. “You’re too good a person to keep going through what you have. I know you, and you don’t deserve the awful shit you’ve had to live with.”

“Don’t try and be sweet to worm your way out of this.” Harry says with a sigh. “Just stop doing it.”

“Alright.” Zayn shrugs. “Are we okay?”

“We will be.” Harry smiles. “Can’t ever stay mad at you for too long.”

“I know.” Zayn smiles. “You never stay mad at anyone for long.”

“Not entirely true.” Harry says adamantly. He can’t think of an example right now, but he’s sure he’s been truly angry towards at least one person in his life. There has to be someone.

“Yes it is.” Zayn says with a soft smile and a peck on Harry’s cheek. “Now come help me set up some makeshift table. We need somewhere to eat.”

“You have that gorgeous bar.” Harry points out. “We could just stand around that and eat.”

“Yeah, but I hate standing and eating.” Zayn says. “Makes me feel like I’m out at a pub or something.”

“Being at a pub isn’t necessarily a bad thing.” Harry smiles. “I’ve learned to have a small love for pubs. We’re having Niall’s birthday in one.”

“He’s Irish.” Zayn huffs. “That’s what’s expected of them. We’re millionaire Brits Harry, we’re supposed to be stuffy and proper about things.”

“You have never been proper Zayn.” Harry grins. “Example: our last conversation.”

“Yeah, but I do reserve the right to be fussy.” Zayn smiles back.

“And yet you walk around with that hair.” Harry jokes.

“My hair is perfect Harry.” Zayn smirks.

“Cocky arse-hole” Harry laughs.

“Brother-husband.” Zayn counters.
“Ugh! Will people stop saying that?” Harry groans. “We’re not a cult or something. We-”

“I know, I just like seeing your face get all red like that.” Zayn says with a soft laugh. “Can I ask a question? And don’t do your stupid ‘You just did’ thing.”

Harry pouts because he was totally going to do that. “Fine.” Harry says dejectedly.

“Do you like actually love both of them?” Zayn asks. “Not like infatuation because they’re both good looking nice blokes, but true forever love?”

“I do.” Harry nods. “I really love them both in a way I’ve never loved anyone else. No other guy has even come close. Honestly, I feel completely different than I ever have before. Every day I wake up so excited and happy, because Niall may have fallen asleep on Liam, but without fail he holds my hand in his sleep each night. Liam and I have a date night every night where we cuddle up and watch movies and wear each others clothes. I’m going completely domestic, but I’ve never been happier in my life than I am when I’m with them. Can I tell you a secret only Niall knows?”

“Always.” Zayn smiles.

“I’m going to propose.” Harry admits shyly. “I know it’s only been a few months, but I want them with me for the rest of my life.”

“You told Niall you’re going to propose?” Zayn asks incredulously.

“It just kind of slipped out.” Harry tells the darker boy. A sheepish grin spreads across his face. “He kind of already said yes, so we’re like engaged to be engaged. Liam has no idea though.”

“You have something planned out?” Zayn questions. He draws the last sparks of life out of his cigarette and then drops it to the floor and grinds it with his heel.

“Something yeah, but I might need help setting it up.” Harry sighs. “I was thinking of asking Louis to help me.”

“Louis? What about me?” Zayn asks grumpily. “I already know about it, and I’m your best mate.”

“It involves climbing a ladder and stuff. You wouldn’t be interested.” Harry says casually.

“I can climb a bloody ladder you ponce.” Zayn glares. “Let me do it.”

“Alright, but it won’t be until after the house is finished being built.” Harry smiles. He has an idea forming, but it isn’t quite there yet. It’ll take some time to finish the plan. Luckily they have a few weeks until the house is finished. Once it is though, his world will be complete.

By the time they stumble though the door, or more accurately Liam stumbles through while probably crushing Niall with his weight, Harry’s car is parked in the driveway. He isn’t in the living room though, to which Liam breathes a sigh of relief. He’s subjected Harry to enough of his drunken craziness in the last few months, but Niall is thankfully used to it.

After Niall’s little declaration in the car, they followed the plan set out by numerous dates before this one. They walked through the park holding hands and talking about anything that popped into their minds. Of course they ended up at the Chair, because no date between Niall and Liam would be complete without an obnoxious number of pints.
Paul packed them into a taxi when they started taking each others shirts off in the back corner booth that basically belongs to them. He was good natured enough, but most of the patrons were laughing and betting on how far they’d get before the taxi showed up. If it hadn’t been his home away from home for so long the regulars probably wouldn’t have taken it so well. Luckily most of them have known Liam and Niall since they were kids and don’t seem to mind even in this small Catholic town. How a bunch of rowdy drunks are more accepting of him than his own family he’ll never know.

They managed to keep their hands off each other in the taxi, mostly because the driver was a kindly looking old man and a total turn off. He let them out at the gate and it took them at least half an hour to get back because they were too busy playing with each other to bother actually trying to get to the house. Niall drops him on the couch and doesn’t resist when Liam grabs his wrist and tugs him down on top of him. They lay peacefully for a few minutes, just breathing in sync.

“Do you think Haz is sitting back there all grumpy at us still?” Niall asks quietly.

“Probably. Want to go see?” Liam questions.

“Would you mind?” Niall asks.

“Not at all.” Liam says reassuringly. Honestly he’d love to see the curly haired boy right now. He’s had such a good time, and he just wants to share that. Harry wasn’t openly upset, but Liam has begun to be able to read him a bit and could tell he just wanted to be included. Liam needed this night with Niall, needed to feel like they’d reconnected a bit more, but he spent a good amount of time missing the other member of their relationship.

Niall lifts up and then guides a stumbling Liam down the hall. The light is still on in the bedroom so Liam has a suspicion Harry is waiting up for them. They reach the door and Niall gives him a look that means he wants Liam to be quiet for a second. He peeks through the door and Liam looks over his to watch too. Harry is curled around a pillow wearing Liam’s jumper and Niall’s joggers. He’s wearing the reading glasses he almost never breaks out and is buried up to his nose in a book Liam can’t identify from here.

Liam notices Niall sneak his mobile out and snap a picture of the gorgeously domestic looking Harry. The flash startles Harry out of whatever book-induced trance he was in and he looks around terrified for a moment before settling on Niall and Liam at the door. “Oh you evil frickers!” Harry groans. “I thought a pap had tracked me down or something.”

“It’s pretty stupid ta risk gettin arrested fer breakin an enterin jus ta get a pic o yer domestic arse.” Niall says with a grin, flopping down next to Harry. “I doubt any rag would enjoy this look as much as I do.”

“How was Zayn’s new flat?” Liam asks, crawling into the bed on Harry’s other side.

“Gorgeous.” Harry says. “They don’t have almost anything in it yet, but the layout is amazing. Huge windows and a fantastic kitchen.”

“As good as ours?” Niall mumbles the question. He’s already worked himself between the pillow and Harry, and his face is pressed into the curly haired boy’s neck.

“Nowhere close.” Harry laughs. “How was the big date night?”

“Good.” Liam says, stroking Harry’s locks affectionately. “Hope you aren’t too upset about it.”

“Nah.” Harry says sweetly. He leans back to give Liam a peck on the cheek before saying “You guys needed some time together.”
“Missed you though.” Niall mumbles sleepily. He’ll probably be out like a light in a few minutes.

“Missed you too, Babes.” Harry says, carding a hand through Niall’s hair. Liam can’t help but smile at how cute they are together. It’s only been a few days, but already he can’t believe he was ever jealous of the two of them together. Yeah, sometimes they just like to be together without him, but he has moments that are the same. Harry is so much better to watch a movie with because he just curls up with Liam and doesn’t talk through the whole thing like a certain nameless Irish lad. Niall however is more fun to take a walk with because he never gets competitive about it. He just takes everything so easy instead.

Liam ducks his head in, planting a kiss on the rim of Harry’s ear. “I love you, you know.” He whispers.

“I love you too.” Harry says, dropping his head back onto Liam’s chest. Niall just wriggles in his sleep to get closer to the warmth Harry is putting out. Liam takes Harry’s free hand and intertwines their fingers before bringing them up to his mouth. A light kiss is pressed against each of Harry’s knuckles, eliciting a small giggle every time.

“You want me to take him over here so you can sleep alright?” Liam asks.

“Nope.” Harry smiles with a shake of his head. “Want you both real close instead.”

“Really?” Liam asks, slightly surprised.

“Realized there are more important things than room to spread out my legs when I sleep.” Harry grins. “Besides, he just looks so cute like this, doesn’t he?”

“You both do.” Liam says softly. “Oh, I owe you a new shirt. Niall dropped a packet of chips on this one and the stain wouldn’t come out.”

“It’s fine.” Harry says reassuringly. “I have the same shirt in four other colors. Blue isn’t really my color anyway, it’s yours.”

“Niall said the same thing.” Liam smiles. “I still like red better.”

“I prefer shirtless, but that doesn’t really count, does it?” Harry asks with a cheeky wink.

“Not technically, but I think I can comply.” Liam giggles, unbuttoning the stained shirt and dropping it off the side of the bed. “So what are you reading.”

“The original Bram Stoker Dracula.” Harry shrugs. “Zayn insisted I read it.”

“Niall likes that book, but I think that’s just because the author was Irish so it’s basically the most famous book by an Irish author.” Liam smiles. “It’s funny though, he hates horror movies. Won’t go near them, but he loves Wells and Lovecraft. Never understood that.”

“It’s just part of his charm I guess.” Harry says, casting an affectionate glance towards the Irish boy currently drooling on his chest. It’s Liam’s jumper technically, but he doesn’t mind at all. Niall looks comfortable and that’s what matters. “How did we get so lucky? Finding this boy out of everyone in the entire world seems like a miracle.”

“I don’t even know.” Liam says quietly. Niall isn’t the only miracle though. For Liam, finding Harry feels like just as much of one. The man is absolutely gorgeous, but also so kind and affectionate it puts Liam to shame. He puts up with Liam’s mood swings and does his best to always keep the peace in the house. He may have drugged Liam once, but only because Liam was too stubborn to
admit he was relying on medication to help him.

They fall asleep like that, a tangle of limbs. Harry is nestled between them, but Niall’s unconscious
had finds its way to Liam’s at some point just before he falls asleep. He wouldn’t have things any
other way.

The night of Niall’s party is chaos given form. It’s a Thursday, meaning the pub isn’t too full, but it’s
also the day before Paul gets his usual delivery of alcohol. This means that Harry has to scrounge up
a keg with half an hour’s notice and Niall is laughing his arse off. Harry has been setting up the room
for an hour already when Paul tells him and the curly haired boy nearly falls off the ladder he’s using
to hang streamers.

“This is a bar! Why for the love of god do you not have any alcohol?” Harry moans.

“I have alcohol. I also have other patrons who will need it. There’s plenty of liquor, but I’m running
at ten percent capacity on Guinness and that’s all Boyo over here drinks. Just like his Da that one.”
Paul laughs. Harry does not seem to find it funny at all and turns on Niall like a lion stalking it’s
prey. The analogy doesn’t quite fit now though, seeing as Harry has had most of his hair chopped off
into a quiff about four inches long.

“Listen here you- you beer snob. I don’t have time for this. If you want Guinness then go grab a keg
yourself.” Harry glares. Niall would be afraid of him, but the three rounds of birthday sex he’s
already had today have mellowed him out incredibly.

“Alright.” Niall shrugs. He stands up and shrugs on his jacket, a leather affair he stole from Harry
that almost matches the color of his newly un-dyed hair.

“Sit down Nialler.” Harry snaps. “Paul if I give you the money will you have someone deliver it?”

“Sure. I’ll even pay you for what’s left after the party.” Paul shrugs. “It’s not cheap though. Guinness
is over a hundred euros for a keg.”

“Paul I could buy every store and pub on this street just for shits and giggles.” Harry rolls his eyes.
He pulls out a few notes from his wallet and hands them over. “Keep the change and the leftover
beer as a thank you for tonight.”

“Yes sir, your majesty.” Paul laughs. “Careful with the money talk laddie. Some people around here
wouldn’t take too kindly to that sort of talk.”

“I’m sorry. I’m just stressed out. The lazy ass birthday boy refuses to help decorate for his own
party.” Harry sighs. Paul gives him a pat on the shoulder and leaves them to their own business.

“I’m not lazy, I just didn’t want this party in the first place. Why don’t you call Payno for help? Or
Louis?” Niall asks. Harry has basically insisted on doing the whole thing himself, so Niall isn’t really
sure why he’s complaining. Niall also already texted Louis and asked him to come down and help.

“Liam is waiting for the cake to be done baking and cooling so he can ice it. And if Louis gets up on
the ladder in those damn leggings he wears I won’t be able to focus on anything but his massive
arse.” Harry laughs.

“Then you get on the ladder.” Louis says. He walked up right behind Harry during his explanation
and his voice scares the poor boy. “You crazy homosexuals and your obsession with my bum.”
“You walk around with gay bait like that and you’re bound to get noticed Louis.” Niall laughs.
“Wear some real trousers and maybe it’ll take away some of the attention it gets.”

“The only reason I wear any sort of trousers is because it’s illegal not to. Harry gets to walk around with those lips and you with those eyes. It’s not fair I have to hide my best feature.” Louis pouts.

“You called him?” Harry glares.

“Yeah.” Niall says. “I’m not getting up and you obviously need help. You’re lucky this bitch even showed up. Zayn flat out refused me.”

“That’s because he knows you’re going to yell at him.” Harry says at the same time Louis protests “I’m not a bitch!”

“Yes you are Louis, embrace it. Be the bitch you were always destined to be. Hetero-King of the bitches.” Niall laughs. “And yes Haz, I am going to yell at him. He deserves it and you know it.”

“I am begging you to leave this alone Niall. Let tonight be about you, not Zayn and Pez breaking up.” Harry pleads.

“I’m not going to say anything in front of Pez!” Niall huffs. “I just want to tell Zayn that I’ll cut his pretty face off like a Halloween mask if he ever tries that again.”

“Jesus Christ!” Louis cries. His face is one of pure horror. “What the hell did pretty boy do?”

“Nothing!” Harry shouts over Niall. He sends a glare straight into Niall’s soul silencing any thought of explaining.

“Oh come on.” Louis whines. “You can’t just threaten to rip off someone’s flesh and not tell me why.”

“Yes, yes we can. It’s private Louis. Now are you going to help me or not? Because if not you might as well go home and get El.” Harry huffs.

“Fine. I’ll help. Niall will tell me all about it when we start our runs up again on Monday just to get a five minute break.” Louis laughs. It’s probably true. Niall really isn’t looking forward to the runs. His knee started aching the other day while he was riding Liam and he know he should have been working on his exercises. He just really hates them.

“If he does then he’ll have to go a month without sex.” Harry glares pointedly. Alright, the secret stays secret.

“Sorry Tommo.” Niall shrugs. “Now get up on that ladder and hang some streamers. I need something pretty to look at while I drink my pint.”

Louis laughs and climbs up, wiggling his hips exaggeratedly in a show. Harry rolls his eyes and starts pushing the tables together to make some room. Niall may have exaggerated about the space, the room could probably fit another ten people than have been invited comfortably, but without moving the tables together the whole place is weirdly divided.

The pizza guy shows up about ten minutes later and Niall greets him with a smile until he sees who it is. Josh is standing there with a dumb look on his face that splits into a smile. “Horan! Hey man, I haven’t seen you in ages!”

“There’s a reason for that Josh.” Niall says icily. He hasn’t seen the muscular brunet since he heard
about his date with Liam. They were practically best friends for years, meeting after their senior cycle. Both were gay, but never even considered dating the other. Josh knew that Niall was in love with Liam almost as soon as they met. After the break up Josh was the only person Niall ever told what happened. He was the last refuge Niall had except for Bobby.

“Niall you two were over. You had been for months. I didn’t think it would bother you that much.” Josh says.

“You knew I was still in love with him! You knew what he did to me and still you actively pursued a relationship with him!” Niall yells. “You knew it would hurt me, and you did it anyways. All because you wanted Liam’s dick in your ass.”

“We got a problem here?” Paul glares. He brings a baseball bat onto the counter and stares pointedly at Josh.

“No problem Paul. Josh was just leaving.” Niall throws down the money for the pizza and takes them into the second room. He doesn’t look back to see how Josh reacts. He’s really not interested.

Once he puts the boxes down Harry rushes over to him and closes the doors. “Niall what happened? We heard shouting.” He asks.

“Get me out of here.” Niall says as a thick sob rips its way out of his throat like some clawed beast. Harry takes him by the shoulders and steers him out the back door that leads to the alley. He drops to his knees, ignoring the blinding pain that shoots up his body, and cries openly into Harry’s hands. Harry kneels down and pulls him into a fond embrace.

“Niall, I need you to tell me what happened.” Harry tells him softly. “I can’t help unless I know.”

Niall doesn’t say anything yet. He doesn’t trust his voice. Harry rubs large circles into his back, calming his breathing with each stroke. Niall feels his rage and sadness subside slowly. It takes a minute before he feels the tears stop, but they do stop and that’s what matters.

“It’s not that important Haz. I ran into someone I thought was a friend once. He wasn’t.” Niall says when he stops crying. “I’ll leave things alone with Zayn. You talked to him already and you said it’s done. I trust you.”

“Thank you Niall.” Harry whispers. “Are you ready to go back inside? People will be getting here any minute.”

“Yeah. I’m fine.” Niall sighs. “Louis is going to yell at me though. My knee feels like it’s on fire.”

“Then I’ll carry you.” Harry says. He turns around and Niall climbs onto his back, thanking god he managed to find two muscular boys with hearts of gold.

As soon as they get back through the door Louis is on them. “Niall what happened? I’d have come out there, but that’s- That’s where Liam got shot for me.” Louis sighs.

“It’s fine Louis.” Niall gives his best smile. “Hazza took care of me. I hurt my knee though. Will you give it a rub?”

“Only because I love you.” Louis rolls his eyes. Harry sets Niall down on the table and Louis begins massaging his knee. His fingers are sharp and bony, but the pressure he applies feels good. Niall feels the pain begin to recede and sighs in relief. He grabs what’s left of his pint and downs it quickly.
“How you doing Tommo? Enjoying the view?” Liam laughs when he walks through the door.

“Your boy toy’s bulge is nothing I haven’t seen before Payne-in-the-arse.” Louis laughs. Niall joins in and Liam just puts down the cake and sighs loudly. Harry flits up and plants a quick kiss on his cheek.

“Leave them alone. Niall hurt his knee and Louis generously offered to help, free of charge.” Harry laughs.

“I said nothing about free of charge.” Louis glares. “I’m taking the expensive bottle of whiskey I bought this mick as payment.”

“That’s fine Tommo.” Niall giggles. He pats Louis’ hair fondly and mimics the kiss Harry gave Liam. Louis pretends to swoon, falling onto Niall’s lap with big fond eyes. “You’ve more than earned it.”

“Damn right I have.” Louis beams. “Best hands this side of a very frisky Korean masseuse I met in Paris during my gap year.”

“I really do not want to hear that story.” Niall gags. Louis cackles and then prances away to fiddle with the streamers he left hanging when Harry brought Niall back inside.

“What happened?” Liam asks quietly. Harry is still setting everything up so they’re basically alone now.

“Josh was the one who delivered the pizzas. I kind of lost it.” Niall admits. He’s afraid to look Liam in the eyes and see the disappointment.

“Why? I told you we didn’t even finish the date.” Liam questions. There’s no tone of judgment, no derision. Just curiosity.

“Because he knew I was still in love with you.” Niall says. It’s barely above a whisper, but Liam tenses and Niall can feel it in the hand on his knee.

“He knew?” Liam asks. “He knew that? He told me you hated me. He told me that you never wanted to see me again.”

“That brathadóir!” Niall fumes. “I’m going to kill him!”

“No you’re not.” Liam glares. “Focus on your work Tomlinson.”

“You are the weirdest fucking people I know.” Louis sighs. “A bunch of crazy slutty weirdos.”

“You love it.” Niall giggles.
“The only thing I love is the look on Eleanor’s face when I tell her the shit I overhear from you three.” Louis rolls his eyes.

“I have a nondisclosure agreement Louis. I could technically fire you and sue you for every cent you’ve been paid, plus room and board.” Harry threatens.

“You’re too sweet to do that to an expectant father. Plus I could file a sexual harassment suit with the way you three talk about my arse.” Louis fires back. His stare is unblinking and a total challenge. Luckily for everyone Harry doesn’t really give a shit as long as Louis doesn’t tell the press.

“You keep showing it off like that and you can tell Ellie anything you want.” Niall laughs. Louis gives his bum a smack and turns back to his work. Niall catches Liam staring and gives him a playful push in the shoulder. “If you continue staring like that I’m going to shove your face in it.”

“Don’t. I might take a bite.” Liam laughs. “Seriously though, maybe you should consider going back to Christ the King some time. It might help you.”

“I’ll consider it.” Niall grins. “If you go grab Louis’ arse.”

Liam stands up and puts a hand on each cheek of Louis’ bum and squeezes. Louis yelps and falls back into Liam’s arms. “Sorry Tommo. I had to do it to save Niall’s soul.” Liam laughs.

“What’s going to save your skin when I put you in a meat grinder?” Louis glares.

“Is that what you call your arse Tomlinson? Because that’s a great name for it.” Zayn laughs from the open door.

“Shut up Malik. From what I hear you may not have any more time left on this planet if the birthday boy has his way.” Louis throws another glare at the darker man.

Niall flushes. He really did mean to let it go, but now it looks like there’s bound to be a conversation and Niall isn’t sure if he can keep his temper. Zayn arches an eyebrow in his direction and then walks over. “Can we at least do this outside? For Pez.” he asks.

“There’s nothing to do Zayn. I told Harry I’d defer to him on this. I’m not happy about what happened. Pissed is actually the word I’d use, but as long as you say it won’t happen again I’m willing to let things lie.” Niall tells him.

“I promise. I know it was stupid and I want you to know that I am so sorry. I can’t make it up to you, but I hope this helps.” Zayn holds out a small bundle, wrapped haphazardly. “I made it myself. Figured that would mean more to you than some silver one.”

Niall unwraps the present and is stunned to find an oak frame around a beautiful sketch of Liam, Harry, and him. They’re sitting on his couch and their legs and hands are interlocked in a way that shows them as both one entity and three separate people all at once. “I took the picture with my phone the night of the party. I was planning on giving it to Harry for Christmas, but this seemed like a better plan.” Zayn mumbles.

“It’s gorgeous.” Niall says. “You really drew this?”

“Sketched it. I blew up the picture with my computer and used that for reference.” Zayn blushes.

“It’s great Zayn. Thank you.” Niall flashes a smile. He’s still not happy, but maybe he can still be friends with the darker boy.
“Pez got you her own present in case you didn’t like this one.” Zayn kicks at the floor. “I’m pretty sure it’s a grill apron that says ‘Kiss the cock’.”

A grin splits Niall’s face in two. “I love it already. Grilling is the only way I can cook.”

“That’s what she said. You told her at the hotel back in London.” Zayn smiles.

“I’m surprised she remembers that. She was so feckin drunk.” Niall laughs.

“What the hell? How am I supposed to call you my Blondie-Bear if you change to brown?” Perrie wails when she finally enters the room. She almost drops her large fruity drink that Niall is sure Paul groaned at having to make.

“You don’t like it?” Niall pouts. He’s actually really satisfied with the way it turned out. Lou’s work is impeccable and she managed to bring Niall back to his natural color and still style his hair in a way he likes.

“I love it!” Perrie squeals. “I just have to come up with a new name for you.”

She drops into Niall’s lap and plants a big kiss on his cheek that he’s sure has left a mark. Niall giggles and gives her one right back. That one doesn’t leave any lipstick though. Zayn just rolls his eyes and gives her a quick snog to mark his territory before walking over to give Harry a hug.

Eleanor is the last one to show up. Will and Fiona couldn’t find a baby sitter so it’s just these seven since Paul has to run the pub. When Louis tries explaining to El that he’s keeping the present she slaps him in the back of the head and tells him that Niall is keeping it. Louis just pouts and hands over the bottle. “I’ll give it back to you on Monday.” Niall whispers and Louis looks extremely grateful.

“My turn?” Liam asks from behind him.

“Whatcha get me?” Niall asks. He makes grabby hands when Liam produces a small box. Niall opens it up and he’s really confused. It’s a necklace, that much is clear, but Niall isn’t sure what the twisted lump of metal on the chain is supposed to be.

“It’s uh- It’s the bullet they dug out of me. I had it engraved.” Liam blushes and looks down.

“Because in the end, you’re always right. I love you.” Niall reads. Tears spring up in his eyes and he’s afraid he’ll cry in front of everyone. “How the hell did you manage to make a bullet the sweetest gift I’ve ever gotten?”

“By saying what’s in my heart.” Liam says softly.

“You realize this gives me total freedom to brag when I’m right about something of course?” Niall asks.

“I accepted that when I had it made.” Liam laughs.

“Well now my present is going to be shite compared to that.” Harry pouts. Liam gives him a sympathetic look that Niall knows is just barely concealing the smugness he feels.

“I’m sure I’ll love it Haz.” Niall says. He buckles Liam’s present around his neck and waits eagerly while Harry slides a very large package over the table. The shape is familiar and Niall knows exactly what it is. He opens the lid and inside is the most beautiful guitar that Niall has ever seen. It’s bright green with flecks of gold and bronze painting the surface.
“The record company gave it to me when my second album went platinum. I thought you’d get more use out of it than I did. Apparently they paid more attention to the color of my eyes than to my abilities.” Harry frowns. Niall realizes he hasn’t said anything yet and he looks up with tears streaming down his face. Liam looks stunned and Harry is blushing at the awkward silence.

“Harry- I don’t- it’s beautiful. They both are.” He looks at Liam and then back to Harry. Neither of them move or look at Niall. “If you two don’t get over here and give me a hug right now I’m going to really start crying and embarrass everyone here.”

Both boys descend on him as quick as he’s ever seen, wrapping limbs around him until he’s not even sure which arms are his own. They stay that way for a while and the other four just go about their own business. Quiet conversation fills the room and Niall refuses to let go when either of his boys tries to pull away. “Not yet.” He mumbles.

They appease him until his eagerness to tune his new guitar overwhelms his sense of fondness. He lets them go and everyone else cheers and whistles. Louis holds up a sign that he’s sloppily written the number ten on. “You lot keep making us look bad.” Zayn laughs. “How are we supposed to compete with gifts like that?”

“You could try listening to your partners.” Harry laughs.

“Listening my foot.” Niall giggles. “I said no presents.”

“We set a price limit.” Liam glares. “I didn’t know Haz was going to give you a guitar worth more than most houses.”

“I didn’t spend anything other than the shipping fee.” Harry sticks his tongue out.

“You knew what I meant.” Liam says grumpily.

“Liam, relax.” Niall puts a hand on his shoulder. “I love your gift. I’ll never take it off.”

“Unlike you. You never wear my gift.” Harry pouts.

“Well you haven’t gotten me a proper chain yet have you?” Liam laughs. Harry blushes at that.

“Oh. Right.” Harry giggles.

“You lot can’t even have a proper row!” Louis whines. “Where’s the bitchy cat fights cable television led me to believe gay men have? Where’s the scratching and accusations of gaining weight? Where’s”

“Louis I swear if you don’t stop I will drag you into the alley and show you how I have a row.” Liam glares. Louis blanches at that and Zayn howls in laughter. Perrie and Eleanor collapse in a fit of giggles.

“Liam.” Niall scolds. “The last time he was in that alley he got a concussion and had his wallet stolen.”

“And I was bloody shot!” Liam hisses. “You are literally holding the evidence.”

“Just be nice. He couldn’t even go out there earlier for me.” Niall whispers. “Don’t ruin my night any more than Josh already did.”
“Yes dear.” Liam says dutifully and gives Niall a peck on the cheek.

“Thank you love. Now where is that bloody keg? I need a pint!” Niall moans. As if Niall’s magic powers from the hospital have been reborn Paul wheels it in as soon as the words leave his mouth.

“It’s right here Boyo. Hold your horses and I’ll tap it.” Paul laughs. He’s very good-natured whenever Niall whines. It’s probably the leftover love the man had for his father.

“My hero!” Niall whoops. Paul moves expertly, tapping the keg like an old master before dropping off a tray of frosted mugs. Niall just may be in love with a third man. Liam brings him a glass with the foam barely bubbling over. Niall takes it greedily and gulps it down in seconds. “Another!”

The evening proceeds happily until Niall gets up on the stage. His stomach is in knots and his new guitar hangs around his neck like an anchor. Liam’s written the words down for him, but as soon as he stops speaking Niall drops the cards and they scatter everywhere. “Alright, well Liam wrote some lovely words for me, but per usual I managed to muck that up.” Niall says.

People laugh kindly and Niall continues. “Just short of six months ago, one of the most amazing people I’ve ever met walked into my life. He wasn’t someone I liked at first. He wrangled me into staying in a place I didn’t want to be through contracts and a very soulless agent.”

Zayn pouts and Niall blows a kiss at him as an apology. “Anyway, a few days later I tried to save him from his own two feet and landed myself in the hospital. While I was there a brilliantly stupid idea popped into my head, and now he’s made somewhere I wanted to abandon feel like home again. He’s brought so much laughter into my life with his stupid jokes and cheesy romantic gestures.

“After we all decided that we wanted to be together I did something reckless and unkind. I dug through his things and stole something from him. I wanted to make something beautiful, but I needed his help and the help of this beautiful man behind me to do it. Harry, I love you. It’s taken me too long to finish this, but I hope you like what I’ve done with your work. Liam did the heavy lifting with the piano, but I wrote the guitar part. Ladies and gentle-ladies, this is Fireproof.”

Liam starts on the opening chords, playing soft on the old piano. Niall joins in shortly after.

“I think I'm gonna lose my mind,
Something deep inside me, I can't give up,
I think I'm gonna lose my mind,
I roll and I roll 'til I'm out of luck, yeah,
I roll and I roll 'til I'm out of luck,

“I'm feeling something deep inside,
Hotter than a jet stream burning up,
I got a feeling deep inside,
It's taking, it's taking all I got, yeah,
It's taking, it's taking all I got.

“Cause nobody knows you, baby, the way I do,
And nobody loves you, baby, the way I do,
It's been so long, it's been so long, maybe you are fireproof,
'Cause nobody saves me, baby, the way you do.
“I think I'm gonna win this time,
Riding on the wind and I won't give up,
I think I'm gonna win this time,
I roll and I roll, 'til I change my luck, yeah,
I roll and I roll, 'til I change my luck,

“'Cause nobody knows you, baby, the way I do,
And nobody loves you, baby, the way I do,
It's been so long, it's been so long, you must be fireproof,
'Cause nobody saves me, baby, the way you do,

“'Cause nobody knows you, baby, the way I do,
And nobody loves you, baby, the way I do,
It's been so long, it's been so long, maybe you were fireproof,
'Cause nobody saves me, baby, the way you do.”

Liam and he sing it as a duet. Niall’s voice feels heavy to himself, not quite like it was when he was younger. It’s still good, just not the boyish tones he remembers. Liam sounds amazing though. Niall is pretty sure the clapping coming from both their room and the main room of the pub is mostly for the muscular man. Harry is staring directly at him though with his stupid gorgeous smile and tears streaming down his cheeks, and to Niall that’s all that matters.

Chapter End Notes

I know I had Harry hate WMYB in this story and I'm publishing it right after he said he still loves that song. Harry Styles has this tendency to ruin my head-cannons though. Just this past weekend I wrote a 10,000 word one shot about Narry being broken up and then they just obliterated that with how affectionate they were between Wetten Daas and the livestream. I didn't feel like changing that whole part, so I just left it as is.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

So I edited this all up yesterday so I could have it out by today, because come Tuesday November 18th, I'll be taking a small break due to a game I've been waiting on for literally years getting here. Chapter 5 isn't completely finished yet because it's the penultimate chapter so I'm making it much longer than usual. Expect it in 1 1/2-2 weeks.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Two weeks after Niall’s birthday their house is officially finished. Will did an amazing job, as did the nearly one hundred men that worked on the place. It will take another few days to get the electricity and water running and for an official walkthrough to be done by county services, but Harry knows there won’t be any problems. Well one problem, but that’s not so much a problem as an inconvenience.

They have to drive to Dublin just to find any furniture stores that could possibly fill an order as big as theirs. Picking furniture is something they had all talked about, but Harry never realized it would be this difficult. Niall wants mostly worn leather and wood, something he calls “modern classics”, whatever that’s supposed to mean. Liam prefers bold pieces that stand out, until he looks at the price tags and nearly faints every time. Harry like more classical furniture like what you’d find in a country manor.

“Haz, you can’t be serious.” Liam whines. “That sofa costs ten grand and it looks like it’s going to fall apart any minute.”

“It was in the home of a Duke Liam!” Harry explains. “For over a century.”

“It doesn’t matter. We’re picking for the TV room right now and Harry already signed all rights to decorate that to me. I say we’re going with the Chelsea style sectional and that’s what we’re doing.” Niall says authoritatively.

“You go pick out what you want for that room Nialler. I’m looking for the drawing room right now.” Harry sighs. The whole process is insanely annoying.

“It’s not a drawing room!” Liam groans. “It’s a library. We don’t have servants or royal guests. This house isn’t Downton Abbey Haz.”

“Is it so wrong to want one room that feels elegant?” Harry asks with a pout.

“Do your bedroom elegant. I plan on spending a good amount of time in the library, and I’m not sitting on that while I read.” Liam glares.

“Just because you want to spend all your time sitting on ten tons of cotton doesn’t mean we all want some overstuffed cloud to sit on.” Harry huffs.

“How about this boys, lets pick out our bedrooms first, and then we’ll split up the other rooms to decorate?” Niall offers.

“I’m game for that.” Liam says. Now it’s down to Harry and he nods. He’ll fight tooth and nail for
the library once they divide them up.

He finds a four poster bed that takes his breath away and he immediately has the salesman add it to the growing list of things they’re buying. This trip may well cost him over half a million euros when all is said and done, but it will be worth it. After this he’s having his flat closed and all his art shipped out so at least that will be taken care of. He already knows where most of it is going and Liam and Niall don’t seem to mind. At least they can agree on that.

His personal bedroom is big enough for a sitting area, so he picks out a set of matching chairs that compliment the bed and a table to go with. He also orders a large wardrobe that he doesn’t really need, seeing as all the rooms have their own walk in closets and bathrooms. It goes well with everything else so he doesn’t care.

Niall actually fucking skips from one side of the store to the other once he’s picked everything out, eager to show Harry his purchases. Harry obliges him and walks with him as he points out the grand bed and dresser set he picked out. It’s very nice, something Harry might have picked for himself. The solid foot board that apparently comes up exactly to Niall’s hips, is also pointed out with lots of eyebrow waggling and elbow nudges.

Liam seems content to stay by himself with the bed he picked. He stands guard like a sentinel, probably afraid someone else will come along and buy it before they complete the purchase. It’s ridiculous though, seeing as Harry has had the store closed until he picks everything out. The store manager was more than happy to do it after Harry explained that he had nearly seven thousand square feet to decorate, and no limit on spending. It probably made the man’s year.

Clerks follow them around silently, jumping whenever they point something out because their commissions skyrocket. They’re probably going to make more today than they have in the last few months combined. Occasionally Janelle, the sweet girl who has been assigned to Harry, will point something out. Generally he likes it and adds it to his order. She’s very good at her job. Harry asks them politely to take a break once the boys are ready to divvy up the rooms.

“I want the library and the main bedroom.” Harry says immediately after they’re left alone.

“Wait a second Haz. I haven’t even finished writing everything down yet.” Liam rolls his eyes.

“How many ‘e’s are there in dining room?”

“Oh my god, Liam, give me the paper.” Niall laughs. He finishes Liam’s work quickly and his writing is much neater when he puts down the list. “Okay each of us needs to decide which rooms are most important to us.”

“Library!” Both Harry and Liam shout at once. Niall rolls his eyes and takes a coin out of his pocket.

“I’m not listening to this all day. Either figure out another room you’re willing to give up that the other one wants, or call a side of the coin and let fate decide.” Niall says flatly.

“Harry can have tails since he’s got his head up his arse.” Liam glares.

“Liam can have heads since his is so bloody huge I’m surprised his neck can hold it up.” Harry huffs.

Niall sighs in disappointment and flips the coin. It lands on heads and Liam whoops so loudly it startles poor Janelle and she spills her tea everywhere. Niall and Harry both glare at Liam and he sits down, unable to hide a small smile. Harry spends the rest of the time pouting childishly. Harry ends up with the main bedroom, kitchen, dining hall, and sitting room. Niall gets his tv room, one of the
two spare bedrooms, the theatre, and the foyer which doesn’t actually need furniture even if it is quite large. Liam scoops up the other bedroom, the office, and of course the bloody library.

Harry finds this all very unfair considering he’s paying for the entire thing, but he knows it’s just him being a sore loser. At least he can still have an elegant set in the sitting room and Liam can’t stop him. The entire bill for the day would be staggering for anyone without Harry’s resources, coming up to over four hundred thousand euros once Harry finishes furnishing the kitchen and buys the electronics. Liam absolutely refuses to look at it. It’s almost precious enough to wipe the pout off Harry’s face.

“Calm yourself Haz. Let him have his victory. He gets so few against us.” Niall says gently. They can’t be too affectionate around each other, even if the staff may have figured something out with three men buying furniture all together.

“In the nearly seven months I’ve known him I have never seen him pick up a book. Never.” Harry whines.

“He used to read all the time.” Niall tells him. “Then his parents moved away and took all the books with them. He couldn’t afford that many afterwards, and he put all his in storage so he wouldn’t take up too much space. He’s even afraid to touch yours because they may be worth a considerable amount and he wouldn’t know it.”

“As long as he doesn’t dog ear them or something I’m fine with him reading my books.” Harry explains. “What was mine is ours now Niall.”

“Oh obviously I know that Haz. I don’t even know the last time I wore an outfit that only belonged to me.” Niall giggles. “Liam on the other hand is all about personal space. He’s very British that way.”

“I’m very British and I don’t care.” Harry huffs.

“Haz you’re like some weird mash-up of British and American at best. You actually watch that abomination they call football for example. You even have a Packers jersey.” Niall laughs.

“Don’t you dare call me American. I can’t think of a worse insult.” Harry groans. He likes America well enough. He has quite a few friends from there and LA is like a third home to him, but that’s not a good enough reason to call him something so heinous.

“What about hipster? Because you totally did the hipster thing and it was awful.” Niall offers.

“Ugh, don’t remind me. The wasted days of youth.” Harry sighs.

“And you wore all those big ugly hats. Oh god those were so terrible.” Niall laughs.

“I won a fashion award you know. I was officially considered a style icon at one point.” Harry glares.

“That had to have been rigged.” Niall rolls his eyes. “I don’t know who you paid off, but it was rigged.”

“I never!” Harry squawks. The accusation is by far the rudest thing Niall has ever said to him.

“Your face!” Niall laughs. “Harry relax. I think you’re gorgeous and I love your style. It’s why I steal all your clothes. I just wanted you to focus on something other than being mad at Liam for a second.”
“Well it worked. Now I’m mad at you.” Harry pouts.

“I’ll make it up to you later. Now that we have that huge bed I’m sure we can find a good way to use up all the space.” Niall says and waggles his eyebrows in that way that Harry finds infuriatingly sexy.

“Even with the three of us I don’t think that’s possible.” Harry laughs. “It’s bloody massive.”

“You good now? Can we go get lunch? Because Liam should be back from the loo and second and I’m starving.” Niall begs. The shorter boy clings onto Harry’s arm and it’s the first time since they entered the store that he actually feels normal. He melts into Niall’s touch and when Liam finally returns he finds them cuddled up on a random sofa and smiles.

They don’t have a housewarming, instead choosing to run around in their underwear and play tag in their giant house. Apparently being in your mid-twenties doesn’t mean anything when you can be ridiculous. Niall is sitting on his favorite couch, the one in the tv room, and giving his knee a rub after he trips up the stairs trying to follow Liam. Both his boys are cooing over him and it’s really kind of aggravating.

“Stop it ya gits!” Niall waves them away. “I’m fine. Louis will be here in a few minutes to check if anything is wrong. If you want to make yourselves useful, get me a beer.”

Harry sighs and goes to the kitchen like the good little housewife he is. Liam stays and sighs. “Honestly I would have given you a rub. I don’t know why you called him.”

“Because he can actually tell me if I hurt it rather than just giving me a massage.” Niall tells him. Honestly he really just wants to be around someone who won’t cluck over him like a mother hen.

The doorbell rings and Liam heaves himself off the couch. Louis is in for a surprise though because Liam still isn’t wearing anything other than a tight pair of briefs. The telltale yelp tells Niall that Liam hadn’t realized it either.

“Do you people just walk around like this? Or is it to fuck with me?” Louis yells. Niall can’t see him, but he can already picture the look on his face.

“In here Louis!” Niall yells. He can hear Liam run up the stairs, and another set of feet that Niall assumes is Harry. Louis comes walking in a minute later and his glare is terrifying.

“We were being frisky and then I hurt my knee. They’ve been mothering me and I guess they forgot to get dressed.” Niall explains.

“As have you.” Louis points out. Niall doesn’t miss the way Louis’ eyes rake over his body and he laughs.

“Excuse me if I didn’t run upstairs to change when my knee went out. Besides, after an eyeful of Liam I’m sure I’m the last thing on your mind.” Niall says with a wicked grin.

“You are such a twat.” Louis rolls his eyes. He pulls an extra shirt out of his bag and throws it at Niall. “At least put that on.”

Niall shrugs the fabric over his shoulders and beams at Louis. “You actually caught me on a good day for this. I almost never wear underwear anymore.”
Louis mutters something under his breath and then approaches the couch. He kneels down and takes Niall’s knee in his hand. He looks it over for a few minutes, prodding at the cap and squinting.

“Exactly how long ago did you hurt it?” Louis asks.

“Twenty minutes ago I think.” Niall shrugs.

“Well there’s very little swelling, and no visible bruising. The only unusual thing is that I seem to remember you having a lot more leg hair, like any.” Louis laughs.

“I shaved. I told you I was going to. Shaved it all. Liam loved it.” Niall giggles. Louis turns a bright red which turns Niall’s giggles into howls of laughter.

“What’s going on in here?” Harry laughs while he walks in, fully clothed and with a beer for Niall.

“Your boy toy is being a cheeky little monkey and I’m leaving.” Louis sighs. “His knee is fine, but I suggest that you all stop playing around like fools and remember he isn’t fully healed. It seems like every few days I get a call about this shit.”

“Stay.” Harry insists. “I’m making dinner. Lamb in a mint sauce and potatoes with glazed carrots.”

“I’d love to, but El is at home and she’s been throwing up all day. She wasn’t happy I had to come out here at all.” Louis sighs.

“Tell her we’re sorry.” Harry smiles. “I do hope you’ll bring her up some time. We’d love to have you for dinner.”

“You say that now. Just wait until she throws up all over your new furniture because she can’t find a loo in this bloody castle.” Louis laughs. “I’ll let her know you offered.”

“Wait, take back your shirt.” Niall says. “It smells horrible.”

“Not as bad as your cum farts.” Louis laughs. He only laughs harder when Niall smacks him in the face with his own tee shirt.

“Get out you jealous little wanker. I’ll see you in the morning for our run.” Niall groans.

“Actually I can’t do it tomorrow. El has an ultrasound appointment.” Louis says. “I meant to text you.”

“Don’t worry about it.” Niall waves him off. “Three babies are more important than one lame Irishman. Send her our best.”

Louis leaves with a nod and a smile. Liam comes in shortly after with a big bag of Tayto crisps.

“Were you avoiding Louis?” Harry asks.

“Nope. I just can’t find anything in that bloody great pantry.” Liam laughs. “My flat was only half the size of that thing.”

“Well I thought it was better that we have enough food for a while than none at all. Our dining hall can fit thirty people after all.” Harry explains.

“And yet we only have what, ten, twelve maybe, people that we allow to see us? Why on earth do we need so much?” Liam asks. He rolls his eyes and Niall braces himself for the argument that is bound to ensue.
“Because eventually I plan on letting more people into our lives. We both have families that may want to come for Christmas, and there’s some people I used to work with that want to see me. I don’t plan on being recluses forever.” Harry sighs. He drops down next to Niall and cuddles into his side. He apparently doesn’t want to have this argument either.

“Good then, I guess. If you ever invite my family for a holiday though, I’ll drop you over the railing.” Liam groans. He takes the spot on Niall’s other side and turns on the television.

“Come on Li, Ruth and Nicci aren’t that bad.” Niall says, stealing a handful of crisps from Liam’s bag.

“Actually Nicola and I aren’t talking anymore. When I told her about us three she freaked out.” Liam says quietly.

“Oh babes, I’m sorry. Is Ruth okay with it?” Niall asks.

“Yeah, she wants to meet Haz. Given her massive crush on him a few years ago, I’m really not surprised.” Liam laughs.

“Oh god, not another fan girl.” Harry rolls his eyes. “I was really hoping to not have to deal with that anymore.”

“You’ll like Ruth. She’s awesome.” Niall laughs.

“I’m sure she is, but I’m not signing any body parts.” Harry sighs. “I have to go cook dinner now. Will you two be alright in here? Won’t get lost trying to find the remote or anything?”

“Go make me food you twat.” Niall throws a crisp at Harry. He laughs and shakes it out of his hair before running off. Niall cuddles into Liam and they sit in contentment while watching some rerun of Father Ted.

Harry calls them for dinner, the first in their new kitchen and Liam picks Niall up off the couch and slings him over his shoulder. Niall laughs and smacks at Liam’s arse the whole way. The kitchen light is off when Liam enters and when he switches the lights back on he almost drops Niall.

There are hundreds, thousands maybe, of fairy lights twinkling across the room, hanging from the ceiling, cabinets, anywhere Harry could think of apparently. Harry is standing in the middle of the room in a suit that looks amazing on him. The light catches his eyes and he smiles brilliantly. It isn’t until Niall starts to wiggle around that Liam even remembers he’s over his shoulder.

He sets the Irish lad down gently and watches as the scene takes his breath away. He looks at Harry and laughs. “Now then?” Niall asks.

Harry nods in response and Liam is deeply confused. Confused until Harry drops down to one knee and pulls out two boxes. He feels his breath hitch in his throat, and wouldn’t move if Niall didn’t tug him to the center of the room. Harry starts talking, but Liam can’t hear anything over the pounding in his ears. He doesn’t know if he’s ready for this. They only started dating in June.

He loves them both so much, but this level of commitment is something he hadn’t considered yet. He had before, with Niall. He’d even picked out a ring and was well on his way to buying it before Niall left him. This feels right though. The three of them work together so perfectly. They fit like a three piece puzzle, locking into each other. They belong together.
Harry is staring at him with wide eyes, mouth hanging open and Liam snaps back to reality. “Yes Harry, oh god yes. I want to be with you both forever.” He sobs.

His eyes start spilling tears and Harry springs up and they all three embrace. Niall is already wearing his ring, a beautiful silver circlet that looks like a Celtic knot with a green emerald, and a brown stone that Liam thinks is called topaz winking on top. Liam breaks apart to take his ring from Harry and gasps. It’s darker than Niall’s and doesn’t have the same intricate design. Instead it’s three solid bands, darker on the outside and lighter for the central one. The gems are another emerald, perfectly matching the one on Niall’s, and a sapphire as deep blue as the ocean. It’s perfect.

“What about you?” Liam asks.

Harry giggles and holds up his own finger and it’s simple, but beautiful. A thin silver band winds around a sapphire and more topaz. “I picked the stones based on our eye colors.” Harry grins sheepishly. “You have me and Niall, I have Niall and you, and he has both of us.”

“I was wondering why we each had two stones. They’re gorgeous Haz.” Liam smiles. “How did you get all this set up?”

“Zayn was here until just a minute before I called you guys in. He snuck in the back door and helped me hang everything. I owe him a picture of us by the way, since you said yes.” Harry smiles.

“Was there any doubt?” Liam asks.

“Well not until I finished talking and you didn’t say anything for a full minute.” Harry admits. His cheeks are tinted red and Liam just wants to kiss him until his whole body is the same shade.

“Sorry about that. Got stuck in my own head.” Liam grins. “How important is it we eat right now?”

“The lamb will dry out and my sauce will congeal.” Harry shrugs.

“So is it out of the question to ask that we go have celebratory sex instead?” Liam questions.

“I’m good with that idea.” Niall laughs. Harry nods and then everything is a blur until they reach the main bedroom.

There’s clothes flying everywhere, and Liam is pretty sure that Harry’s suit is going to wrinkle on the floor. Niall crawls on the bed first, staking a claim in the middle of it. Harry crawls in shortly after, inviting Liam to help him bracket Niall. They lay down on either side of him, and kiss at his neck. They’ve been together for long enough, and done this so many times, that everything moves like clockwork.

Harry’s hands move opposite to Liam’s, mirroring his movements without even having to look. They can indicate what they’re thinking without a word and it’s like magic. Their fingers circle Niall’s nipples, pinching occasionally because they both know Niall loves it. In unison they move their hands down and link their fingers around Niall’s cock.

Niall revels in the attention they give him, soaking it up greedily. He’s generally the bottom in these threesomes, although occasionally Harry takes that mantle while Niall gets to be in between them, so they focus on him first. Even though they’ve already had sex once today Niall isn’t sure how long this will last. There’s a spark in the air that’s not been there before. Things are electric between all of them and it’s exciting in a way that flows through his veins like pure energy.

Liam and Harry get up on their knees and start kissing. They still have their hands wrapped around Niall, but now he can reach both of them too. He wraps a hand around each of the cocks in front of
him and pulls them in time with the strokes on his. Harry takes charge, winding his free hand around
Liam’s neck and leaning up so he’s over him.

Liam lets it happen, he wants it even. Harry is insanely arousing when he’s dominant. Liam lets him
pull their chests together and tug on his hair. He moans into the kiss, which Harry is also dominating,
his tongue driving into Liam’s mouth. His hand wanders down the muscles of Harry’s back, feeling
them flex and strain.

Air is becoming hard to come by when Harry breaks the kiss. He drives Liam down next to Niall
and climbs on top of him. He presses his hand against Liam’s jaw and turns his jaw towards the other
boy. Niall immediately latches onto Liam’s mouth, hungrily devouring while Harry does the same to
Liam’s neck. He mouths his way up to the muscular man’s ear and takes the soft lobe between his
teeth. Liam’s cock stirs beneath Harry’s hips and he smirks. “I want Niall to fuck you this time.” He
whispers.

“Wait what?” Niall asks in surprise. His head snaps up and he’s sure he looks horrified.

“I like that idea.” Liam moans. Harry has resumed nipping at the skin along Liam’s jawline,
completely ignoring the panic in Niall’s voice.

“Haz no-” Niall pleads. He’s already told Harry why he hasn’t done it before.

“If I like it then so will he.” Harry says adamantly. “Besides, I’ll be fucking you into him. If it’s bad
then it’s on me.”

“Niall, I want this.” Liam pleads. “I have for a while.”

“What about my knee?” Niall asks. He planned on laying on his back for the experience because it’s
still sore.

“I’ll support it with my hand. You won’t have to put much weight on it.” Harry smiles.

“I- I’m out of excuses.” Niall sighs. He really isn’t sure about this, but if it’s what they both want
he’ll give it a try.

“Good.” Liam grins. He surges back up and brings his lips to Niall’s. Harry climbs off and Liam
pulls his legs back while Niall nestles in between them. Harry rolls across the bed, it’s large enough
that it takes several times to reach the edge, and grabs the lube from the drawer. By the time he looks
back Niall is rocking his hips against Liam’s, frotting desperately.

Liam is moaning into his mouth and Niall is taking them in hungrily. All nervousness is banished
from his mind when Harry returns. He trusts the curly haired boy with his life, so of course he trusts
him with this. If the way Liam is panting underneath him is any indication, he’s excited about it as
well.

Harry reaches a lubed hand under where Niall is rutting against Liam and circles a finger around the
muscular man’s hole. He slips a finger in and Liam breaks from the kiss to moan into Niall’s
shoulder. Niall starts to back off and slides back until Harry steadies him. “I’ve got a finger in him
love. You sit back and you’ll break it. Go back to what you were doing.” Harry whispers.

Liam bucks up into Niall and the auburn haired boy resumes rocking his hips. Harry’s finger inside
of him makes Liam’s eyes roll back in his head, and he can’t keep his breath long enough to snog
Niall properly. His hands wander down Niall’s back to his arse. He wraps his hands around the soft
flesh and pulls Niall’s hips down harder to increase the friction against his cock.
Harry slips a second finger in once Liam loosens around him. He knows exactly where to find Liam’s prostate and immediately presses against it with the pads of his fingers. Liam’s head snaps back and he starts leaking against his own stomach. “Fuck! Niall stop!” He moans.

Niall’s hips stutter mid-thrust, but he can see how close Liam is so he takes the inconvenience with a heaping spoonful of pride. Harry works quickly now, scissoring his fingers apart and circling them so one is always stimulating Liam’s spot. Niall’s size means a third finger isn’t necessary so once Liam is properly loose he pulls his hand out and slides Niall’s hips back.

A lubed hand snakes around Niall’s hips and grabs ahold of his prick. He gasps when Harry’s arm wraps around his chest and pulls their bodies flush. He soaks Niall’s cock liberally and bites down on the meat of his neck and shoulders. Niall hisses, but Harry knows the difference between pain and eroticism and this is definitely the latter. He lets Harry’s hand guide him into Liam and the man moans as soon as Niall presses into him.

Niall’s eyes bulge once he bottoms out into Liam, his breath caught in his throat. Harry whispers comforting words in his ears and kisses at his cheek. Liam moans and tries to move, but Harry places a hand on his hips to steady him. “Not yet Li. I still have to get inside Niall.”

“Just lube up. I’m still loose from earlier.” Niall moans. Harry takes the instructions to heart and rubs a small glob of lube on Niall before coating himself. Niall may think he’s loose still, but the way he squeezes around Harry tells a different story. It’s probably because he’s inside Liam, but he’s as tight as he’s ever been to Harry.

Harry keeps good on his promise and tucks a hand under Niall’s knee before rocking forward. His hips push Niall into Liam and they all moan in unison. Once Niall nods for Harry he starts to actually work his hips. Liam pulls Niall’s face into his own, needing the contact on his mouth. Their tongues mix as Harry fucks Niall into Liam with all the force he can muster.

Niall reaches a hand down and tugs on Liam’s leaking cock, eliciting a moan from the man beneath him. He can already feel Liam throbbing and knows his orgasm is close. His pace quickens, using the precum coating his hand as lubricant. Liam writhes beneath him, not knowing whether to focus on the feeling of Niall’s hand or his cock which is hitting inside him just right.

It turns out that both is the right answer and before he knows it he’s cumming all over himself. His length and position make it so it reaches all the way to his neck, but he doesn’t care that it’s getting everywhere, just that it feels amazing. “Don’t stop.” he moans. “For the love of god, don’t stop.”

“Good god you’re such a bottom.” Niall laughs. Harry fucks into him harder, wildly chasing his own orgasm. Niall is so close, so so close, and with every thrust he comes closer and closer to the edge. Within a minute his arms give out and he slumps onto Liam’s chest moaning. His hips are still rocking into Liam, but only because Harry is pushing them. His own body has gone completely stiff, the force of his orgasm knocking the air out of his lungs.

Once Harry realizes that both the other boys have finished he pulls out of Niall and strokes himself a few times before cumming all over the smaller boy’s arse. He starts giggling once his breathing settles down and neither Niall or Liam knows why.

“Haz, you are rapidly dropping the level of my ego down to zero.” Niall groans.

“Sorry Nialler. I just realized that you’re both covered in jizz, and there’s no way to get you off the bed without getting it on the duvet.” Harry laughs. “We haven’t even slept in it yet and I’m going to have to get it dry cleaned.”
"Oh shit." Liam mumbles. "Grab us each a towel or something Haz."

"Sure." Harry smiles. It won’t do much good. His cum is already sliding down Niall’s arse, unimpeded due to the lack of hair. He was right, and by the time he gets back it’s already dripping onto the covers. He tosses two to Liam, who hands one to Niall, and then crawls behind the smaller boy to wipe up his own mess. Niall giggles once Harry starts wiping at him, wiggling his bum to make things more difficult.

"That feels really weird now!" Liam laughs. Harry hadn’t realized it yet, but Niall is still inside of him. He’s rapidly softening and Liam is actually starting to hurt him. He pulls out quickly and Liam groans. "I will never get used to that part."

"Well if you bothered to bottom more than once a month you would. I can promise that." Niall laughs.

"Says the bloke who refused to top for me, even when given every opportunity." Liam says back. "I had my reasons." Niall huffs.

"You top Harry." Liam retorts.

"I’m not talking about this now." Niall groans. "Why do you two always do this to me after sex? We’re engaged, we’re freshly fucked, can’t we just be happy?"

"Yes Nialler, I think we can." Harry smiles. He gives each of them a peck on the cheek and they drop the argument before it turns into anything serious. They really should go shower, but instead they wipe off and collapse in a pile of interlocking limbs. Harry stares down at his hand and smiles. The ring is beautiful, but it’s nothing compared to the promise it entails.

After a week of rampant debauchery Harry, Niall, and Liam get their shit together enough to invite their friends over to their house for a dinner party. It’s mostly driven by the ulterior motive of announcing their engagement, but it also gives them a chance to show everyone the new house. Harry goes all out and cooks five courses which are served in their dining hall.

Liam has been conscripted to help in the kitchen, leaving Niall to play the host. He thinks he looks quite dashing in a new black suit. His hair has grown back to it’s old length, but his natural color seems to suit him better now than he thought it would. The autumn gloom has taken what little tan he had out of his skin, but his alabaster skin is charming in it’s own way.

"You could have told me this was formal!" Louis yells when he walks through the door. He’s dressed in a button down and jeans which aren’t all that flattering if Niall is being honest. It’s a terrible contrast to Zayn and Perrie who arrived looking like they’re going to the Grammys instead of a dinner party. Eleanor looks cute though, a floor length blue maternity dress that hides her ever growing bump and makes her look like a Greek goddess.

"El understood the invitation just fine." Niall says, giving her a peck on the cheek. "What did you think black-tie meant?"

"I’m wearing a black tie!" Louis groans.

"Come upstairs with me, I have a suit that should fit you." Niall sighs. He leads Louis up to his secondary bedroom and rummages through the several bags of suits Harry bought him for special occasions. He pulls out a navy one and hands it to Louis before opening the cabinet with his tie
carousel. He grabs a few that should bring Louis up to snuff for the party.

“Will the shirt I have on do?” Louis asks, resigned to his fate.

“No, Louis, it’s purple. You strip down and I’ll pick one out.” Niall orders.

“I’ll wait until you leave.” Louis snarks.

“Look, for all the attention we give your bum, I’m really not interested in it. It’s a nice hunk of meat, sure, but I’m not going to give up my fiancés just to take a gander at it.” Niall rolls his eyes.

“Hold it ya mick!” Louis turns him around by the shoulders with a wild look in his eyes. “fiancés?”

“Harry proposed!” Niall squeals. In a very un-masculine display, Louis links their fingers together and squeals with him.

“When? How? Where’s the ring?” Louis asks with almost as much excitement as Niall had when it happened.

“A week ago. He hung fairy lights throughout the entire kitchen so it looked like stars everywhere. It was amazing Louis, really really amazing. Like a movie or something.” Niall giggles. “He said he’d never been so happy in his whole life as when he met us. He wants to spend his life with us Tommo. Harry feckin Styles wants to spend his life with us.”

“Of course he does. If he didn’t want to spend his life with my best friend he’d be an idiot.” Louis laughs.

“I’m your best friend?” Niall asks. “That’s pretty sad Tommo.”

Louis removes one of his hands from Niall’s and smacks him in the back of the head. “Don’t be a bitch Niall. I’m willing to move countries and raise my children as leprechauns because of you. You’re probably the best mate I’ve ever had.” he glares.

“Alright alright, don’t go all Million Dollar Baby on me Hillary Swank.” Niall says with a smile. Louis looks like he wants to hit him again so Niall says “Want to see the ring now?”

“Of bloody course!” Louis squeals, all thoughts of bodily harm against Niall apparently forgotten.

Niall pulls his greatest treasure out from his pocket and hands it to Louis. The cinnamon haired boy takes it greedily and looks at it in wonder. He turns the circlet over in his hands carefully and his jaw hangs open. “The gems are supposed to be-” Niall starts to say.

“Your eyes, or rather their eyes. Right?” Louis asks with a smile.

“I would not have guessed you’d get that so fast.” Niall laughs.

“I’ve been around you blokes for months, I know how Harry thinks and that’s right up his alley.” Louis shrugs. He hands the ring back to Niall and turns around. Niall tucks the ring back in his pocket, wishing he could just put it on his finger instead. He grabs a crisp white shirt out of his wardrobe and hands it to Louis.

“This should all fit you alright, you’re almost exactly my size. Let me know if anything doesn’t. The bathroom is through that door.” Niall points. Louis shuffles into it and closes the door behind him. Niall sits on his bed and looks through his phone for a few minutes before Louis struts out.

The suit is tight around Louis’ shoulders and bum, but it still looks good on him. Niall holds up each
of the ties in turn, laying them on Louis’ shoulders before he makes a decision. He picks a teal and scarlet paisley one that fits the other boys personality well and tightens it in a double Windsor. “I shouldn’t have to ask this, but I will anyway. You’ll keep it a secret right? Zayn already knows because he helped set everything up, but Harry wants to make an announcement at dinner and it’s really important to him.” Niall says quietly.

“Of course Nially-poo.” Louis pats Niall on the cheek and smiles.

“If you ever call me that again I’ll tell everyone about the time you got drunk and told me that you wouldn’t be opposed to experimenting sexually with Haz because he has a nice mouth.” Niall glares.

“You rude little orphan.” Louis laughs.


“Yes?” Louis asks.

“Besides Liam and Haz, you’re my best mate too.” Niall grins widely.

“Of course I am. I’m fantastic.” Louis says with a cocky grin.

“Everyone is going to think we’re fucking in here if we don’t get back down there.” Niall pushes the other boy towards the door. “Shite, we still have to do your hair!”

“My hair is fine.” Louis groans. “Why does everyone always get on me about it?”

“Because you just let it hang there.” Niall snarks. “There’s absolutely no styling involved.”

“El says the same thing. You’re all so mean to me.” Louis pouts. He lets Niall lead him into the bathroom where his hair is quickly whipped into a swooping quiff.

“It would look better if you shaved, but that’ll do for now.” Niall sighs. His work is pretty good and the transformation is startling, but it could still be better.

Of course as soon as they get downstairs Zayn asks “What took you so long? You fuck him or summat?”

“Back off. I had to do a full Princess Diaries up there.” Niall glares.

“Oh my god Louis!” Eleanor squeals. “You haven’t looked this good since our wedding!”

She runs over and wraps her arms around him in a really beautiful display of affection. Niall smiles at them while Louis rolls his eyes. “I swear you all think I look like a homeless man or something.”

“Not homeless Louis, just unkempt.” Liam laughs. He’s standing in the doorway looking like a model in his gray suit. Niall’s heart skips a beat no matter how many times he sees him like this. It’s cliched as hell of course, but as long as he doesn’t say anything then nobody can laugh at him.

“Well how am I supposed to compete with you lot?” Louis huffs. “Harry, Zayn, Niall, and you are not playing fair.”

“Careful Louis, someone will think you noticed how hot we are.” Zayn laughs. “It would ruin your already strained reputation as the hetero of our little group.”

“Harry! Add a laxative to Zayn’s soup!” Louis shouts. Harry’s bark of laughter can be heard echoing from the other room and Zayn blushes as much as he can with his complexion.
“Since Liam is here, I’m assuming it’s time we head into the dining hall.” Niall says amicably. They file in and take their seats around the long table Harry picked out. It’s not very practical seeing as one host would always have to be seated with the guests, but Harry fell in love with it. Niall handled the situation easily placing their guests on one long side, and themselves on the other. Seeing as the party is seven it works relatively well and keeps everyone close for conversation purposes.

He sits Louis and Zayn as far apart as possible to keep the fighting to a minimum, and takes the seat across from the cinnamon haired boy. He quickly jumps up again when he realizes he hasn’t served any drinks for anyone. He quickly pours a glass of red wine, something that Harry had picked out specifically for tonight, for each of them except for Eleanor. He hands them out, placing Harry and Liam’s in front of their seats, and then pours a special bottle of dealcoholized Ariel Vineyards wine for her. He didn’t even know it existed before tonight.

Eleanor takes it with a grateful smile and Louis is about to shout his protests before Niall hands him the bottle to look at. “It’s perfectly safe Tommo. We just thought she’d appreciate feeling less like an outsider.” Niall explains.

“I do Niall. Thank you.” Eleanor giggles. She quickly drains her glass and holds it up for Louis to begrudgingly pour another. Perrie and Zayn laugh and Niall joins in while Eleanor sips contentedly at her Cabernet.

“If my babies come out looking weird or something I’m blaming you.” Louis glares.

“If they come out looking weird it’s because their dad is an alien.” Zayn laughs. Perrie hits him on the arm and whispers something in his ear that makes him blanch. Louis smiles triumphantly and Niall takes his seat again.

Liam and Harry come in, Harry looking every bit Liam’s equal in his tight black suit, carrying trays of appetizers. Finding something that would satisfy everyone’s dietary restrictions was difficult, but Harry settled on bruschetta with Parmesan cheese crumbles.

“Oh god.” Louis whines. “Is the entire meal going to be this pretentious?”

“Don’t be fucking rude.” Niall glares. Louis shrinks back and withers under the stares of all three hosts and his wife.

Louis pops a piece of bruschetta in his mouth and his eyes pop open in surprise. “Holy crap!” He says around his mouthful of food. “This is amazing! Is your food always this good?”

“It is. Now don’t you regret not joining us for dinner more often?” Niall says cockily. He doesn’t really deserve to feel proud about the cooking, he’s literally done none of it since Harry moved in except for his apology breakfast, but he does anyway because his beautiful boy is so good.

“I regret not living with you so I could eat this good every night!” Louis laughs.

“Are you saying El’s cooking isn’t good?” Perrie asks, feigning innocence and sipping from her wine.

“El doesn’t do the cooking. I do.” Louis says bluntly. “If I let her cook she’d eat everything you aren’t supposed to during pregnancy.”

“It’s true.” Eleanor giggles. “I crave fish all the time.”

“Way to subvert gender roles you two.” Harry smiles. “Now can we eat? Because I have four more courses and the soup will get cold.”
“Yes yes, dear Harold.” Louis says happily.

They slip into polite conversation, Harry steering them away from anything straying too close to the engagement. Louis on the other hand keeps slyly trying to bring it up without letting on that he knows. Niall has spent a fair amount of time glaring at him, but he doesn’t ever seem phased. Eventually he lashes out under the table, trying to kick Louis. It isn’t successful as Niall forgot there’s a crossbeam under the table and he almost cries when his shin comes into contact with it. Louis smiles at him with a knowing look and then tops it off by blowing a kiss, much to everyone else’s confusion.

Harry serves a red lentil and pumpkin soup next, followed by a salad that Niall can’t even remember the ingredients of. There’s a lot of different greens and a vinaigrette that manages to be both tangy and sweet. The main course is a pair of gorgeous stuffed pheasants. Their skin is aromatic, rubbed in rosemary and olive oil, so they smell it before the boys bring it in. Niall’s mouth is watering by the time Harry sets down a plate of specially prepared fish for Perrie since she technically calls herself a pescatarian. Liam is in the center spot so he gets the honor of carving up the birds, but right before he does his phone starts ringing in his pocket.

He sighs and puts down the knives before pulling his phone out to a chorus of booing. He ignores the call, only to have it start ringing again before he can even get it back in his pocket. He sighs and turns to Harry. “Haz I’m sorry, but apparently I need to take this. I’ll be back in just a minute everyone.”

Harry groans and takes Liam’s place, starting to carve the birds. Liam steps back in quickly, all blood drained from his face. “I need to go. I- I need to go to the hospital.”

“How?” Liam screams. “People don’t just die in childbirth anymore! This is Ireland for god’s sake, not the third world!”

“Mr. Payne, I’m going to have to ask you one more time to calm down. If you don’t you’ll be escorted off the premises.” The doctor says boldly.

“Liam, please. Let the doctor explain.” Harry pleads. He tugs on Liam’s arm, probably trying to get him to sit again. Liam shakes off Harry’s hand but calms down enough to listen.

“As you probably know, Ms. Smith, Sophia, had no family. She listed you as the father on the birth certificates for the twins, which is why we called you. You were also listed as the emergency contact in case this very thing happened.” The doctor explains. “Sophia suffered complications that forced us to perform an emergency caesarean section. I’m afraid she lost too much blood and her request was that we save the babies before working on her.”

“So now I’m just a father? She didn’t even tell me she was pregnant.” Liam growls. “I want the test, the- the one that tells me whether they’re really mine!”

“I can arrange a paternity test right away Mr. Payne, but it will take about a week to get the results because we don’t have the lab for it on site.” The doctor says quickly. “Until then though, either you’re going to have to take them or they’ll be placed in foster care.”

“I don’t have a nursery set up.” Liam says. “I didn’t even know about any of this. Can they stay here for one more night while I get things set up?”

“I’ll take care of that Li. You stay here with Haz.” Niall says quickly. He doesn’t leave any room for
argument and exits quickly.

“Doctor can you give us a minute?” Harry asks quietly.

“Of course.” The doctor nods and follows behind Niall.

“We need to talk about this.” Harry says flatly.

“There’s nothing to talk about until I get the test results. They’re probably not even mine.” Liam answers. He can’t process this. He can’t even start. He slept with an ex-girlfriend once eight months ago and now he’s responsible for her children? He wants a family, but this isn’t the way he ever pictured it. His life is finally on track; he’s engaged, he has a house and a good job. Two babies are the last thing he needs right now.

“The timing is right isn’t it?” Harry asks. “Niall said you slept with Sophia a month before we met, so they could be yours.”

“I won’t believe that until I see it.” Liam sighs. “I can’t. I can’t let myself think they’re mine until I know it’s true.”

“I understand, Liam, but you will have to face this sooner or later. There are a little girl and boy in there and they may be yours.” Harry rubs soothing circles on Liam’s back, but it doesn’t help. Nothing could help right now.

Niall is pushing a trolleys through a mostly abandoned store. He had to bribe the clerk who was closing up to keep it open so he could get what he needs. His once beautiful suit is now stained with salt from the tears he couldn’t contain once he reached the truck. He allowed himself five minutes, no more. The flood of emotions that literally poured out of him didn’t stop, but it slowed enough to let him drive to the store.

He needs two trolleys just to carry the cribs, rocking chairs, and car-seats. He leaves them at the front of the store and then goes back for the rest. Everything is so bright and cheerful, it really doesn’t match what he’s feeling right now. He tosses a pack of dummies into the cart, along with several cans of formula and bottles. He doesn’t know what size of diapers to get so he asks the clerk to help him. She picks out several packs marked newborn and then goes about pointing out other things he’ll need. She gives him several plain onesies, caps, socks, and some fuzzy clothes to protect them from the cold.

“What are their names?” The clerk, Evelyn according to her name tag, asks. “We may have caps with their names on them.”

“I don’t know their names. I don’t think they even have any yet.” Niall sighs.

“Can’t you call their mother?” Evelyn asks.

“She died in childbirth. My boyfriend is the father. He didn’t even know, so I’m pretty sure he hasn’t named them.” Niall says flatly.

“Oh. I- uh- You should probably get some blankies for them. We have a lovely selection.” Evelyn stammers.

Niall smiles grimly and follows her. Once he checks out and pays the massive bill for his boyfriend’s love children’s supplies, he loads them into the truck and drives back to the house. He’ll have to set
everything up quickly so he calls Louis.

“Niall? What happened?” Louis asks. His voice is laced with concern and it doesn’t help Niall’s willpower.

“I’ll explain later. Can you meet me at the house?” Niall asks curtly.

“We’re all still here. We wanted to make sure everything was alright.” Louis explains.

“All right. I’ll be there in a few minutes. I’ll need help with some things if that’s okay.” Niall says quickly.

“Of course Niall.” Louis says softly.

“Thank you Louis. I just- thank you.” Niall says. He hangs up before Louis can say something sarcastic and ruin the moment.

He pulls up to the house not long after and by the time he’s out of the truck Louis is standing there with a grumpy look on his face. “It is incredibly rude to hang up on people Niall. I can’t believe you would just- Is that a crib?”

“Two of them.” Niall sighs.

“As sweet as it is that you’ve decided to throw me an impromptu baby shower Niall, I have three on the way, not two.” Louis snarks.

“It’s not for you, you stupid bitch!” Niall yells. “It’s for Liam’s illegitimate twins!”

“His what?” Louis asks. He’s apparently decided to ignore Niall’s insult which the Irish boy is incredibly grateful for. He didn’t mean to snap, but he’s too frayed to even try and control his emotions right now.

“He got some girl pregnant before we got together again. She didn’t even tell him, and then she went and died giving birth to them. Now we’re fucking parents and I have to get a room set up for them.” Niall growls. He’s on the verge of tears again, and when Louis pulls him in for a hug he can’t hold them back. He sobs into Louis’ shoulder for who knows how long while the other boy just holds him in uncharacteristic silence.

“You should know I’m not very good at building things by the way. You probably won’t want your kids sleeping in a crib I put together.” Louis smiles.

“We’ll figure something out. And they’re not my kids Louis, they’re his.” Niall sighs. Louis’ hand moves so fast Niall can’t even try and stop it. His cheek stings from the sudden impact and his neck jerks to the side.

“He’s your partner you stupid little child!” Louis says angrily. “Those poor motherless children only have three people in this world and like it or not you are one of them! Pull your shit together!”

“What the hell?” Niall sobs. “Louis-”

“Shut up!” Louis snarls. “What happened sucks. It sucks so bad I’m not even going to joke about it, but it happened. Now you have two options, be here for those kids, or walk away. It will break Liam and Harry, but like it or not those kids are more important than you. They’re your family now, and like you, they’ve already lost a parent.”
Niall falls into stunned silence, scared by his mate’s sudden outburst. He’s right though. Niall isn’t going to leave, so he needs to get it together for Liam and these two kids. Whether he wanted it or not, he’s a father now. He just wishes his own father could be here to tell him what to do. Bobby probably would have done the same thing as Louis though. They’re startlingly similar in some ways, fun and lighthearted one minute, stoic and strangely wise the next. It’s probably why he finds himself so drawn to the other boy.

“You’re right, okay?” Niall cries. “You’re right, but I don’t know how to process this Louis. One minute I’ve just gotten engaged and I’m finally living my dream life, and the next my fiancé has two kids and I don’t know what to do. I’m scared.”

“I’ll be here for you as much as you need, but you need to put that away until you have time to deal with it. Right now we need to put together a nursery for your kids.” Louis laughs. “Now Zayn is waiting with his nose pressed to the window. Let’s have him give us a hand carrying this shite upstairs.”

Niall waves Zayn out from the window and the other three shuffle outside quickly. “Did you slap him?” Zayn asks when he runs up.

“I needed it. Now help me get all this baby stuff up to the main bedroom so I can set it up.” Niall orders. Zayn starts to protest but Niall silences him with a glare. “I’ll explain everything up there. Just help me.”

When the doctor comes back she takes a swab of Liam’s saliva and then, enters the ward and takes a sample from two babies. They’re beautiful from where Harry is watching. They have scrunchy little faces and wail afterwards, but Harry thinks they’re the most beautiful thing he’s ever seen. A nurse offers to bring them in, and Harry nods fervently.

Liam is already sitting, and Harry takes the seat next to his. The nurse hands off the baby girl to Liam and gives Harry the boy. Liam looks stunned and terrified, holding the tiny bundle of new life in his hands. Harry focuses quickly on his own, holding carefully so he doesn’t break the small boy.

“What are we going to call them then?” Harry asks curiously.

“Sophia didn’t name them?” Liam asks. His voice has lost all it’s venom, completely replaced with something Harry can’t identify.

“She wanted to meet them first. She thought she could decide then.” The nurse says sadly.

“I may not have any right to name them.” Liam sighs. “I’ll decide on something after the test comes back.”

The nurse nods and then leaves them alone.

“What are we going to call them then?” Harry asks curiously.

“I don’t care right now. Until I know they’re mine I won’t name them. I can’t take that away from their father if it isn’t me.” Liam says softly. The little girl has stopped crying and is now cuddled against Liam’s chest.

“They’re yours Liam. This little boy has your nose. I know in my heart that they’re yours.” Harry smiles.
“I love you, and I trust you, but until I know for sure I can’t do it. I can’t get too attached to them if they’re going to be taken away from me.” Liam says. His voice sounds like it’s going to break, and Harry wiggles the little boy into one arm so he can reach the other hand over and comfort him.

They sit in silence for a while, cradling the twins tight. The nurse comes back after about twenty minutes with another woman and Harry struggles to let the boy go. The woman sits and takes him in her arms before taking off a flap on her shirt. Harry realizes where it’s going and asks the nurse “What are we supposed to do about this?”

“You can turn away if you’re uncomfortable.” The nurse says. Her face is pleasant enough, but her voice shows traces of disgust.

“That’s not what I mean. I support women being able to breast feed wherever and whenever they need to. I meant because their mother can’t do it. What are we supposed to feed them?” Harry asks.

“Oh, yes, of course that’s what you meant. Well, you can hire a wet nurse like Sheila here to live in with you or pump for you. Some babies will take formula right away, but it’s less common.” The nurse offers.

Niall walks into the room a few seconds later looking completely wrecked. “I have that under control already. El has started lactating already because, you know, triplets, and she’s volunteered.” He sighs.

“That will also work.” The nurse says.

“The nursery is ready, or it will be by the time we get home. Team Zouanelrie is all over it.” Niall says.

“Team Zouanelrie?” Liam asks.

“Zayn, Louis, Eleanor, and Perrie. They insisted on the name. They’re even getting shirts made because our friends are all idiots.” Niall shakes his head.

“Sounds about right.” Harry smiles. “We’ll get going when the babies have been fed then.”

“There’s some paperwork that will need to be filled out.” The nurse says and then she shuffles off to get it.

Liam sighs and then holds the baby up, looking between Niall and Harry. When Niall doesn’t step forward Harry gladly takes her. He cradles the little girl in his arms and coos over her as quietly as he can. She’s beautiful, her scrunchy little nose mimicking Liam’s when he smiles. Liam stands up and follows the nurse out of the room, touching Niall on the shoulder before he disappears.

After a few moments of silence the wet nurse, Sheila, Harry remembers, stands up. She walks to Niall and passes him the boy. He looks scared, but takes him reluctantly. She takes the girl from Harry’s arms next and he huffs because she always takes his baby away. Niall looks at Harry with an eyebrow cocked in question so Harry makes grabby hands for the baby boy.

Niall looks relieved when he passes off the baby and Harry smiles down. He wasn’t ready for this at all, and a part of him throbs in pain every time he thinks about it too much. Liam and Niall obviously can’t handle this yet though, so he’s decided to take charge. He’s wanted kids for a long time, so regardless of how it happened, he’s glad he gets to be a father.

“You look perfect with him in your arms.” Niall says quietly. “Happier than I think I’ve ever seen you.”
“Not quite.” Harry smiles. “When you said yes was a pretty happy moment too.”

“Not here Haz.” Niall sighs. His eyes slant towards Sheila and Harry understands. “It’s not the time or place.”

“You win. I’ll just focus on this cutie instead.” Harry says. He rubs the little boy’s nose and when he sneezes Harry thinks his heart is going to burst.

The first night with the babies is restless and loud. Newborns need to be fed every couple hours so none of them have gotten much sleep. Louis and Eleanor have decided to move in until the twins can be weened onto formula instead. Harry argues that breast milk is better for the babies, but they’ll only be four months old by the time Eleanor gives birth if she manages to carry to full term which is unlikely with triplets. She can’t be expected to breast feed five babies until the twins are old enough for other food. Liam also can’t stand the idea of having Louis live with them for that long.

Eleanor sleeps in the rocking chair next to him while Liam is sitting quietly with the girl. She’s not asleep, instead focusing very intently on something Liam can’t see. She looks the spitting image of Ruth from the baby pictures Liam remembers. It’s hard to believe they might not be his, but as long as it’s possible he doesn’t get too attached.

“Daddy suits you well.” Louis says quietly. Harry and Niall are snoring in a pile on the bed and Eleanor doesn’t even flinch from her sleep at his voice. “I suppose that particular kink will go on the back burner though.”

“Do you know what time it is?” Liam glares. “Too-fucking-early-for-your-bullshit-o-clock.”

“Language!” Louis says with a smirk. He waggles his eyebrows in a way that tells Liam that Niall has shared too much. “You don’t want her first word being a curse do you?”

“Have you met Niall? Clean language was out of the question. My kids, if they are mine, will have mouths like sailors.” Liam sighs.

“They’re yours. Your son has your grumpy face when he poops.” Louis smiles. Liam rolls his eyes and focuses on his maybe-daughter. She’s beautiful, especially for a newborn. Liam has seen enough to know that most have smushy little red faces and are only cute to their parents, not that he’d ever be rude enough to say that. These two though, they’re gorgeous babies. Secretly he really hopes they’re his.

Morning doesn’t change much, but Harry and Niall have slept enough to let Liam take a good long nap. Niall is adjusting to having them around well enough, but he’s still afraid to hold them. Both babies are so small, so fragile, he can’t bring himself to do it. Zayn and Perrie show up at a polite hour, eager to see the twins. Niall wants to go take a nap now that reinforcements have arrived, but Harry calls it first, so he stays up.

“Mate, you doing all right?” Zayn asks. Perrie and Eleanor have taken the twins and Louis is out grabbing the things that Niall forgot at the store. Niall didn’t even notice that Zayn had stayed with him.

“That’s an incredibly stupid question Zayn.” Niall says bluntly.

Zayn laughs a few times and then says “Yeah, I guess it is. I’m sticking with it though. I know I’m
probably the last person you want to talk to about your problems, but you’re pretty much out of options at the moment.”

“You want to help? Make me some tea.” Niall says. He’s surprised when Zayn actually gets up and starts the kettle. He opens up several cabinets before he finds the tea. He holds up a hand and waves at the massive selection that Harry insists upon keeping with his eyebrow arched. “Lyon’s please.”

“Right.” Zayn says. He drops a bag into a mug and pours the water over it when it’s done boiling. “What do you like in it?”

“Lot’s of sugar, no cream.” Niall says. He really doesn’t understand why Zayn is doing this for him. They aren’t really friends, even if they’re on civil times. Zayn adds two large spoonfuls of sugar and brings the cup to Niall. He sets it down in front of the Irish lad and then sits down.

Niall sips at his tea contently and Zayn sits there without saying a word. It goes on for several minutes before Niall finally says “It’s your fault you know. I’m taking this so hard because you made me doubt him, even if it was only for a second.”

“I can see how you’d feel that way.” Zayn shrugs.

“What if he doesn’t want me around anymore, now that he has what he always really wanted?” Niall asks. His voice is so soft he can barely hear it himself. Zayn seems to get it just fine though.

“That’s not going to happen. If he loves you half as much as Harry does, then he could never even consider it.” Zayn says simply.

“They’ve both tried to leave me at different points.” Niall says. “Liam when he was falling in love with Harry, because he didn’t want to hurt me. And Harry because he thought Liam didn’t love him too. They’re so good together, and they both want kids.”

“You don’t?” Zayn asks. He doesn’t sound judgmental, just curious.

“I don’t know. I mean, yeah I do, but I thought I’d have more time. I thought I’d know they were coming before they were born. Becoming a father overnight isn’t something I know that I can cope with.” Niall admits.

“And that scares you. Makes you want to run.” Zayn says. It isn’t a question.

“Old habits die hard. Running away from my problems was an old specialty of mine.” Niall sighs. “I’m fighting every instinct in my body by still being at this table. Louis tried to help me last night, but nothing looks any easier in the light of day.”

“It might take a while.” Zayn says. “It did with me.”

“Harry never mentioned you have a kid.” Niall says curiously.

“That’s because he doesn’t know. Only Pez does.” Zayn shrugs. “My girlfriend had him when we were seventeen. We were just stupid kids, fooling around in the back of my mum’s car. Then we were parents. It took us six months to decide to put him up for adoption. It was more than a bit unorthodox, but a sweet couple adopted him and I know he’s happy. I get updates a few times a year and I met him once a few years back.”

“Are you saying we should put the twins up for adoption?” Niall asks. It’s completely ludicrous.

“Dear god, you’re thicker than Harry ever let on.” Zayn sighs. Niall is about to protest when Zayn
Niall nods and follows him out the door that leads to their back porch. Harry had a large area laid down with cement and a grill pit put in special for Niall. It’s probably his favorite place in the new house besides their giant bed. “Harry told me about the roof you go to when you need to think.” Zayn explains. Of course he did. “I’m afraid of heights though, so this will have to do.”

He produces a bottle of whiskey and hands it to Niall. It’s Redbreast, just like his father used to drink. Niall twists off the cap and takes a deep pull off the bottle before handing it back to Zayn. “You trying to get me drunk so you can take advantage of me too?” Niall asks.

“Nope. There was never any need to test you. I’ve known you love Harry since the moment I met you. Well the second time anyways.” Zayn says simply. “Wouldn’t turn you down if you offered though. You’re definitely my type.”

“So not the time, Zayn.” Niall glares.

“You started it.” Zayn pouts. “You’re right though, it really isn’t. Right now the focus is on you. You need to let go of your anger, so do it.”

“How?” Niall asks. He doesn’t even know where to begin.

“Scream. Cry. Throw the bottle. Hit me. It doesn’t matter how. You figure something out, and I’ll help you do it.” Zayn shrugs. Niall is tempted to take him up on his offer of being a punching bag.

“Actually I have an idea, but you couldn’t tell Haz about it.” Niall says. He hasn’t done it in a long time, not since a little after his mother died.

“I’m here for you right now, not Harry, but why can’t I tell him?” Zayn asks.

“You’ll know as soon as you see.” Niall grins. He takes Zayn by the wrist and leads him towards his former house. Once they reach it he drags Zayn into his old bedroom and closes the door.

“This really wasn’t what I had in mind Niall.” Zayn says.

“Get your mind out of the gutter Malik. You may think you’re everyone’s type, but I like a real top and you so aren’t one.” Niall laughs. He digs around in his closet before he finds a duffel and grabs it.

“That’s rude.” Zayn pouts.

“Don’t get me wrong, you’re gorgeous. You look like a great fuck and a few months ago I’d have
been willing to go to jail just for the tiniest chance to snog your face off, but I have the perfect sex
life already.” Niall giggles. “Not risking that even for your pretty pink lips.”

“That’s less rude.” Zayn says with a laugh. “What’s in the bag?”

Niall puts it on the bed and unzips it. He pulls out one of the two shotguns and turns to show it to
Zayn.

“Jesus fuck!” Zayn screams. He presses back against the door with his eyes wide.

“I’m not going to shoot you Zayn.” Niall says after barking in laughter. “Me da used them for
hunting back before the UK got all nutso about guns.”

“You want to go hunting?” Zayn asks. “Don’t you need like permits or summat?”

“We’re not going hunting. We’re going to shoot trees on the edge of my land. The birds have already
left so we won’t be risking hurting anything.” Niall beams.

“I don’t know how to shoot.” Zayn says. He still looks unsure of the whole plan.

“You’re not actually going to shoot. You’re going to reload for me so I never have to stop until I’m
good and ready.” Niall says bluntly. He packs the gun back in the bag and takes off before Zayn can
protest any more. They walk to the farthest point from the house and Zayn grumbles the entire way.
Niall teaches Zayn how to load it and check for jammed shells. It’s fairly simple so he catches on
quickly.

Once Niall is confident in Zayn’s abilities he hands him a pair of shooting ear muffs to block out the
noise. They’ve set up a system of flags that Zayn can hold in Niall’s peripheral to signal him if he
needs to stop or that Zayn is clear after handing him the next gun. From the first blast Niall feels his
nerves begin to dissipate and he knows this is exactly what he needs.

Zayn and he work as a well oiled machine, falling into a perfect rhythm of shooting and reloading so
well there’s almost no gap. After about his twentieth round he sees the red flag pop up in his field of
vision. He drops the shotgun from his shoulder and pops it open before turning around. Zayn takes
off his earmuffs and Niall follows suit.

“What is it?” Niall asks.

“Can, um- can I try it?” Zayn asks shyly.

“I guess, yeah.” Niall says with a smile. Zayn walks over and Niall teaches him the proper stance.
He wraps himself around Zayn from behind, lifting his arms to show him the way to hold it. He runs
a hand to the inside of Zayn’s leg and uses his foot to scoot Zayn’s leg to the proper spot.

“Awful intimate no?” Zayn asks with a wink. Niall pokes him in the eye with the arm of the shooting
goggles before slipping them over his face. He snaps the ear muffs over each of their ears before
backing off and letting Zayn have at it. His first shot goes really well, but Niall can’t hear if he
screams or not. He probably does.

Zayn takes his second shot and Niall is about to start clapping before he feels a hand turn him around
by the shoulder. Louis is standing there with a very angry glare on his face. His mouth is moving but
Niall can’t hear anything he’s saying. Niall reaches out and grabs Louis by the face and covers his
ears just before the third blast goes off. Louis looks terrified and clutches to Niall’s chest. The fourth
blast goes off and Niall takes off his ear muffs.
“Niall did you see that?” Zayn shouts. Niall looks and he’s still wearing the ear muffs. He signals Zayn to take off his muffs and then shows him Louis who is clinging to his chest still.

“I did see Zayn. You didn’t fall or anything. You did perfectly.” Niall beams.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Louis yells once he realizes the shotgun is done for now.

“I’m doing shotgun therapy.” Niall laughs.

“Of course you are, you ridiculous little mick.” Louis sighs.

“Listen Tommo, I love ya, I do, but I swear ‘f ya insult my people like that again I will tie ya to a tree and use ya for target practice.” Niall glares.

“Oh I get it, I give you one little love tap and suddenly you’re best mates with Malik. Is it because he’s prettier than me?” Louis pouts.

“You’ll always be the prettiest to me Louis.” Niall says. He gives Louis a peck on the cheek and then catches him when he predictably pretends to swoon. “You want to take a turn with the shotgun?”

“Not a chance in hell, you bloody loon.” Louis smiles.

“How bout a snog session behind the bushes?” Niall giggles.

“More of a chance than me touching the gun, but less than me stabbing you in the face with a fork.” Louis says with a smirk.

“I like those odds.” Niall grins. He plants a big wet kiss on Louis’ mouth and then drops him on his arse to go hide behind Zayn.

“I am going to bloody murder you Horan!” Louis rages.

“I thought you said you prefer tops?” Zayn asks with a big smile.

“I am a top! I always top!” Louis glares. “That’s what happens when you’re straight!”

“With that arse that’s a total waste.” Zayn smiles. “To each their own I guess. Personally I think you’re limiting yourself if you only top her. Occasionally Pez will put on a strap on and-”

“Nope!” Louis yells. “I love Niall so I’ll listen to his filthy sex stories which have way too much detail, but not you.”

“Suit yourself.” Zayn shrugs.

“If I forgive you and agree to shoot the gun, can I ‘accidentally’ shoot Malik?” Louis says, doing air quotes on the word accidentally.

“No. I need you to check out my hand anyways.” Niall holds it out. “I cut meself.”

“So you decided the best solution was to smear gunpowder in it?” Louis squawks.

“I decided to let go of all my rage and this is how I did it.” Niall says flatly. “I needed this Louis, whether you understand it or not.”

“I do I guess. Is that why you’re acting so weird?” Louis asks.
“I’m not acting weird.” Niall pouts.

“You snogged me Niall.” Louis glares.

“You looked snoggable.” Niall laughs. “Once was enough though. You’re not a very good kisser.”

“I am going to save this up for a rainy day and use it against you.” Louis saysthreateningly. If he didn’t have such a short memory Niall would actually be afraid.

“Lets go back now. I’m sure everyone at the house is wondering what happened to us.” Zayn says. “That is if you’re feeling better.”

“I am. Thank you Zayn.” Niall says gratefully. He wraps his arms around Zayn tightly and doesn’t mind when Zayn hugs him back. It actually feels pretty nice. Louis sighs loudly and Niall just rolls his eyes. He’s such a child when he isn’t getting any attention.

“What the bloody hell were you doing?” Liam roars as soon as Niall walks through the door. He runs over and pins the boy against the door with a glare.

“Working out some stress?” Niall says. His tone makes it sound like a question.

Liam pulls his hand back and then smashes it into Niall’s testicles. He still hasn’t forgotten the promise he made at that hotel in London, and this is the best possible time to fulfill it. Niall crumples to the ground while Louis and Zayn back away and cover their own groins.

“Traitors!” Niall squeaks at them. His eyes are watering, but Liam didn’t use much force. He’ll be fine in a little while. “Is this your payback for London then?”

“It’s payback for scaring my babies with a fucking volley of shotgun blasts you fucking lunatic!” Liam growls. He woke up so scared he’d have fallen out of the bed if he was within feet of the edge.

“Liam-” Niall says quietly.

“Niall you are safest if you don’t speak right now.” Liam glares.

“Liam-” Niall tries again.

“What part of keep fucking quiet don’t you get?” Liam asks. His anger is starting to fade now and he feels bad for hurting Niall.

“Liam, that’s the first time you’ve called them yours.” Harry says behind him.

“That’s what I was trying to say.” Niall groans.

“Well shit.” Liam sighs. He’s not sure about the exact second he started thinking of them as ‘his’ babies, instead of just ‘the’ babies. As soon as he woke up he rushed downstairs to make sure they were alright by instinct. Perrie and Eleanor were trying to calm them down, but until Liam held them they wouldn’t stop crying. Even through further blasts as long as he was holding them they didn’t wake or cry. That’s probably when he realized it.

“They are mine, aren’t they?” Liam asks.

“I think so, yes.” Harry smiles.
“Me too if that matters.” Niall moans from the floor.

“Shut up and go ice your balls Niall.” Liam says. Zayn and Louis pick the Irish lad up and start to help him walk to the kitchen when Liam says “Did you work out whatever you needed to work out?”

“I think so.” Niall says with a small smile.

“Good.” Liam says and then he walks back to the tv room where Perrie and Eleanor have his kids. “Alright ladies, time to fork one over.”

“Both of them actually.” Harry laughs. The girls whine in protest, but grudgingly hand over the twins. Liam holds his daughter in his arms and looks down at her with a huge grin.

“I need to give you a name baby girl.” He coos.

“Well actually I think they both need names.” Harry says with a giggle.

“I have one for him already.” Liam smiles. “He’s going to be Samuel Gregory. And I think I’ll call her Gemma Elizabeth.”

“Liam-” Harry says. His voice breaks before he can even finish two syllables, but he doesn’t need to say anything. Liam gives him a soft kiss on the cheek and smiles at the curly haired boy.

“I think the names fit well, don’t you?” Liam asks. Harry nods and beams. Liam carries his daughter to the kitchen and Harry follows behind. “Everyone, I’d like you to meet my children. This gorgeous little girl is Gemma Elizabeth, and that handsome little boy is Samuel Gregory.”

“Li, are you sure about this?” Niall asks. “Greg was an arse. I loved him, but he was. Bobby might be a better choice if you want to go there.”

“I made my choices Nialler. Now would you like to hold your daughter?” Liam asks happily.

“I’d love to.” Niall grins widely. “But Louis is patching up my hand so I have to wait until my blood’s all back in my body.”

“I swear I’m going to start charging you people for all the extra shite I do around here.” Louis groans.

“That’s fine. I’ve put a large deposit in your account that should cover it and El’s services.” Harry says softly. Sam has fallen asleep in his arms so he’s rocking back and forth.

“Harry you don’t have to-” El starts to say.

“You’re feeding our children Eleanor, which is something literally we can not do for them. I’d pay a wet nurse and I’m going to pay you. Well actually I’m paying Louis because he’s the one who’s account information I have.” Harry grins sheepishly. “I’ve also bought you a house in town with four bedrooms that’s ready at any time. Think of it as an early baby present. I got it before all this so I won’t hear any arguments on it.”

“You are a fucking mad man Harry.” Louis laughs.

“I want our family close, and that’s what you all are. Zayn controls my finances so I can’t sneak a house for him, but I can for you two. Once Escrow is up you’ll have to give me a euro for tax purposes, but it’s yours.” Harry says with a smile.
“Just let me know if you want to buy me a house Harry. I’ll gladly do all the paperwork.” Zayn laughs.

“Go ahead then. Don’t go too crazy though. I have kids to take care of now. Gotta have over a hundred mil still left in the bank for that.” Harry says.

“I have a place in mind that shouldn’t cost you too much.” Zayn grins wickedly. “You’ll still have more than you’ll ever need. I don’t invest in risky stock for you, so you shouldn’t ever lose too much should the market crash.”

“Complete jargon to me.” Harry shrugs.

“He’s fluent in it.” Niall rolls his eyes. “It’s how we ended up here, remember?”

“Best decision he ever made if you ask me.” Liam smiles.

Harry puts it off for as long as possible before he can’t anymore. He’s been dreading it since the day he got engaged, but now that the babies are here and the test has confirmed Liam’s paternity, he can’t put it off any longer. He presses the button and waits.

“Harry Edward Styles!” Anne screams through his mobile. He holds the device away from his face while his mother yells incoherently.

“Mum.” Harry tries. Anne keeps yelling until Harry shouts again and louder. “Mum! I need you to listen to me!”

“You had better be dying to pull that tone with me.” Anne says angrily.

“I need you to get on the first flight to Dublin.” Harry says flatly. “I have some things to tell you, but it’s better in person. Zayn will pick you up at the airport and bring you to my house.”

“Harry are you alright? Is everything okay?” Anne asks, her anger replaced by worry.

“We’re fine mum. Just please come as soon as possible. Send me your travel info once you book it. I love you.” Harry says. He probably should just tell her, but she’d just be cross at him for telling her such important information over the phone.

“I love you too Bug.” She says softly. Harry hangs up after that and sits for a moment before standing up to button his suit.

It’s jet black which is appropriate for where he’s wearing it. He meets up with Liam and Sam in the foyer and Niall joins with Gemma shortly after. Today is somber, and the sky is drizzling to match. They climb in Harry’s range rover and drive into the town. Once they reach the funeral parlor they sit for a moment in silence before heading inside. Niall carries Sam, and Harry carries Eliza, as they’ve taken to calling her. Well Harry has anyway. It’s too weird to call her Gemma when she was his older sister.

There aren’t many people there. Sophia didn’t have any family, having run away from home at sixteen. Liam didn’t know many of her friends, but the few he did know called others. There are just over twenty people in attendance including the boys and the twins. It’s a sad showing and Harry’s heart aches for the mother of his children. He never knew her, but neither will her babies and that’s a shame.
She has a non-denominational service because nobody knows if she was even religious, but it gives Harry a chance to carry Eliza up to see her mother for the first and final time. She falls silent, stopping her usual gurgling as soon as Harry rests a hand on Sophia’s. “I’m so sorry you had to leave this world so young.” He cries. “Thank you though. Thank you for this amazing gift you’ve given us. I promise they will know about you. They will.”

Niall stands beside him with Sam, but he doesn’t say anything. He closes his hand over Harry’s and stills him through his tears. Liam doesn’t approach the casket. Harry thinks it’s because he might yell. He doesn’t want to ruin her funeral, but he still hasn’t forgiven her for keeping this from him. A pastor approaches them and asks Harry “Is one of you two Mr. Liam Payne?”

“No, that’s Liam.” Niall points. The pastor smiles and nods before shuffling off towards Liam. He says something low and hands Liam a piece of paper. Liam nods and then waves the boys over to himself once the man walks away.

“This was found with her belongings.” Liam holds it up. “It says it’s for me. I- I can’t read it though. Can one of you?”

“I will Li.” Niall says softly. He hands Sam over and takes the letter carefully. He scans it first with his eyes before reading out loud. “Dear Liam, I’ve written and re-written this letter a thousand times. I honestly don’t know if this version is going to be the one I decide is right, or if there ever even will be one that you deserve. If you’re reading this then I did die in childbirth. I’ve had a bad feeling for the last few days, and I’m afraid that is what it means.

“As you know by now, I was pregnant. They’re yours. I haven’t been with anyone since you. You’ll probably want a test if I know you, but they are yours. I wanted to tell you for so long. I even tried once to find you. I asked Paul right after I first found out I was pregnant if he could help me find you. I didn’t tell him why though so please don’t be mad at him.

“He told me you were happy now. That you’d found someone that made you really happy. I personally hope it’s Niall. You two were so good together.” Niall has to stop for a moment to stifle a sob in his throat.

Once he does he continues. “I decided then that I wasn’t going to tell you. I didn’t want to ruin whatever happy life you’d found for yourself. I knew you would be an amazing father, and now you will be, but I couldn’t stand to just interject myself in your life like that. I know you’re probably angry at me, and this is a lot to ask, but if you can find it in your heart to forgive me one day I hope you do. Please take care of our babies and tell them every day that their mother loved them. Sophia.”

Tears are streaming down Harry’s face and he has to sit down carefully. He doesn’t dare sob for fear of waking Eliza up. Liam is crying silently too and Niall’s face is turned away. He carefully folds the letter back up and puts it in the envelope. He tucks it in his own pocket and asks “Are you going to be okay Liam?”

“Can you hold him? I need to go say goodbye to her.” Liam says softly. Niall takes Sam out of Liam’s arms and then the muscular man is gone. Harry and Niall sit in silence holding the twins so that their hands can touch. They’ve taken to putting them in the same crib when they sleep because they sleep better that way.

“How’d Anne take it?” Niall asks.

“I didn’t tell her yet.” Harry sighs. “She’s coming out on a plane tonight and Zayn is bringing her. A three-way engagement and surprise fatherhood aren’t a phone conversation.”
“I can see that. I owe Zayn twenty euros though. He bet that you’d chicken out.” Niall says with a smile.

“I surround myself with the rudest people.” Harry sighs. “At least these two are nice to me.”

Gemma Elizabeth chooses that precise moment to poop with a very loud fart. Niall has to clap a hand over his mouth to keep his laughter from echoing through the entire funeral home. Harry groans and stands up to go out to the car. “I forgot the diaper bag in the car. Come with me?” He asks.

Niall nods and follows him out. Liam apparently saw them leave and followed them. Harry hands off their daughter for a moment and folds back the front seat to give him some room. He’s become quite the master at this over the last few days and changes both twins in under four minutes. Niall takes Sam back greedily with a huge smile. “Look at that me boy, I didn’t even have to do a thing. Daddy Hazza cleaned you up for me even though it was my turn. He’s so sweet isn’t he?” He coos.

“That’s because you get bath time tonight and I took pity on your soul.” Harry smirks.

“Not according to the schedule I have in my phone I don’t.” Niall says. He holds up his calendar to Harry and shows that in fact the taller boy has bath duties tonight. Niall was scheduled for their lunch duty with Eleanor, but Louis wanted to do it with her instead Harry remembers.

“When did you even put this in there?” Harry asks. Harry had written down an outline for everyone, but Niall had apparently entered everything into his phone. How he’s found the time is beyond Harry’s understanding.

“Right after you wrote it up. Figured it’s good to know who is where at any given time.” Niall shrugs.

“I’ll make Niall-cake for dinner if you take bath time.” Harry offers. He loves his babies so much, but they absolutely hate bath time. He needs to find some new cloths that are softer in case it’s rough on their skin, but secretly he thinks they just hate not being held. With five people in the house every day, and Zayn and Perrie most days, they’re constantly being held unless it’s time to put them to bed. Once Anne gets here it’s going to get even worse. As if by divine knowledge of Harry’s thoughts his phone chimes.

He pulls it out and takes a look at the message his mother sent him. “Taking off from Ringway in half an hour. Be in Dublin at three and then straight there. X” He reads out. “Oh god, my mum is going to be here at four.”

“Do you need to go home?” Niall asks. “I think the funeral is slated to go until four thirty.”

“Would you two mind if I did? I can take them back with me.” Harry offers.

“You go. We’ll catch a cab back, but I’d like to keep Sam and Gems here.” Liam says quietly. “Sophia deserves to have her babies around for as long as possible before she’s buried.”

“Yeah alright.” Harry smiles. “You’ll need the diaper bag just in case, and I should leave the car seats.”

“Don’t bother. We can hold them through it. They need some comfort today.” Niall says. “I think they have a sense about it. They’re very quiet.”

“Don’t miss me too much.” Harry coos at Eliza. He turns to Sam and says “You either. I’ll miss you two.”
“I swear, he finally gets a baby and we get forgotten.” Niall giggles.

“I got two babies. You two can’t honestly expect to compete with this level of perfection.” Harry grins. Liam smiles and Niall rolls his eyes with a small grin. Harry hands the diaper bag off to Liam and kisses them all goodbye before hopping in the car. Just before he’s ready to go he rolls down the window. “Wait won’t you two need a car for the procession?”

“The cemetery is behind the home Harry.” Niall laughs.

“There’s a hearse that will take the coffin, but other than that we all walk. It’s more intimate here in Mullingar.” Liam says while rocking back and forth.

“Oh. Gotcha.” Harry says with a dopey smile. He rolls back up the window and pulls out of his spot. The drive home is too quiet and Harry feels like his heart is going to break leaving his babies for even a few hours. He’s scarcely left them for more than a half an hour unless he was napping. He misses his boys too, but it’s not the same. Even though he isn’t related to them, they’re his kids through and through.

When he gets home he sees that both Louis’ and Eleanor’s cars are parked, so at least he’ll have somebody to talk to until Zayn comes back with his mother. The darker boy is under strict instructions not to tell his mother anything, and threat of being banished should he disobey. Zayn is almost as in love with the twins as Louis and Eleanor are, so he’ll behave. Harry is sure that Perrie has been getting hounded about started a family recently.

He doesn’t see either Louis or Eleanor in the rooms branching off the foyer when he walks in, so he goes to the kitchen to make himself some tea. Instead he gets an eyeful of Eleanor moaning on the counter and Louis’ upper half hidden in her skirt. “What the bleeding hell!” Harry screams. Eleanor screams and starts beating at the form under her dress while Louis falls back on his arse.

“Hiya Harry. Thought you’d be gone longer than that.” Louis grins.

“You two have a bedroom! A very nice bedroom! With a bed!” Harry shouts.

“Yeah, but making her waddle up all those steps for a little cunny is just so cruel.” Louis laughs. Eleanor grabs the closest thing she can find, a plastic mixing bowl, and smacks Louis over the head with it.

“You’re the one who started this mister!” she groans. “And I do not waddle!”

“I wanted a good meal and you were the best looking thing in the kitchen.” Louis says with a laugh and a rub n his head. Harry rolls his eyes and gags a little. “And yeah love, you kinda do.”

“Harry I’m so sorry. I promise it won’t happen again.” Eleanor says desperately.

“I don’t care if you two want to fool around, just don’t do it in my kitchen.” Harry sighs. “This is my sanctuary and now it has cunnilingus imprinted on the counter.”

“If it makes you feel any better I’m pretty sure Zayn shagged Perrie in your pantry the other day.” Louis offers. “We were comparatively tame.”

“We have the worst friends.” Harry grumbles. “Go upstairs and finish what you were doing. I have to bleach the counter and my eyes.”

Louis giggles and takes a very embarrassed looking Eleanor by the wrist before running out the kitchen. Harry can hear their footsteps on the stairs and he relaxes. It’s taken his mind off his babies
for now, but before he can lay down his second coat of bleach the thoughts are back. He resolves not
to cry, even as a tear falls onto the spot he’s cleaning. He’s never been good at keeping those
promises to himself.

Around the time he finishes Louis and Eleanor creep back down the stairs and peer into the kitchen.
Harry sighs and waves them over while he starts cooking stew. There’s going to be eight people for
dinner tonight so he makes a lot. There’s also mashed potatoes and a salad to make, but for right now
the stew is all he need to do. Eleanor won’t stop blushing until Harry says “It’s all right you two. It
happens.”

“That’s what I said.” Louis huffs. “It’s not like it’s the first time we’ve been walked in on. Not even
here for that matter.”

“Wait what?” Harry asks.

“Yeah, the other night Niall came bursting into our room while we were proper shagging.” Louis
cackles. “He looked like a tomato and then told us the twins were hungry.”

“He didn’t tell me about that.” Harry laughs.

“Probably because it’s not a big deal. Lord knows I’ve seen enough of you three.” Louis shrugs. It’s
true honestly. He’s been around them in various states of undress more times than Harry can count,
including an incident not too far off of what happened with Liam on Harry’s first full day on the
farm. Harry really needs to start wearing a robe.

“Well I’m sorry he did that.” Harry sighs. “I think he’s just not used to knocking anymore since it
was just the three of us for so long.”

“Like you said, it happens. El just needs to laugh it off.” Louis grins.

“Excuse me if I’m not quite the exhibitionist you are.” Eleanor glares. “Not all of us wear tights to
work because they love their arse so much.”

“Yeah and those dresses you wear to show off your cleavage totally aren’t the same thing.” Louis
snarks. He rolls his eyes and ducks when Eleanor tries to hit him.

“Harry will you please explain the difference to him?” Eleanor pouts.

“The difference Louis, is that your wife does it tastefully. You’re just gay-baiting your employers to
get a better salary. Which hasn’t worked.” Harry laughs.

“I have a house now.” Louis smirks. “A house. My salary may be middling, but I’ve had more than a
few perks.”

“I bought the house because I want Eleanor and your babies around with our family. Because I think
of you all as family.” Harry rolls his eyes. “Not because you show off your bum.”

“Say what you want Harold, I know the reasons.” Louis winks. Eleanor takes the opportunity to
push him off his stool and laughs hysterically.

“The reason is because he’s a sweetie with a heart of solid gold you git.” She cackles.

Zayn’s car makes a very distinctive sound when it pulls up and Harry feels his stomach turn. “Shit,
okay you two, no mentioning the babies to my mother. I only want to tell her when they’re here so
she’s too distracted by how cute they are to attack me.” He says quickly.
“Righto.” Louis laughs. Eleanor nods and Harry rushes out of the kitchen.

He straightens up his hair in the hall mirror before rushing up to the door. He throws it open with a smile and a very angry looking Anne Twist is charging up the steps at him. “You little prat!” She roars. “You don’t call, you don’t write, and then you just expect me to jump on a plane at a moment’s notice!”

She walks forwards threateningly and Harry scrambles back until he trips backwards on the staircase. “I call!” Harry wails.

It doesn’t work as the shield he hoped it would and Anne smacks him in the back of the head. “Once a week! You called me more when you were on tours than you do now that you’re settled down like a normal human being.” She roars.

Harry hears Louis cackling from the door to the kitchen and Anne turns to look at him like a predator. “Who are those two? Are you dating a different couple now? Did you call me out here just to tell me you started dating a man and a woman?” She asks with her eyes wild.

“No mum. That’s Louis, Niall’s physical therapist and his wife Eleanor.” Harry says quickly. “I called you out here to tell you I’m engaged to Niall and Liam.”

“You’re what?” Anne smiles delightedly. “My baby is getting married?”

“Not as such, no.” Harry grins sheepishly. “It’s not actually like a legal thing, but we’re having a commitment ceremony in the spring.”

“I’ll take what I can get.” Anne shrugs. She pulls Harry up off the stairs and wraps him in a vicious hug while Zayn struggles up the stairs with her luggage. “Where are they?”

“Actually they’re at a funeral right now. I thought you’d be in later when we went, so I came back early when I got your text.” Harry says softly.

“Oh those poor boys. Is it someone you knew?” Anne asks.

“I didn’t know her, no. She did mean a lot though.” Harry tells her. “I’ll explain later, I have to get back in the kitchen for the stew.”

“Well obviously I’m coming with you Bug. I have to show you the pictures of our Hawaiian cruise.” Anne beams. She lets go of Harry and grabs her bag from Zayn with a peck on his cheek. “Thank you love, for grabbing this for me.”

“No problem Mrs. Twist.” Zayn smiles.

“Honestly if you don’t start calling me Anne we’re going to have a problem Zayn.” she sighs. “The whole way up here with this one!”

Zayn blushes and Harry is just grateful his mother’s eye is focused on somebody else for once. According to his watch the funeral will be over soon and then he’ll get to see his babies again. Just a little longer.

He leads her into the kitchen where she takes a good look at his new place. “You didn’t tell me it was going to be so big Bug!” She squeals.

“Well, I wanted it to be everything my boys deserve.” Harry smiles. “I still don’t think it’s enough, but Niall didn’t want anything over eight thousand square feet. I came up just under that with the
garage and the home theatre downstairs.”

“And does it have room for your mother to stay?” Anne asks, feigning innocence with the question.

“Oh the more the merrier!” Louis laughs. “We’re staying in one of the guest rooms at the moment, and the one between us is occupied. Harry has three other lovely rooms you can pick from though.”

Harry shoots a glare at Louis who looks anywhere but at him. “There’s also the guest house if you want your privacy.” Harry says quickly.

“Oh look at my posh boy with a mansion and a guest house.” Anne smiles wickedly. “I’ll take one of the rooms here. That will suit me just fine.”

“It’s not a mansion.” Harry mumbles.

“It so is Harry.” Zayn laughs.

“Everyone is so hateful.” Harry groans. “Zayn go get the rest of my mum’s luggage from the car. Eleanor, if you could watch my mother’s slide show and give me the highlights I’d be so grateful. Louis, zip it or I’ll put you on laundry duty.”

“So commanding.” Anne scolds. “Be nice to your friends Bug.”

“I am nice to my friends. El is my only friend right now.” Harry says flatly. Eleanor smiles sweetly and pecks him on the cheek while Zayn pretends that and arrow struck him in the heart. Louis rushes to his side and lowers him to the floor. He mimes pulling the arrow out and trying to stop the bleeding while Zayn looks around panicked.

“Tell Harry- Tell him—” Zayn groans in fake agony. “That he’s a prat.”

He falls dead in Louis’ arms and the cinnamon haired boy wails and reaches up to the sky. “Why, oh Lord, Why? He was so young!” He cries. “Why must Harry be a prat?”

“Do you see what I have to put up with?” Harry shoots a look at Anne.

Anne just giggles at the display and smiles at Harry. “I think they deserve an Oscar for that. The dialogue was spot on.” She laughs.

Harry rolls his eyes and Louis and Zayn stand and bow with their hands linked. Anne and Eleanor clap wildly much to Harry’s chagrin. “Zayn, where is Pez?” He asks. He hadn’t noticed with all the commotion, but she isn’t here.

“She’s at home puking her guts out.” Zayn says with a shrug. “She thinks it’s food poisoning, but I’m hoping it’s something else.”

“You should go back to her. I have some leftover chicken soup in the middle fridge that should help.” Harry smiles.

“Thanks Harry.” Zayn pecks him on the cheek. “Your mother doesn’t have any other bags so I’m going to leave now. Tell Niall I said hi, yeah?”

“Tell Pez I love her and I hope you’re right.” Harry grins.

“She’ll hate that.” Zayn laughs and then he’s gone with a container of soup. Harry hears the door open and Zayn coos loudly. Harry’s heart jumps in his chest because only two people in the world get that response from Zayn.
“Hey mum?” Harry asks.

“Yes Bug?” Anne asks from the table. Her laptop is out and she’s excitedly showing Eleanor pictures of her holiday.

“I’d like you to meet two people who are very important to me.” Harry beams. Liam and Niall are walking down the hall with two very wiggly babies and big grins on their faces.

“Oh god, please tell me you didn’t add more people to your relationship.” Anne groans.

“Just two.” Harry laughs. “I’d like you to meet Samuel Gregory and Gemma Elizabeth. Our children, and your grandchildren.”

Liam and Niall walk through the threshold carrying the twins and Anne jumps up so fast her chair falls over. She has tears streaming down her face, and her hands are clutching her chest like she’s afraid her heart will fall out. “My grandchildren?” She sobs.

“Would you like to hold her?” Liam asks. Anne nods and holds her arms out while she practically glides across the kitchen.

“Her name is Gemma?” Anne asks softly once she holds her in her arms.

“Yes. And Samuel Gregory is named after Niall’s late brother.” Harry smiles. “He got it as a middle name though.”


“About a week ago.” Liam explains.

“It’s a bit of a sad story though, so let’s wait until you’ve had time to love on them before we tell it.” Niall says softly.

“Alright.” Anne smiles. She doesn’t remove her eyes from her granddaughter throughout the entire exchange.

“I thought you’d rather meet them than just hear about them over the phone.” Harry explains.

“You were right.” Anne laughs. “This is so like you though. Not telling me for a week that you were a father. Honestly Harry I could give you such a smack.”

“Things get hectic with twins.” Liam smiles. “Even with five adults constantly taking care of them.”

“Six now.” Anne beams. “You can’t expect me to go back home tomorrow.”

“I figured you wouldn’t. I’ll have Robin send more of your things.” Harry says with a smile. His family is complete now, the six of them all pressed in one circle. Louis and Eleanor are sitting at the table and when Harry sneaks a peak, Louis is pressing his hand to her stomach and smiling. Everything is perfect.

“Hey Irish.” Zayn says, sneaking up behind Niall. They both have some time away from the babies for now, and Zayn just wants to sit around with the other man.

“You do realize that nickname loses it’s effect in this country?” Niall asks with a small smile.
“Yeah, but our little Band of Brothers and Some Sisters are literally all British except for you.” Zayn says with a shrug.

“BOBASS!” Niall cackles.

“Bob-ass?” Zayn questions.

“That’s the acronym.” Niall explains.

“Oh!” Zayn says, smiling as he gets the joke. Only Niall could come up with something like that, and only he could make Zayn grin like a fool over something so ridiculous.

“BOBASS.” Niall nods. “I kind of love it. Much better than Zouanelrie.”

“Well it would be too long if we had too add Liam, Harry, and Niall into it.” Zayn says. “Zianouerrihell. Way too much of a mouthful.”

“How did you even come up with that so fast?” Niall asks.

“I was an agent.” Zayn shrugs. “Publicity was my job, and mashing names together came with that.”

“Why did you go into that?” Niall asks. “You should have been an artist, or like a bloody supermodel or something.”

“I actually did model at one point.” Zayn admits. “Helped pay my way through college. Nothing big, but I did it. It’s not that fun of a job.”

“So why not art?” Niall asks again.

“Didn’t think I could make it honestly.” Zayn says. “P.R. is a good steady job to fall back on. I knew I’d be secure if I took it, and that’s what my mother wanted for me. I wasn’t doing too well though after I got out of uni. I had signed a few people: a children’s band, a couple of struggling artists, nobody that would ever really make it.

“Then I met Harry. It was a total chance thing at a bar. I knew who he was of course and I took a shot. I told him what I’d do if I was his agent, how I’d negotiate his contracts. How I’d push out into other forms of merchandising like a perfume. I explained everything, embarrassing the hell out of myself because I was way too drunk.

“He liked me though. Said his last agent was a real prat, he took bloody twenty percent of Harry’s earnings. He signed up with me that night and I had the guy crucified in the papers within days for taking advantage of a poor helpless boy with no idea how to run his business.” Zayn explains with a fond smile.

“Haz is anything but helpless.” Niall scoffs. “He always seems to find exactly what he needs.”

“I’ve noticed.” Zayn says, taking a long look at the Irish boy sitting next to him. Zayn wasn’t lying when he said that Niall was exactly his type. It’s more than just looks though. Niall is carefree and easy to talk to. He’s forgiving and compassionate, and he can make Zayn laugh like nobody else. He shakes his head to clear the thoughts away and tries to play it off as being tired. “So how have you been since we had our talk?”

“Surprisingly good.” Niall says shyly. “Thank you for that. It’s nice being around someone who doesn’t judge me.”
“Any time.” Zayn smiles.

“You really mean that, don’t you?” Niall asks curiously. “Most people jus say that sorta thing, but you actually would just sit there and listen to whatever I have to say without thinking I’ve gone mad.”

“Course I would.” Zayn says. He really would too. Niall is fifty shades of fascinating to him.

“S so weird.” Niall laughs.

“Why?” Zayn asks, trying not to feel offended.

“Well I mean, I got Louis, ya know? And he’s great, but I can always see the wheels turning in his head on how much he fucked up by making us friends. I don’t hold most anything back, so he’s probly heard more’n his fair share o’ tings, like Liam’s Daddy ting, or what happened when I shaved me legs an everyting else, or how much better tings got when I started sneaking pineapple juice into Haz and Li’s morning smoothies.” Niall says with a small grin.

“Well you can always tell me instead.” Zayn offers, trying desperately not to think of Niall shaved everywhere. It’s really not working at all.

“Dirty dog, Zee.” Niall says with a knowing grin. “You jus wanna know what Li is like in bed.”

“I can promise you, I’m not interested in Liam anymore.” Zayn says. It’s very much true, as is becoming increasingly apparent to him over the last several weeks.

“Well Haz den.” Niall says with an eye roll. “I can tell Louis cause he’s not gonna sneak a wank to one or both of me boyfriends. Me point was that if I did tell you, I don’t tink you’d judge me fer it.”

“Why would I?” Zayn asks. “It’s not like we haven’t all got shit like that. Feels good to talk about it sometimes.”

“Like Pez pegging you?” Niall smirks.

“There’s that, yeah.” Zayn says with a nod. “Other stuff too though. Like when I told you about James.”

“Who is James?” Niall asks.

“Oh, that’s right. Never told you his name, did I?” Zayn says softly. “That’s my son’s name.”

“Oh.” Niall says. “Yeah. Sorry, that must have seemed really rude.”

“Not at all. I just told you he existed, not his name.” Zayn says with a shrug. “It’s nice to have someone know about it other than Perrie. It’s not like a secret or anything, just haven’t told many people.”

“Do you know if you’ll be able to see him again?” Niall asks timidly.

“I um- I hope I never have to.” Zayn admits softly. “The only reason I got to see him two years ago is because he needed a bone marrow transplant. They tracked me down because his biological mother wasn’t a match and they couldn’t find any other donors.”

“Leukemia?” Niall asks.

“Yeah. From what they told me, he pulled through it like a champ. I just got a few minutes with him
before the procedure, his parents’ way of thanking me, but I hope he never has to go through that again. No kid should have to live like that.” Zayn tells the Irish boy.

“I’m sorry about that.” Niall says. “It’s not the same at all, but me mum had cancer. I know how rough it can be to see somebody go through something like that.”

Zayn reaches a hand over to Niall’s and squeezes, not missing the spark he feels at the touch of their skin. And maybe he leaves it there, and maybe Niall doesn’t take his away. Maybe that should tell him he’s getting in too deep, but maybe he just won’t listen to that.

Nothing is perfect and happiness is a lie. Sam has colic and Niall is panicking. Everyone is out right now except Niall who hasn’t slept through the night in three days. Gemma is being a perfect angel, sleeping soundly in the sitting room in her bassinet, while Sam wails angrily in Niall’s arms. They just turned one month old yesterday and Niall has never had a longer month in his entire life.

Niall carries his son around, rocking him and trying to shush him. Eleanor has been pumping so they can add probiotics to the milk which helps, but he’s not hungry right now. Niall doesn’t know what to do so he calls Anne.

“Niall love, is everything all right?” Anne answers.

“Sam woke up and now he won’t stop crying.” Niall says. He’s trying desperately not to let his panic seep into his voice, but it isn’t working. “Louis says it’s colic. Do you know how to calm him down?”

“Fill a hot water bottle with warm water and then lay it on your stomach and him on top of it. You can also hold him on his back and lay it over him.” Anne tells him quickly. “Make sure it isn’t too warm though or it could burn him, and wrap it in a blanket.”

“Oh god, why did you have to leave?” Niall whines. “I miss you so feckin much.”

“I miss you too Nialler. And my grand-babies.” Anne laughs. “I have a job though, and three weeks was all of my leftover vacation time. I’ll talk to you later love. Give everyone kisses for me.”

“I will. Love you too mum.” Niall says and hangs up his mobile. He’s quickly taken to thinking of Anne as a second mother. He’s missed his own so much for so long, and she’s been so amazing. It’s impossible not to love Anne.

Three nights after she got here Niall couldn’t sleep. He wandered into the kitchen looking for a midnight snack hoping to that a full belly might put him back to sleep. Anne was already in there and she quickly sat Niall down with a cup of tea.

“What’s wrong love?” Anne cooed. She ran her fingers through Niall’s hair and sat next to him.

“Honestly?” Niall asked. “I had a nightmare.”

“Tell me all about it love.” Anne smiled. She had brought a box of biscuits and slid it across to him. Niall grabbed a biscuit and sighed.

“I couldn’t find them. I heard Sam and Gems crying and I tore through the entire house, but I couldn’t find them. Harry and Liam were gone too. Nobody could help me and I lost them.” Niall
said. His voice was close to breaking and tears were stinging his eyes.

“You’re officially a parent now.” Anne said with a smile. “Every parent has that dream at some point or another. I even had it before my Gemma was born. With Harry it was at a market. It makes a lot of sense coming from you especially though.”

“Why do you say that?” Niall had asked.

“Because of your family love.” Anne said quietly. “You’ve lost so much, and now you have four more people you’re afraid to lose. It’s natural for your dreams to show you that kind of thing.”

“So how do I get it to stop?” Niall asked. He didn’t think he could take another nightmare like that.

“For me, I just went and held my babies. I held them until I fell asleep and then I woke up with them in my arms.” Anne grinned. “Waking up and knowing that they were safe, seeing them safe, it helped.”

“Thanks Mrs. Twist.” Niall had mirrored her grin.

“Anne, please.” She had groaned.

“I can’t.” Niall sighed. “’s too weird.”

“How about mum then?” Anne asked. “If you’re marrying my baby, you can call me mum.”

“I think I can work with that.” Niall smiled. He drained his cup of tea and then went upstairs with Anne. They held his children through the rest of the night, and Niall had never woken up happier than when Sam wet his diaper.

Now though, Anne had left and Niall is on the verge of a breakdown seeing his son so upset. He quickly fills a hot water bottle with water that he felt was mildly warm and wrapped it in one of the spare blankets that litter the house. He lays down on the couch, carefully rolling Sam and the warm squishy bottle on top of his stomach. The effect is almost instantaneous. Sam stops crying and cuddles into the warmth pressed to his stomach. Niall holds him with both hands and watches as Sam’s tear filled eyes slowly close.

He makes a funny little snoring sound when he sleeps because Harry didn’t have the time or patience to use the little turkey-baster-like-device that removes bogeys this morning. Niall would do it himself, but he has a secret fear he’ll accidentally suck their brains out. He’d had to rush out with Liam because of some charity auction he had been signed up to host the previous year. Zayn only reminded him two days before and never had Niall been so tempted to shoot a human being. Liam had wanted to stay behind with the babies, but Niall had insisted that he be the one go with Harry. He looks better in a suit and was less likely to curse loudly when somebody spent too much on something stupid. Even though Liam has issues with money being treated so casually, he’s more polite than Niall is. Liam is the boyfriend that Harry can take in public that won’t embarrass him. That doesn’t bother Niall as much as it probably should.

Louis and Eleanor have left to check out their new house and Niall has never regretted being a good person more than now. Louis had put on a pout and begged for just a couple hours to see his new abode. They’ve been gone for five and Niall is pretty sure that they’re shagging in every room, because why else would they need five hours to look at a damn house?
That thought just makes Niall groan, not because Louis is getting some ass at his expense, but because he hasn’t had sex once since the babies came along. He’s barely even seen the other two naked except for showers. They’ve all been too tired or focused on the twins to even consider it. That doesn’t stop the desire though. Even Louis is starting to look good to Niall, which considering how many times he’s walked in on them doing it around the house is really not good.

really though, they need to keep it in the bedroom. Louis says it’s the hormones making Eleanor incredibly horny, but as long as she’s feeding his babies Niall can’t be mad at her. He can’t be mad at Louis either though, because unfortunately the tan and often naked boy with the really great arse is still his best friend. Niall’s decision making skills obviously need a tune-up.

Someone opens the front door, but Niall can’t see who they are without moving Sam and risking waking him up. Zayn struts in and smiles at him. “Damnú” Niall mumbles.

“Good to see you too Irish.” Zayn smirks.

“I thought you’d be Tommo and El.” Niall sighs.

“They’re probably shagging somewhere.” Zayn shrugs. “I thought you might need a hand with Harry and Liam being gone, and I needed to get away from Pez.”

“What’s wrong?” Niall asks.

“After that possible pregnancy turned out to be food poisoning after all, she decided she doesn’t want any kids.” Zayn sighs. He carefully pulls Gemma out of her bassinet without waking her and sits in the chair by Niall’s head.

“I’m sorry Zee.” Niall offers a smile.

“Don’t be. Just feed my baby addiction.” Zayn coos over Gemma.

“Totally willing to be your enabler.” Niall giggles. He tries not to focus on how good Zayn looks in his leather jacket and holding his daughter. It doesn’t go well according to the sudden surge in his regrettably loose shorts.

“Should I even ask?” Zayn asks with a smirk.

“I have no idea what you mean.” Niall lies badly, betrayed by the blush now heating his face.

“Sure you don’t.” Zayn laughs. Gemma squirms in his arms and he refocuses on her, rubbing her stomach until she settles back down.

“It’s not because of you.” Niall admits eventually. “I just haven’t had anything resembling a shag in a month.”

“When Louis gets back we’ll take the babies, so you can go sneak in a wank. You have my deepest sympathies because I’m right there with you.” Zayn says quietly.

“Why haven’t you been having sex?” Niall asks curiously.

“Because it gets in the way of our constant fighting of course.” Zayn says. “I don’t think we’re going to make it honestly.”

“I don’t even know what to say to that.” Niall admits. “I’m sorry.”

“You could invite me into your weird relationship.” Zayn offers.
“Three is good thank you.” Niall rolls his eyes.

“Then just let me hold your baby and tell me I’m pretty.” Zayn laughs.

“You’re the prettiest Zee.” Niall says with a grin.

Zayn beams and then refocuses on Gemma. Niall cuddles with Sam and they all sit in silence until Louis and Eleanor get home an hour later. “What’s Malik doing here?” Louis hisses when he comes and finds Niall and a sleeping Zayn.

“Challenging your place as my best friend.” Niall glares.


Sam starts to stir on the water bottle and Niall rubs his back to settle him back down. Zayn glares at Louis and holds a now crying Gemma to his chest. “That pretty asshole showed up when I needed him where you spent six hours banging your wife in a house with no furniture.” Niall says flatly.

“He’s also giving Niall the rest of the night off.” Zayn adds in. “So take Sam and settle in because Niall needs some alone time.”

“Just for the record I’m only doing this because I love Niall the mostest.” Louis says childishly. He lifts Sam off of Niall’s chest and cradles him. Sam wakes up almost immediately and begins to cry with his sister.

Niall smirks and says. “Try a bottle with probiotics. If that doesn’t work then fill this up so it’s barely warm and hold it to his stomach. Have fun.”

He skips off before Louis can whine and gives Eleanor a peck on the cheek in the foyer before running upstairs. He shuts the door to his private bedroom behind himself and strips down to nothing before being carried off on a wave of fantasy.

There’s a knock on the door and Niall covers up before answering. Zayn stands there with a cocky smile and brushes past him to the bed. Niall closes the door and turns on the darker boy. “What about the babies?”

“This is a wank fantasy Niall.” Zayn smiles dangerously. “Forget about the babies.”

“Oh. Right.” Niall grins. He drops the towel he was using to cover up and approaches Zayn on the mattress. They’re on each other in seconds, Zayn’s bright pink lips working under Niall’s own. Their tongues battle each other while Zayn’s hands drift over Niall’s chest. He can already feel himself hardening from just the feather-light touches on his collar bones.

Zayn moans into his mouth and Niall rocks his hips forward over Zayn’s jeans. They look like they’re painted on and when Niall glances down he can very clearly make out Zayn’s cock. “I think it’s time those disappear.” Niall moans.

Zayn’s clothes instantly disappear and Niall looks him over, proud of the work his imagination has done. Zayn cocks an eyebrow at him and Niall says “Let’s keep the jacket though. Looks right hot.”

The tight black leather coats Zayn’s arms and hangs open over his chest and Niall is satisfied to continue. He kisses his way down Zayn’s chest, marveling at the ink that spreads across it. Harry’s tattoos are mostly random, cute but ridiculous things gotten in the heat of the moment, but all of
Zayn’s seem to have a purpose. He saw them once when Sam spit up on the darker boy’s shirt and he stripped it off. It’s a pretty good recreation, but something is missing and Niall can’t figure it out until Zayn points between the angel wings on his chest and Niall plants a kiss there. It leaves a bright red mark and then Niall remembers it.

The mark sinks into Fantasy Zayn’s skin and glows up at him, the sole spot of color on the tan boy’s chest. Niall rubs his hands over the skin, taking pleasure in the way his copy of Zayn moans. His fingers trail down Zayn’s abs, feeling the bumps under the taught lean skin. He’s used the way Harry’s feel under his hands and modified it a little since he’s never actually felt Zayn’s chest or stomach.

“What do you want me to do for you?” Zayn asks. Niall struggles, because it is his fantasy, but even here he’s such a bottom. How can it be hard to tell a mental construct you want to top?

“I want you to fuck me, but I also want to be the top.” Niall admits. Really his mind works in the weirdest ways.

“Did someone order a bottom?” Louis pops up and asks. He’s dressed in nothing but a jockstrap Niall has stashed away and it looks fantastic. Niall rolls with it and nods. In for a penny, in for a pound he thinks.

Louis skips over to the bed and Niall lays back. The best thing about wank fantasies is that you don’t have to worry about pleasing your partner, or in Niall’s case this time, partners. All foreplay is for his pleasure. If he doesn’t want it they can slip right into something more. If he doesn’t want it to end he can imagine it not ending. It’s delightful.

Zayn and Louis lap at him greedily, taking turns mouthing up and down his cock. Their mouths meet on the head and they start kissing each other. It’s insanely attractive. Louis is flipped under Zayn and they rut against each other desperately and curse in Irish they don’t actually know, just because Niall thinks it’s hot.

Niall points to his cock and the other boys break away and refocus on pleasuring him, which they do excellently. Zayn swallow down on his prick, while Louis licks and kisses at his balls. He’s getting close, so he decides it’s time to kick things up a notch.

Louis hops off the bed and prostrates himself over the side of the bed. Niall follows and sets himself up behind him, while Zayn is positioned at his backside. He imagines himself slick and wet, the product of the lube he’s using in the real world, and slides into the perfect tightness. Louis’ arse looks amazing wrapped around him and framed in the tight little jockstrap.

Zayn lines himself up with Niall and slides in just as easily. No prep is also a nice side effect of these little fantasies. Niall snaps his hips forward and then back, setting a pace that’s perfect for him. Louis moans underneath him, loud and unabashed while Zayn bites down hungrily on his exposed neck. Niall’s hips drive into Louis, and then he rams himself back onto Zayn. He loses himself in the sensation, Louis warm and tight, Zayn throbbing inside him, his neck just this side of painful.

He imagines the coolness of the leather pressed against his back, and the way Zayn’s long fingers feel digging greedily into his hips. He imagines Louis clenching around him almost too tight and the smack of his hips against the cinnamon haired boy’s cheeks. He imagines the way he tugs on Louis shoulders, even as Zayn tries to steal focus by biting on the other side of his neck.

His orgasm sneaks up on him, bursting forward almost before he knows it’s there. Louis and Zayn disappear as Niall falls into warm light. His body feels light as air for just a moment, and then reality comes barreling back in as always.
His eyes snap open and he’s alone again. Harry and Liam are four hundred miles away and Niall has nothing but disgust curling in his stomach now. He should have imagined his boys. He shouldn’t be doing this at all. He should be downstairs with his babies and ignoring the fact that his sex life has fallen by the wayside. It’s not important enough to do what he just did, to fantasize about other men.

He pulls his fingers out of his arse and hops out of the bed, hoping a shower will wash away the guilt he feels. It doesn’t, he still feels dirty after he steps out, but at least his muscles have let out some tension. Both he and Louis have slacked on his workouts since the twins arrived and it is most definitely taking it’s toll on Niall’s entire body.

His knee is only at about ninety percent of what it was before the fall, but it’s possible that’s all he’ll ever get to. He’s starting to seriously consider the possibility he will never have full strength in his leg again, which at barely twenty six is a terrifying prospect. He shrugs into a pair of joggers and a jumper. He doesn’t wear anything that belongs to Liam or Harry, doesn’t want to dirty them with his mental infidelity.

He pads down the stairs and finds Zayn sitting alone in the sitting room. “Where are my kids?” Niall asks with a sigh.

“El and Tomlinson took them to the nursery to feed and go down for another nap.” Zayn explains. “How did you get on? Or off as the case may be?”

Niall blushes deeply down to his toes. “I- um-” he stammers, unable to meet Zayn’s eyes.

“Oh. Oh!” Zayn laughs. “So how was I?”

“What makes you think I thought about you?” Niall scoffs. It’s an absolutely terrible attempt at lying.

“You’d normally just laugh and say good.” Zayn smirks. “Instead you turned into a beet and that means it was either about me or Tomlinson.”

Niall turns even darker red and drops his eyes to the carpet. He absolutely hates how easy he is to read. “You dog!” Zayn laughs. “Both of us? I know you’re used to threesomes, but damn.”

“Shut up Zayn!” Niall growls. “If he hears that he’s going to freak out.”

Zayn smiles and pats the seat next to him on the couch. Niall hates himself for it, but he sits down and curls into Zayn for comfort. “He wouldn’t freak out Niall, and neither would I. We all have fantasies. I’d be lying if I said I hadn’t thought of all four of you blokes at some point or another. Even that awful little Tomlinson. It’s not wrong, it just is.”

“Says the arse hole who tried to ride my boyfriend on the porch.” Niall groans.

“I admit I may not be the best person to take advice from on this subject.” Zayn giggles. “But I’m asking you to trust me on this. Don’t feel guilty or ashamed just because you thought about someone other than your boys when you wanked.”

“I just feel like I cheated on them.” Niall admits softly.

“Niall, if I offered to ride you right now, would you take it?” Zayn asks. “Or have you ride me. Whichever.”

“Of course not.” Niall hisses. He pulls back and slaps Zayn on the arm.
“Exactly. You’re all stupidly in love.” Zayn says with a smile. “You wouldn’t cheat on them, and a little fantasy isn’t going to change that. Don’t let guilt eat you up over something like that. It isn’t worth it, and Harry would tell you the same thing. Liam too probably.”

“You really think so?” Niall asks, falling back against Zayn.

“I do.” Zayn tells him. “You never answered my question though. How was I?”

“Not as good as Liam or Haz, but pretty spectacular.” Niall admits with a blush. “What about me?”

“Fantastic actually.” Zayn laughs. “Harry tells me you really know how to ride a cock.”

“This is such a weird conversation.” Niall groans.

“Just one more question then.” Zayn says. Niall nods against his shoulder and he asks “Was I at least better than Louis?”

“That’s difficult to answer. You both played different roles.” Niall shrugs. “But you were the first person I thought of. Louis only showed up because I couldn’t decide whether to top or bottom.”

“I’ll take that as a positive then.” Zayn grins.

“Now never mention this conversation again or I’ll castrate you and see how close I was when I imagined it.” Niall deadpans.

“I’d show you if you asked.” Zayn grins.

“Of course you would.” Niall rolls my eyes. “Excuse me while I go take a second shower to wash off the dirty feelings.”

“Don’t leave Niall, please.” Zayn begs quietly.

“Missing your girl?” Niall asks.

“Not really. That’s why I want you to stay. I feel—” Zayn tries to come up with a word but it doesn’t come out.

“I think I know what you mean. You’re upset that you aren’t upset.” Niall says to him.

“Exactly.” Zayn sighs. “I love Pez. I do. I just don’t think we want the same things anymore.”

“Like a family.” Niall says.

“It’s more than that though. She spends half her time in clubs with or without me. She wants to move back to London too. Two months here and she’s done with it.” Zayn explains.

“I thought you loved London though. Harry always made it seem like you belonged there.” Niall says. Honestly he’s never understood why they moved to Dublin in the first place. He likes having them around, but it still never quite seemed right.

“I’m done with that phase of my life. I know I’m only twenty six, but I don’t want to be that guy anymore. I’ve changed in the last two months, but she hasn’t. She’s the same party-girl I met when I was twenty one.” Zayn sighs. His voice is tinged with something Niall can’t quite place. “Did you know we’ve been engaged for over three years?”

“No, I didn’t actually.” Niall says.
“She won’t even plan the wedding. She likes having the ring on her finger, but she isn’t ready for the commitment it symbolizes.” Zayn frowns. “I’ve come close, but I’ve never actually cheated on her. She has though.”

“Pez? Really?” Niall asks. He’d have never seen it coming.

“At least three different blokes and one of her friends named Jade.” Zayn say quietly. “You’ve seen how she is when she drinks, which is most nights actually. She’d have probably tried with you by now if I wasn’t always around. She thinks you’re hot.”

“What?” Niall gasps.

“She wanted to invite you to join us at one point. I have to admit that it was tempting, but I knew you wouldn’t go for it.” Zayn laughs, but it’s off.

“I have a feeling that’s not all there is to the story.” Niall says.

“It hurt alright?” Zayn asks with a bite. “It hurts every time, and it hurt when she asked about you.”

“But you make all those jokes about joining our relationship.” Niall says. He pulled away when Zayn snapped, so now he can see the look in Zayn’s eyes.

“Because you all love each other so much. I want to feel that.” Zayn says. There’s a choking sound to it. “I want to love someone and be loved the way you all do with each other. I want to be the one someone is so in love with that if someone offered to sleep with them they pull back, not the one they forget about when it happens.”

“Zayn-” Niall says softly.

“I’m not asking to join you guys. I’m not.” Zayn wipes a tear from the corner of his eye. “I just wish I could have what you have.”

“You can Zee.” Niall says. He puts his hand on Zayn’s shoulder and the darker boy holds onto it like a lifeline. “You’ll find someone.”

Zayn curls into his chest and Niall holds him tightly. He feels a sudden flood of affection for him. He knows more about Zayn than even Harry does in a way. He knows about his son, he knows about his crumbling relationship, and he knows how much Zayn just wants to be loved. The boy in his arms feels like family suddenly, and Niall just wants to help him.

Liam is very happy at the auction. There’s champagne flowing from a fountain of glasses in the lobby, and Liam is on his fourth glass. Harry has given him a cap of five hundred thousand pounds for anything he wants at the auction, but Liam doesn’t think he wants any of the things that have been shown. He’s sitting two chairs down from Ian McKellan and he’s already met David Beckham. Nothing he could buy would be worth more than that, but the proceeds go to help the homeless so Harry told him to bid on something.

He ends up bidding on a few random things, none of them very competitively. He only wins two things, a large painting of the Cliffs of Moher for Niall, and a first edition Charles Dickens that Harry had looked very excited about when it was brought out. They’re the only things he really wanted so he’s happy enough about it. He really would have liked the one on one footy lessons with Beckham though. Stupid Ian McKellan.
“How ridiculous are you?” Harry laughs when he finds Liam after the auction.

“What is that supposed to mean?” Liam asks. He has yet another flute of champagne in his hand, and he’s well on his way to being drunk. A slight hiccup tells him he might actually already be there.

“The Dickens was my donation to the auction. If I still gave a damn about what these people think of me I’d have been mortified.” Harry smiles.

“What?” Liam questions stupidly. He had no idea that Harry had donated anything, let alone that Liam was bidding on it. That would explain the funny looks though. “I embarrassed you?”

“No Babes.” Harry presses a kiss to his cheek. “You didn’t know any better, and you obviously got it for your library. I just can’t believe you bid on that pompous ass’ lot. This isn’t a silent auction, you don’t put yourself up as a prize.”

“Beckham?” Liam asks with a giggle.

“Yes. I mean who does that?” Harry laughs. “Probably Victoria didn’t want to part with any of her possessions. So materialistic that one.”

“That kind of talk would start a feud if you were still worth anything in the world of the rich and famous.” A voice sneers behind them. They turn around find a tall lanky man with an incredibly tall hairdo.

“Nick Grimshaw, I didn’t realize you were even worth enough to walk through the doors here.” Harry retorts. “Then again they said no press, so I guess you wouldn’t count seeing as a twitter dedicated to one of my tattoos has more fans than you do.”

“I’m just here to report back to the world how you posh types throw money around like it’s mud.” Nick laughs.

“I don’t seem to recall you having a problem with that when your career was still something worth note.” Harry grins wickedly. Liam has never seen him be this nasty before, and it’s honestly a little unnerving.

“I’ve missed you too.” Nick giggles. Harry leaves his side to wrap his arms around Nick in a stiff hug and Liam feels a slight confusion.

“This the bloke you replaced me with Styles? I’d be wounded, but he’s fuckin gorgeous.” Nick smiles.

“Can’t tell you that Grimmy.” Harry says flatly. “I don’t want people even knowing I’ve surfaced, but I can’t avoid that now that you’ve reared your head. Not letting you tell the whole world what I’ve been up to. Or at least the six people that still listen to your show.”

“Fine, you caught me.” Nick pouts. “Well it’s been lovely seeing you, but I have real celebrities to go annoy.”

The tall man goes running off without another word, leaving Liam with a growing dislike for him. “Sorry about that Babes.” Harry smiles.
“What did he mean replaced him with?” Liam asks carefully.

“I briefly dated that arse believe it or not.” Harry says with a tone.

“Like, I know this is rude, but I don’t care. Why on earth would you do that?” Liam asks.

“A lot of alcohol and being an attention whore played a part.” Harry says with a grin. Liam can’t be sure, but something about it seems off.

“Why am I not surprised?” Liam groans.

“Liam, I’ve changed.” Harry says softly. “I’m not that little boy anymore with the big eyes and bigger mouth who didn’t know what he wanted.”

“I know Haz.” Liam bumps his shoulder.

“Ready to go up to our room?” Harry changes the subject quickly.

“I’m ready for a full night’s sleep for the first time in a month.” Liam sighs contentedly.

“Right?” Harry laughs. “I miss the twins so much my heart is physically aching, but I just want to sleep right now.”

“Oh thank god, you said it.” Liam smiles. “I want to have a quick Skype session, then a long undisturbed sleep to recharge.”

“Unfortunately that’s not an option yet.” Harry says stiffly.

“Why not?” Liam whines.

“You need to eat Liam. You skipped breakfast this morning and lunch.” Harry explains.

“Harry, that’s not because of- It’s not that.” Liam sighs. “I’m not relapsing.”

“I know Babes, but it’s easy to slip into old habits.” Harry says quietly. “We’ll go upstairs and order room service, then settle in for a chat on the laptop before bed.”

“If you insist.” Liam groans. His head is completely light and his body is tingling in a very pleasant way. There’s a warmth under his skin that only comes from drinking and honestly he’s feeling a little frisky. Harry looks spectacular in his tight gray suit, picked special for the occasion, and Liam wants to see how it feels under his hands. Liam sneaks a hand down Harry’s back and pinches his bum. Harry lets out an offended squeak, much to Liam’s delight.

Harry turns to him with eyes wide and hisses “We are in public!”

“Nobody is even paying attention to us.” Liam grins. “Guess a retired pop star isn’t worth their attention anymore.”

“Liam, please.” Harry pleads. “Just not here.”

“Then let’s follow your plan and get back to the room.” Liam smiles wickedly.

Harry rolls his eyes and leads Liam to the lift. Liam follows happily, his eyes glued to the way Harry’s trousers cling to his perky little ass. The lift is occupied with three other people by the time they start to move; a little girl with an arm cast and a man and woman who are presumably her parents.
“Are you Harry Styles?” The girl questions with big eyes. Her voice is laced with adoration and it warms Liam’s heart to see someone love his man so much.

“I am.” Harry smiles widely. “What’s your name?”

“I’m Eva.” She grins.

“That’s a very nice name. What happened to your arm Miss Eva?” Harry asks happily.

“I tried to ride my bike without training wheels.” Eva explains. “It didn’t turn out so well.”

“I can see that.” Harry laughs. “Would you mind terribly if I signed your cast? I always love doing that you see. I’m terribly greedy that way.”

“Yes!” Eva squeals excitedly. “Mommy can Harry sign my cast?”

The woman smiles and digs through her clutch to find a sharpie. “I always keep one on me since it happened.” She explains.

Harry takes the pen with a smile and holds Eva’s bright pink cast steady while he scrawls his name. His tongue pokes out with the concentration he’s using trying to squat and write in a moving lift. It’s decidedly adorable to Liam. Eva giggles when Harry finishes autographing the cast with a big smiley face.

“All the kids at school are going to be so jealous!” Eva laughs. The elevator comes to a stop on the family’s floor and waves their goodbyes to Harry.

As soon as the doors slide closed Liam pins Harry against the wall. “It’s so hot how much of a daddy you are sometimes.” He whispers in Harry’s ear.

The curly haired man shivers under his touch and moans slightly at the light touch of Liam’s lips against his neck. “Liam, there’s a camera in this thing.” Harry says quietly. “Just wait until we get back to the room. Please please please.”

Liam pulls back as though Harry had slapped him. Harry had sounded scared, not frustrated, and it hurts worse that Liam could imagine. He quickly backs up to the other wall of the lift and his heart throbs painfully when Harry looks relieved. The lift moves achingly slowly, and Liam’s eyes look anywhere but at Harry.

Finally they reach their floor and Liam darts out of it before the doors can even finish opening. He moves quickly down the hall, his feet barely making contact with the floor. He tears the key-card out of his pocket and slips it into the slot, hearing Harry slowly approaching behind him. As soon as he’s inside he grabs his valise and heads right back for the door. Harry is standing between him and his escape.

“What are you doing?” Harry asks, shrugging out of his suit jacket.

“I’m going to check into another room.” Liam says softly.

“Liam, what’s wrong?” Harry questions.

“What’s- what’s wrong?” Liam almost yells. “Haz you were scared of me in there. I know every nuance of your voice, and that was fear.”

“No. No, Liam that’s not it.” Harry says desperately. “I wasn’t scared of you.”
“Yes you were, Haz.” Liam says flatly. “Something I did scared you and I don’t want that. It’s best if I just go for the night.”


“What does your ex have to do with anything?” Liam asks incredulously.

“I was seventeen when we met.” Harry sighs. “I was immediately pulled in by him. He was famous and sexy and I had never met anyone like him. He was very controlling though. He’d take me where and when he wanted me. He didn’t care when I’d say no, when I wasn’t comfortable or happy.”

Liam’s eyes grow wide and he’s about to say something when Harry says “It wasn’t- it wasn’t that. He didn’t forcibly rape me or anything. I’d always consent in the end. I wanted him to be happy, so I’d always say yes eventually. I didn’t always like it though. He was rough sometimes. He’d forget I was basically a kid, or maybe he did it because of that. It took a long time for me to recover from the damage he did to me.”

“So I reminded you of the man who raped you?” Liam asks. His heart is crumbling in his chest and he can’t quite catch his breath.

Harry’s eyes go wide and he says “I told you he-”

“Yes he did Haz!” Liam shouts. “He manipulated you into having sex you didn’t want to have. That’s rape, pure and simple. Even you can’t believe what you’re saying. I need to go now.”

“Liam please don’t leave me.” Harry cries. Tears are starting to form in his green eyes, welling up like little fountains. Liam is torn between staying to try and comfort him, and leaving before he can make everything worse. He decides to stay when Harry takes a ragged breath and starts to fall forward. Liam drops his valise and catches Harry against his chest, his arms folding around the sobbing boy protectively.

“I’m right here, Haz.” Liam whispers as he cards his fingers through Harry’s locks in an all too familiar gesture. He carries Harry too the bed and sits on the edge while Harry breaks down in his lap. It’s a reminder of the last time he was in a London hotel room with Harry, and a painful one at that. Last time this happened, Harry had been crying because he was leaving everything he knew behind for good, now though a portion of his past has come back and reared an ugly head Liam didn’t know existed.

Liam doesn’t know how much time passes, but he’s almost positive Niall has gone to bed and the twins with him. Harry stops crying eventually, and then pops back up. “Food!” He says, wiping away the tears with the back of his hand. “You still need to eat.”

“Harry, I think it’s more important we talk right now.” Liam groans.

“No, no you need to eat.” Harry smiles, but it falters as he scrambles for the phone.

Liam grabs him by the wrist and holds him still. “Haz! Talk to me!” he pleads.

“We can talk after I order you something Liam.” Harry glares. Liam sighs and lets Harry do as he pleases. He’s clearly having some sort of mental breakdown, and Liam doesn’t know how to handle it. He slips off to the bathroom and pulls his mobile out of his pocket. He presses a familiar face and lets the phone ring.
“Hello?” Zayn answers sleepily. The sound startles Niall awake and he rolls over in the bed.

“Is that Pez?” He asks with a yawn.

“It’s Liam.” Zayn tells him. “No, Liam, it’s fine. I mean yeah I was sleeping, but you wouldn’t be calling if it wasn’t important. Is something wrong? It’s Niall. We were sleeping if you really must know, but I highly doubt that’s the reason you called. Liam. Liam!”

Niall’s mobile starts ringing and Niall grabs it off the bedside table and answers it. “Hello?” He asks cautiously.

“What the hell are you doing in bed with Zayn?” Liam roars through the phone. There’s feedback from Zayn being so close to him and on the same call. It screams in his ear almost as loudly as Liam does.

“We were sleeping Liam. That’s all.” Niall groans.

“We’ve been gone for like twelve hours, and already you’re inviting another man into our bed?” Liam asks. Niall scoots off the bed while Zayn looks at him helplessly.

“We’re in my second bedroom Liam, and it isn’t sexual. I just fell asleep when I was sitting here with Zayn waiting for you to call us.” Niall groans. He’s not awake enough for this fight right now.

“I promise Liam, nothing happened.” Zayn says over the phone. Niall can hear it in the room and then in his phone a second later. It’s really trippy and Niall briefly considers moving rooms. He decides against it for lack of energy.

“Fine, believe it or not, this is not my biggest problem right now.” Liam sighs. “Zayn, what do you know about Haz and Nick Grimshaw?”

Niall sees Zayn stiffen, even in the dark, and he feels a chill across the room. “Why are you asking about that cunt?” Zayn snarls.

“Because we ran into him at the auction. Afterwards I tried to get flirty with Harry in the elevator and it scared him. Then he told me about what happened between them and now he’s having some sort of mental break.” Liam explains.

“What did he do to Harry?” Niall asks. He’s more alert now, sensing something was deeply wrong before Liam even said anything.

“Nick Grimshaw raped Harry when he was seventeen. Repeatedly.” Zayn growls. “Harry refused to accept that it was rape, because he consented to it, but that’s what it was. I tried to get him to file charges when I found out, but that was years later and he refused.”

“Why?” Liam asks.

“Because some dark self-loathing part of Harry felt like he loved Grimmy at some point and he didn’t want to hurt him.” Zayn explains. “I have no such qualms, but I can’t do anything about it except skin the bastard if I ever see him again.”

“Is there anything I can do that will snap him out of it?” Liam asks.


Liam sighs and then Niall hears some shuffling before he hangs up the phone. He sits in the dark,
listening to the sound of Zayn breathing heavily. His chest rises and falls, caught up in the moonlight streaming through the window. His tired mind can’t process what Zayn has told him, not completely. Harry was raped, but he didn’t think of it as rape.

“Meri jaan.” Zayn says quietly in the darkness. Niall knows it’s Urdu, but he doesn’t know what it means. “Harry I need you to listen to the sound of my voice. Nothing happened. Nick isn’t going to hurt you anymore. Niall and Liam aren’t going to leave you Harry.”

Niall cocks his head at the last part. “Harry I promise they still love you. They wouldn’t stop just because they know now.” Zayn says soothingly.

Niall launches himself at Zayn and wrestles the phone out of his hand before the darker boy even knows what’s happening. “How could you even think that Haz?” Niall cries. “How could you think we’d ever stop loving you just because some monster hurt you when you were too young to know any better?”

“Niall? I just- I just feel so dirty whenever I think about what he did to me. I feel like I don’t deserve you two.” Harry sobs.

Zayn is trying to take the phone back, but Niall quickly pins his wrists with strength that surprises even him. “Frankly Haz, that isn’t up to you to decide. Liam and I love you. We will always love you. We decide whether you deserve us, and we will never think you are anything less than the sweetest most amazing man we have ever known.” Niall says.

“Really?” Harry asks so quietly Niall almost doesn’t hear it.

“Really. Now go calm down and sleep. You’ll feel better in the morning and then you’ll be home and see the twins. I promise they, and I, will be excited to see you.” Niall says. He’s smiling and he hopes it translates in his voice.

“I love you so much Nialler.” Harry says with a noise somewhere between a laugh and a sob.


“Good night. Tell Zayn thanks for me.” Harry laughs.

“I will. Sleep tight Haz.” Niall sighs. Harry hangs up and Niall lets his hand drop.

“I hate you so much.” Zayn glares.

“You do not.” Niall laughs. He feels something poke him in the thigh and he quickly scrambles off of Zayn. “What the hell Zee?”

“Don’t act like you don’t know where that came from.” Zayn huffs. “I can’t help it from getting excited when the hot shirtless Irish man pinned my wrists and straddled me. I’m only a man.”

“Still though.” Niall sighs. “Now I have to go sleep alone because it’s weird.”

“Shouldn’t you have done that anyway?” Zayn asks.

“I like having a warm body next to me.” Niall admits.

“I do too. You can stay in here if you want.” Zayn pats the bed next to him.

“No I can’t.” Niall groans.
“It’s not like I’m going to try and seduce you Niall.” Zayn says quietly. “I just don’t want to be alone right now. It’s why you let me stay over, remember?”

“Zayn, if I felt like I was cheating just having a wank to you, what do you think it’ll feel like if I just choose to sleep in here with you now?” Niall asks.

“Sleep being the operative word.” Zayn says. “Listen, I don’t care either way. I’d be happy if you decided to sleep in here, but I understand if it makes you uncomfortable too.”

“Thank you Zee.” Niall says with a smile. He gives Zayn’s hand a squeeze and then goes to the door.

“You can’t blame me if I have a wank to it though.” Zayn laughs.

Niall turns around to say something back but Zayn’s hand is already slipping down his pants and Niall dashes out before he can see anything. He closes the door behind him and slumps his head back against the wall. It takes him a minute before he calms down enough to notice his own erection.

“You dirty little man whore!” Louis laughs from the other side of the foyer. Niall has never regretted having an open view between the two wings of the house until now.

Niall stomps around the balcony and glares at Louis the entire way. He walks into the main bedroom and shuts the door behind him. Apparently it was an exercise in futility as Louis slips in before he can get halfway to the bed. “Go away Louis.” Niall growls.

“Not until you tell me why you walked out of a room with Zayn in it, with a hard on, at 3 in the morning.” Louis smirks.

“I’m getting naked and in bed now.” Niall rolls his eyes. He drops his underwear and steps out of them before crawling into the bed. His eyes almost bug out when he feels the weight of Louis climbing in behind him. “Get out of the bed Louis!”

“No. You’ve spent all day with him and I want to know what’s going on.” Louis glares.

Niall crawls under the duvet as quickly as possible and pulls the covers over his head. Louis straddles over his hips and rips the blanket off his head. “Louis please don’t press this.”

“It is my duty as your best friend to tell you what a mistake you’re making if you’re screwing Malik.” Louis says angrily.

“I’m not shagging with Zayn!” Niall roars. “I’m trying to help him figure out if he’s going to break up with Pez or not! We fell asleep talking and then I was woken up to find some asshole raped Haz when he was seventeen! So kindly fuck the fuck off you fucking fuck!”

Louis flies backwards when Niall lifts up and he scrambles backwards. “Harry was raped?”

“Yes.” Niall says. He deflates and feels so small. He’s starting to regret not staying with Zayn because he’d have held Niall if he cried. He’s kind and understanding and just the right level of warm. He’s so great that way. Louis will probably laugh at him.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Louis asks quietly.

“No. I want to hold my boyfriend and tell him that, no matter what he thinks, I will always love him, because he needs it right now.” Niall can feel the tears beginning to press at the corners of his eyes and tries to blink them away. “He doesn’t think we’ll still love him anymore.”
“That’s stupid and crazy.” Louis says. “Can I ask about Zayn and Pez or will you yell at me again?”

“Please Louis, just go away.” Niall starts to cry. He can’t hold it back anymore and he doesn’t want to deal with whatever Louis is going to say. Louis surprises him once again by crawling under the covers with him and silently holding him tight.

“I’m not going to leave you Niall. Not until you’re okay.” Louis says softly. He runs his fingers through Niall’s hair and holds him until he cries himself to sleep.

When Harry steps out of the bathroom his eyes are puffy with recently shed tears. He’s managed to compose himself pretty well, but his shirt is definitely going to need dry-cleaned to get the salt stains out. Liam is sitting on the bed, staring at him instead of eating the meal Harry had ordered.

“Is that really what you think of us?” Liam asks quietly.

“Liam-” Harry starts.

“You think we’d stop loving you because of him?” Liam asks.

“I don’t know.” Harry admits softly. “I feel like I don’t deserve to be loved like this sometimes.”

“You do though Haz!” Liam says desperately. “You’re beautiful and kind. What you did in the lift for that little girl was so sweet, you’re amazing with our kids, you brighten anybody’s day with just a smile. No human being has ever been more deserving of love than you.”

“I’m sorry.” Harry answers him. It’s all he can think to say.

“Haz, don’t be sorry. You have no reason to be. I just want you to see how amazing you are. You’re radiant.” Liam says with a small smile.

“Do you really think so? Even knowing what happened to me?” Harry asks.

“I do. I always have and will.” Liam grins. “Now how about you come eat and we go to sleep? Our flight is at nine so we can only get like seven hours now.”

“I suppose I ruined the mood earlier.” Harry sighs.

“I don’t know how to answer that without being rude.” Liam admits.

“It’s fine.” Harry says. He had really hoped this trip would give them some time to make up for the celibacy that has settled over their relationship like a cloak. Of course Grimmy had to show up and ruin that. “How’s the food?”

“Not as good as yours.” Liam sighs. “Honestly I can barely enjoy anybody else’s cooking anymore.”

“Niall’s barbecue was pretty damn good if you ask me.” Harry smiles as he sits down next to Liam.

“I can’t believe he insisted on doing that in bloody October. It was freeezing outside.” Liam laughs.


“He’s good at it, isn’t he?” Liam nudges him.

“You have got to start calling her by her name.” Liam says flatly. “She’s going to get confused when she’s older.”

“I just can’t yet.” Harry sighs. “She was older than me. Now my daughter has her name and it’s going to take some getting used to.”

“Fine.” Liam sighs. He swipes a finger through the chocolate frosting on the cake and pokes Harry in the nose and then giggles. Harry tries to reach it with his tongue, but he can only just get the bottom bit. Liam laughs next to him and Harry pouts.

“Meanie.” Harry says and then he sticks his tongue out. Liam leans across his lap and licks the mess off his nose. Harry laughs and says “You are so weird.”

“Well it was just going to waste.” Liam laughs. “I’ll eat the dinner, but I’m not putting that junk food in my body.”

“I ordered the cake for me Leeyum.” Harry pouts. Liam is on him in a second, pinning his arms over his head and ducking in to bite at the flesh of his neck.

“I thought I told you never to say my name that way again.” Liam growls.

“Got you all riled up though didn’t it?” Harry moans. Liam bites down right over Harry’s collar bone when he says that, and it’s just short of painful. Harry bucks up and squirms under Liam’s grip, desperate to do anything to reciprocate what Liam is doing to him right now. A wayward kick connects with the food cart and sends it crashing to the ground with a loud noise.

“Jesus Christ!” Liam yelps. He hops off of Harry and sighs at the mess all over the floor. Harry looks at it, blushing with guilt, before he picks up the phone and calls down for maid services. Liam insists they can clean it themselves, but Harry stops him from touching anything for fear he’ll cut his hand. The maids come quickly and clean everything without asking what happened. Harry slides each of them twenty pounds and then smiles goodbye to them.

“I guess we just really aren’t supposed to have sex tonight.” Harry sighs once the door closes behind the maids.

“I think the universe is telling us sleep is more important.” Liam shrugs. It hurts a little that Liam would give up so easily, but Harry is already feeling the warm fingers of exhaustion pulling him under. He strips off his shirt and trousers before climbing into the bed. He can’t even crawl under the duvet before he falls asleep.

Niall wakes up way too early with Harry pinned half underneath him. He slides his hand lazily down Harry’s pants to find him already hard. Niall smiles into the skin of Harry’s neck as the boy moans beneath him. Something’s off though. He feels smaller than usual, much smaller, and Harry always trims his pubic hairs before they get this long. He decides to blame it on his own sleepiness and ignores it. He strokes slowly in the way he knows Harry likes until- is that foreskin? His eyes pop open to find someone who is very much not Harry. Niall rips his hand out of Louis joggers and wails.

Louis jumps up, eyes suddenly wide. “What? What happened?”

“What the hell are you still doing here Louis?” Niall roars.
“I fell asleep.” Louis mumbles.

“Well you almost had your first gay experience!” Niall spits.

“Jesus Niall!” Louis yelps, covering his crotch. “What the fuck are you doing molesting me in my sleep?”

“I thought you were Harry.” Niall says angrily. Why though is beyond him now, Louis is much slimmer than Harry and he knows Harry is in London right now. He’s really tired of waking up to people that aren’t his boyfriends, though Zayn was far less offensive than it should have been, if Niall’s being honest.

“I’m flattered, really, but if you ever do that again I won’t be your best mate anymore.” Louis laughs.

“Go sleep in your bed Louis. With your wife.” Niall glares.

“Actually it’s probably about time to get up for a feeding. El probably did the last one all by herself. Want to help?” Louis asks. The clock on the table is glaring five twenty and Niall sighs. He crawls off the bed and about walks through the door when Louis grabs him by the shoulder. “Niall, you’re still starkers. How about you get dressed?”

Niall looks down and groans. He’d forgotten that he’d stripped earlier in an attempt to ward Louis off and shuffles over to his dresser. He pulls on a pair of joggers and a jumper that Gemma particularly likes to cuddle against. Louis is thankfully gone when he turns around and Niall stumbles his way to the nursery.

“I heard you tried to give my husband a handjob.” Eleanor laughs. She’s already feeding Gemma, so this is a weird conversation to have when she’s shirtless. Louis is sitting in the other chair with Sam and grinning maniacally.

“I just couldn’t resist his tiny prick now could I?” Niall rolls his eyes.

“There’s no need to be rude Niall.” Louis frowns.

“There’s no need t’go telling your wife I tried to molest you either. That isn’t what happened El. I promise.” Niall sighs.

“I know.” She smiles. “Louis told me you thought he was Harry. I think he should be flattered because, you know. Harry.”

“Am I literally the only person in this house that doesn’t want his dick?” Louis groans.

“I’m fairly certain you’re holding a comrade literally in arms there Louis.” Niall laughs.

“Oh yeah.” Louis smiles. “At least you two don’t want gross Harry’s sex.”

“Stop talking to my children about sex Tommo.” Niall glares. “In fact just stop in general. Stop doing or saying anything.”

Eleanor laughs at that and Louis just pouts silently in his chair. Niall sits in the comfy armchair and waits for one of them to finish so he can hold one of his children and forget this nightmare of a morning. Eleanor finishes first and pulls back up her bra before handing Gemma off to Niall. He holds his girl against his shoulder and pats her softly on the back until she burps onto the cloth Niall had set there.
Elanor leaves, but not before kissing Niall on the cheek and whispering “I think it’s kind of hot.”

Niall flushes deeply and stammers, but never manages to say anything before Eleanor is gone. “I hate having other people in this house.” Niall moans when he manages to find his voice.

“Why is that?” Louis asks.

“No talking Louis. None.” Niall glares.

“What did she say to you?” Louis asks, completely ignoring the stormy look in Niall’s eyes.

“You ask her when you go back to bed with her.” Niall says flatly. “She’s probably waiting quite eagerly.”

“What did she say Niall?” Louis questions again, all traces of humor gone from his voice.

“She said she thought it was hot.” Niall admits with an eye roll.

“Of bloody course she did.” Louis sighs. “Does anybody believe I’m straight?”

“Probably not.” Niall laughs. Louis pouts like a toddler at that. “Listen Louis, some girls like that sort of thing. They get turned on by two guys. It happens.”

“Why me though?” Louis whines. “Why does it have to be my wife?”

“Because you have terrible luck I guess. It’s like your genes just forgot to flip the gay switch, but they built you perfectly for it.” Niall giggles.

“I got enough of that in my teens Niall. Don’t you start.” Louis says quietly. He’s told Niall about it before, he way he was constantly teased and beaten up in school just for being flamboyant. He wasn’t even gay, but that didn’t matter to the bullies. It didn’t matter to the thugs that mugged him and shot Liam.

“I’m sorry Louis. I forget sometimes everything you’ve been through.” Niall says softly.

“I can live with that. People are ignorant and horrid. That’s not going to change any day soon. It would be nice if my best mate didn’t constantly tease me about it though.” Louis tells him.

“I’ll stop. I can’t promise anything about Liam and Zayn, but I’ll do my damnedest to get them to lay off too.” Niall gives a small smile.

“Good luck with Malik. He’s too much of an arse to give a damn about my feelings.” Louis sighs.

“He’s a good guy Louis. I would have agreed with you for a long time, but I know better now.” Niall says quietly. “He’s having a pretty rough time himself.”

“Why? Because he and Perrie are having one of their fighting phases?” Louis scoffs.

“Because she doesn’t want to have kids with him and she’s put off their wedding for years.” Niall explains. “She’s cheated on him multiple times too.”

“What the bleeding fuck?” Zayn bursts into the room. “Were you going to tell him about my son too? Or just all the rest of my dark little secrets?”

“Zayn close the door and sit down.” Niall says harshly. Zayn looks furious, but he does as he’s told. “You two need to start getting to know each other. You’re our best friends and the constant
bickering between you needs to stop. You’re both fantastic listeners and have a lot of things you can help each other with. You’re fantastic blokes and I love you both, but get your heads out of your arses. You two would be best mates if you just realized how close you actually are in terms of personality.”

“I am not.” Louis protests. Niall silences him with a look.

“Zayn, Louis could help you work through this. He’s helped me with every problem I’ve had since I met him and he’s annoyingly persistent. He’ll listen or talk or whatever you need. Underneath his extremely bitchy exterior is a good man. I promise.”

Zayn looks down angrily, but otherwise doesn’t protest. “Louis, Zayn is aloof and yeah he totally buys into his too-cool-for-anybody thing he has going on. He’s also Harry’s best friend for a reason. He’s sweet and artistic and amazing with my kids, just like you. He always thinks of everyone around him first, even when he’s going through his own shite. He makes bad decisions sometimes, but he’s always trying to help.” Niall says flatly.

“Niall.” Zayn says softly.

“I’m not finished Zayn.” Niall says harshly. “I want you two to be friends, because I can’t choose between you if it comes down to that. Like it or not, you guys are the closest thing I have to brothers and I want you both in our lives. Brothers can bicker and generally be asses, but that’s it. You need to learn to live with each other, especially since I’m asking you to move in here if things go for shit with Pez. Do you understand?”

“Yes.” Louis says quickly. Zayn nods in agreement, his eyes slightly scared but also kind of hopeful.

“Good, because I can’t have all your shite piled on top of just me all the time when I only get a few hours sleep. Why does everybody in this damn family act like I’m a damn therapist?” Niall groans.

“I’m actually fairly certain you’ve become the daddy of our little group.” Zayn smiles.

“Liam is going to be jealous, coming home to see us playing nice.” Louis laughs.

“I’ll be glad if it lasts a feckin day.” Niall says. Honestly it probably won’t last that long, but he can dream.

“Do you really have a son?” Louis asks curiously.

“Kind of.” Zayn shrugs. “Had him when I was seventeen, but we gave him up for adoption. I wasn’t a good parent.”

“You’re kidding right?” Louis asks. “I’ve been around these babies every day of their lives and they still totally like you better. I can’t believe Perrie doesn’t want to have a million of them with you.”

“Nice try Louis.” Zayn laughs. “Let’s just try being civil before we work our way up to actual conversation.”

“Oh thank god.” Louis sighs in relief. “Being nice to you was giving me heart burn.”

“I’m not surprised with all the crap you were spewing.” Zayn smiles. They settle into a comfortable banter and Niall just smiles and watches. This is much more brotherly than Niall expected. At least they’re smiling.
“Hey you.” Niall says with a grin, settling onto the TV room sectional with Zayn. He’d come down to grab a beer and watch some mindless late night television until he was sleepy even though it is already well after midnight. He was pleasantly surprised when he heard the TV was already on and found Zayn laid out on the sofa. It’s been a couple days since their talk in the nursery, but Zayn has stayed over every night since then. He always tries going home, but Perrie and him fight and he comes back and spends the rest of the night watching movies and talking with Niall.

“Hey Smiles.” Zayn says happily, making a space next to him for Niall. The Irish boy slots himself behind Zayn’s legs and settles in there instead.

“Not Irish?” Niall asks curiously.

“You said it lost it’s effect.” Zayn shrugs. “I’m trying something new.”

“How bout just Nialler then?” Niall offers.

“I can do that.” Zayn says with a smile.

“Haz and Li are already in bed, so there’s nobody left to cook for you if you’re hungry.” Niall explains.

“That’s alright.” Zayn says. “I don’t suppose you’d make something for me?”

“You don’t want to die of food poisoning.” Niall laughs. He’s actually not that bad of a cook, but Harry is just so good he feels inadequate in comparison.

“When you grill it’s good.” Zayn says amicably. “Don’t see why that should change just because you do it inside.”


“Sounds perfect.” Zayn says.

Niall hasn’t cooked at all since they moved in except for couple of times on the grill, so he doesn’t know where everything is. It takes him ten minutes to find a wok, but once he does he’s in business. He grabs several bags of vegetables from the fridge, and shrimp because Harry bought them but was never going to use them anyways. Niall is pretty sure Harry is afraid of making them all sick with seafood and leaving the babies in limbo.

There’s a packet of lo-mein noodles and soy sauce in there too so he grabs those as well. He oils the pan lightly and then tosses in the shrimp. Once those are mostly cooked through he adds the washed carrots he’s been grating, along with the snap peas and bean sprouts. After that he dumps in the noodles and a bunch of the sauce. It’s stir-fry, so he spends a majority of the time just stirring it around until everything looks done.

“So what was it tonight?” Niall asks.

“She’s mad I’ve been spending so much time over here.” Zayn admits.

“That’s stupid.” Niall scoffs. “She’s the one been kicking you out your own flat every night.”

“Exactly.” Zayn nods. “She expects me to come crawling back, begging to sleep in my own bed and saying she’s right about everything.”

“Because that’s not completely mad at all.” Niall says, rolling his eyes.
“Thanks Nialler.” Zayn says softly.

“Don’t thank me.” Niall laughs. “She’s a loon if she thinks that’s how this should go.”

“That’s not why I’m saying it.” Zayn mumbles. “You’ve been really nice to me. Harry is so busy with the babies and he hasn’t had any time for me lately. I’m just really glad to have you.”

“Oh.” Niall says simply. He doesn’t really know how to respond. He’s grow to really like Zayn. Maybe a little too much sometimes if he thinks about it. He steers himself away from those thoughts though. “Well you’ve been there for me too. Least I can do is return the favor.”

“Oh.” Zayn mutters. “That’s all it is then? Returning a favor.”

“No, Zee, that’s not what I meant.” Niall groans. “It’s just- we’re friends, yeah? That’s what friends do. It’s not like, an obligation or anything. I like talking to you.”

“Yeah?” Zayn asks.

“Yeah.” Niall nods. “You’re much easier to be around sometimes than, say, Louis. When he gets in one of his moods he’s a right terror. You’re more like me.”

“You totally but into your too-cool-for-you thing you have going on too?” Zayn smiles.

“I don’t think that. Not with you at least.” Zayn admits softly. “If anything it’s the other way around.”

“I am pretty awesome aren’t I?” Niall grins.

“That’s one word for it.” Zayn mumbles. Niall isn’t sure what he means by that, but his pan starts to hiss before he can ask. It’s a little burned on a few of the shrimp, but he’s actually really proud of himself when he plates it up for Zayn. He hands it over and they go back to sit in the TV room.

Zayn takes his previous spot, but he sits differently so that he can eat off the coffee table. Niall remembers he didn’t grab any beverages so he asks “What do you want to drink?”

“Beer please.” Zayn says happily. Niall goes back to the kitchen and pulls out two of his bottles of Guiness. There’s another case of beer for everyone other than him, but just this once he’ll share because Zayn has put him in an incredibly good mood. When he gets back to the living room though, Zayn is coughing and tears are running down his face.

He rushes back over to the darker boy and hands him the beer to try and clear his throat. “Do you need me to like, do the Heimlich or something?” Niall asks in a panic.

Zayn shakes his head and takes a long pull off the beer. “I thought we were friends!” he rasps once he manages to stop coughing.

“We are.” Niall says, confusion taking precedence over panic now.

“Then why?” Zayn asks, pointing an accusatory finger towards the stir-fry. Niall takes a bite of it and it’s immediately painful. There’s loads and loads of salt. It is literally the only thing he can taste and he spits it back out onto the plate trying his best not to retch. He doesn’t understand. He’s made this meal for Bobby a lot of times, but it’s never been like this.

“Did the teriyaki go bad or something?” Zayn asks.
“No it should have been fi-” Niall starts before realization hits him in the face like a bitch-slap. “Shit!”

“What?” Zayn asks.

“Soy!” Niall groans. “I used soy sauce. I grabbed the wrong bottle.”

Zayn stares at him for several seconds before he starts laughing. Niall sits there horrified, trying to figure out what could have made him be so stupid. That’s the worst mouthful of anything he’s ever had, and Zayn probably didn’t even have as small of a bite as he did, and yet here he is cackling like a loon. Maybe the salt destroyed his brain.

“Zee, I’m so sorry.” Niall says. “I didn’t mean to do it.”

“Nialler.” Zayn says with a smile. He leans over and plants a huge snog right off of Niall’s lips. It makes the Irish boy heat up instantly. “Thank you. That’s exactly what I needed.”

“You needed the worst meal in the history of the world?” Niall scoffs.

“I needed a laugh.” Zayn giggles. “You tried and that’s what matters. Can we go try and find something else though?”

“I think there’s some leftover pizza in the fridge.” Niall sighs. He was so proud and that came crashing down in flames.

“No.” Zayn says with a shake of his head. “I want you to try again. Maybe something different though.”

“Are you sure?” Niall asks.

“Positive.” Zayn nods with a grin. “I believe in you.”

“I can help.” Harry says behind them. “Niall can take point, but I can like, check on things.”

“Haz, what are you doing up?” Niall asks. He hadn’t even heard Harry approach.

“Heard two lunatics making a commotion.” Harry laughs. “Came down to check on you.”

“You go back to bed Harry.” Zayn smiles. “Niall can handle it himself.”

“Zee, Hazza is a much better cook.” Niall says softly. “Just let him do it. He won’t accidentally kill you.”

“Neither will you.” Zayn says, taking Niall’s hand. “You’ll get it right this time. You made a small mistake, but that’s nothing to be ashamed of.”

“I agree Nialler.” Harry says. “Now go cook him a meal and then come up to bed when you’re done. Liam’s feet are freezing and I need a barrier between us.”

“Will do.” Niall beams. Harry leaves and Niall makes another attempt at a meal for Zayn. This time he doesn’t mess it up. Tacos probably aren’t a great dinner at nearly two in the morning unless you’re drunk, but Zayn gulps them down and gives Niall another kiss on the cheek as thanks. He’s tingling with pride when he finally crawls into bed with Harry and Liam.
Zayn moves in a week later. His attempts to broker some sort of peace with Perrie having failed completely. It’s over now, and Harry can’t say he’ll miss the side of Perrie he’s learned about recently. He misses the sweet blond he met in London years ago. The one he became fast friends with, but the monster behind the scenes is someone he’s glad to have out of his life. Zayn asks that only Harry help him, and everyone else just accepts it.

He’s moving into Niall’s second room, the decor most matching his own taste. He left everything in the flat for Perrie, unfortunately having paid a full year in advance. His clothes and a few personal things are all he has to show for his life now. “Twenty six and starting over.” he sighs.

“Zayn, you still have a career. You have us. It isn’t like this is the end of everything.” Harry says softly. Frankly he’d been surprised when Niall had brought up the subject of Zayn moving in the day after they got back from London. Liam had protested, saying there were too many people in the house already. Niall had fervently argued that Zayn was family until Liam finally relented. Harry had agreed easily.

“I don’t have a career Harry. I manage your money, I do your taxes, but that’s not a career. I was an agent. I represented one of the biggest names in the world, the guy who knocked Bieber off the charts. The guy actually became a gay icon and wasn’t a woman.” Zayn says venomously. “Now I’m an accountant with one client, who only keeps him on out of pity.”

“I keep you on because I trust you Zayn.” Harry says. He’s trying hard not to be hurt by Zayn’s words. He reminds himself that it isn’t out of anger at him, but rather at his situation. He doesn’t mean it. Not really.

“I’m sorry Harry.” Zayn sighs. “I just don’t know what I’m going to do.”

“You’re going to get back on your feet.” Harry smiles. “You’re going to find someone amazing and have a family. You’re going to fall in love again, I promise.”

“I’m going to avoid any sort of relationship for a while.” Zayn sighs.

“Then you avoid that. Focus on something else. I can set up my room as a studio for you to start your art again. Or the garage if you still insist on using spray paint.” Harry smiles.

“You don’t need to do that Harry. I can afford a studio. Hell I could afford my own flat if Niall hadn’t insisted I move in here.” Zayn says. He smiles though and that tells Harry that he’s grateful for it. Niall and Zayn have become increasingly close ever since the twins were born. Whenever Harry can’t find the Irish boy all he has do do is ask where Zayn is instead. It’s a relief considering he’d threatened to kill him not that long ago.

“You should be around family right now.” Harry grins.

“I have a family Harry. A mother and father and four sisters. This is much better.” Zayn laughs.

“We’re your family too Zayn.” Harry pouts.

“I have a son.” Zayn says suddenly. The air feels like it’s been knocked from Harry’s lungs. Zayn has never mentioned anything about having a child.

“You what?” Harry asks stupidly.

“I had a son, when I was seventeen. We gave him up for adoption though. His name is James.” Zayn says softly.
“Why didn’t you tell anyone?” Harry questions.

“Actually Niall already knows. And Louis.” Zayn admits sheepishly.

“You told Louis before me?” Harry screeches.

“Niall made us be friends and I kind of let it slip.” Zayn says. He looks a little guilty and that helps quell the anger in Harry.

“So why didn’t you tell me?” Harry asks, folding his arms.

“Because until I held your babies I never regretted that decision. I didn’t want to think about if I had kept him, what my life would be like.” Zayn admits.

“And now?” Harry questions.

“I still don’t regret it. That family has been amazing to him. I want to be a father though. I want what you have.” Zayn says.

“Don’t measure yourself by me. I got more lucky than I could have imagined. I got more than I deserve.” Harry explains.


“You’re just saying that because I’m your best mate.” Harry smiles.

“Actually, you’ve been replaced by Niall.” Zayn grins wickedly.

“I have not!” Harry squeals.

“Kinda yeah. He taught me how to shoot. He knew about my kid. He even made me a shitty dinner just because I asked him to, and then made me a good one.” Zayn says with a shrug. “He fought Liam just to get it so I could live here.”

“I’ll make you dinner.” Harry pouts. “I still can’t believe he has guns in the house.”

“He doesn’t. He literally keeps them in a separate house, Haz.” Zayn rolls his eyes.

“Guns Zayn!” Harry groans. “You know how I feel about guns!”

“They’re a memento of times with his father Haz.” Zayn says firmly. “Also a good deal more fun than I would have believed.”

“Hooligan.” Harry snorts.

“Pussy.” Zayn laughs.

“You boys having fun?” Liam asks from the door.

“Not yet, but you and Niall could join in and change that.” Zayn wiggles his eyebrows.

Liam laughs and rolls his eyes. “Just put away your things Zee. We’re almost ready with dinner. Everyone is pitching in. Niall is even grilling something that vaguely looks like chicken.”

“I’ll have to eat that as well then.” Zayn sighs.
“Just for the record, his grilling has always been phenomenal in my opinion.” Harry speaks up.

“I agree.” Zayn smiles. “I’m just not hungry.”

“Well you don’t have to eat anything I guess.” Liam shrugs.

“Yes I do. You guys are doing so much for me. The least I can do is be thankful.” Zayn grins.

“Well let me warn you off of Louis’ appetizers then. I’m not even sure what they’re supposed to be.” Liam giggles.

“Why are you letting Niall grill? It’s like seven degrees outside.” Harry says. He’s glad to see everyone welcoming Zayn so easily, but they can’t afford to get sick with the babies in the house.

“He’s wearing a coat and standing by a fire. I’m sure he’ll be fine.” Liam laughs.

Niall sneezes again and starts to groan in Zayn’s lap. Liam watches the whole display from a safe distance, careful not to get close enough to catch anything. Louis and Zayn have volunteered to take care of him so Sam and Gemma still have two healthy parents to take care of them. Eleanor has basically been sequestered away to keep her as far away from the virus as possible.

“You okay Nialler?” Zayn asks, running a hand soothingly through Niall’s hair. Ever since he moved in he’s started using their pet names and Niall finds it incredibly comforting at the moment.

“My head feels like it’s going to explode.” Niall whines. It’s been two days of constant pain and aches for him and it’s getting old.

“Want some soup?” Zayn asks with a smile.

“Just a cuddle please.” Niall moans. Zayn lays down behind him and holds him around the waist. Niall can see Liam staring at them from the door, but his look is one of sympathy, not jealousy.

“Like this?” Zayn wonders.

“Yeah. That’s good.” Niall sighs contentedly. Louis is god knows where right now, probably taking a nap, so when Liam smiles and goes to play with the babies he’s left alone with Zayn.

The movie they’ve been watching, some cheesy horror flick Zayn put on, isn’t really catching his attention. He decides to trace the tattoos littering Zayn’s arm instead. He particularly likes a large squiggly blob that says ‘Zap!’ in it. It’s probably a reference to the comics Niall was surprised to find out Zayn loves. In fact almost all of the darker boy’s books are of the graphic novel variety.

“I noticed to don’t have any ink.” Zayn mutters.

“Nope.” Niall says. He’s considered it before. He even went to a tattoo parlor once, but the artist ended up embarrassing him and he never went back. His bum is not that squidgy.

“How come?” Zayn asks. He sounds legitimately curious, so Niall decides to tell him.

“Never really wanted any after a point. I tried to get one that said ‘Made in Ireland’ on my arse, but the artist was rude about it. I never wanted any after that.” Niall shrugs.

“That would have been cute.” Zayn laughs.
“It would have been stupid.” Niall sighs. “I’m glad he told me my arse was too squidgy. I’d have just ended up regretting it.”

“Why?” Zayn asks.

“Because it wouldn’t have meant anything. I’m proud of where I’m from, but not enough to get it embedded in my flesh forever.” Niall admits.

“What would you get then?” Zayn asks curiously.

Niall rolls over so he’s facing Zayn. Conversation without eye contact is weird if it’s not over the phone. He’s probably too close to the darker boy right now, their chests are pressed together and Zayn’s arm is still hooked around his waist. “Sam and Gemma’s names maybe.” Niall smiles.

“Nothing else? No guitars or sheep or anything? Nothing just because you love it?” Zayn questions. His eyes are soft and maybe a little sleepy, but he looks genuinely interested in what Niall has to say.

“I don’t love sheep, Zee.” Niall rolls his eyes. “I work with sheep. There’s a difference.”


“That’s a ram. Do you have any like that?” Niall asks.

“A few. I can show them to you if you like.” Zayn offers.

“Are they inappropriate?” Niall asks. He’s curious, but not that curious. Well maybe. Actually, definitely.

“Course not.” Zayn laughs. He pulls up his shirt and shows Niall the playing card tattooed on his rib cage. Niall ghosts his fingers over it, tracing the intricacies or the pattern. He’s seen it before briefly, but not this close. There’s so much detail he hadn’t noticed. “You all right there mate? You’re looking a little red.”

“Fever.” Niall gulps. “Can you go get me some orange juice?”

Zayn smiles and hops off the sectional. He leaves Niall alone and now the Irish lad can’t figure out if his sudden flush is actually the fever or something else. God please don’t let it be something else. Zayn come back a minute later with a kind smile and a tall glass of juice. He sets it on the table and then takes the spot in the corner opposite Niall.

“Thanks.” Niall says with a small smile. He’s actually upset that Zayn didn’t come back to hold him some more, but that’s mostly because he gets absolutely pathetic and needy when he’s sick. He wants a warm body holding him and an endless supply of attention. He takes a gulp of the drink and immediately feels a little better.

“No problem Nialler. Though I did have trouble deciding whether or not to add a little vodka.” Zayn giggles.

“Why would you want me to drink in this condition?” Niall asks. Honestly it might just dissolve the tiny amount of self control he has that’s kept him from whinging more.

“So you’d smile again. Sad pouty Nialler isn’t as much fun.” Zayn shrugs.

“Stop being pleasant Malik.” Louis says sleepily. “It’s off-putting.”

“Good morning to you too sleepyhead.” Zayn smiles. Niall isn’t sure when the cinnamon haired boy
came in. He’s sitting in a chair, but Niall has been completely focused on Zayn. Not a good sign honestly.

“I needed a nap.” Louis pouts. “Took care of this one all day yesterday.”

“Louis you microwaved me some soup and threw a box of tissues at me.” Niall glares.

“I also let you have control over the telly, unlike a certain someone.” Louis grins.

“How do you know I didn’t pick this?” Niall asks.

“Because you hate horror movies. Especially campy ones like this.” Louis snorts. It’s a little startling sometimes how well Louis actually knows him. He’s not as conceited as he seems sometimes, and while Niall knows this, it still takes him by surprise when he isn’t ready for it.

“You said you were okay with it.” Zayn says quietly. He looks upset, but not at Niall.

“I am okay with it. You wanted to watch it, so I did too.” Niall says, trying desperately not to blush.

“Oh, so when I wanted to watch the new Saw movie, you throw a fit, but Malik bats those mile-long eyelashes and you put on some D-list gore-fest?” Louis asks grumpily.

“Those movies are just bad Louis.” Zayn rolls his eyes. “This movie is so bad it’s good.”

“Exactly!” Niall laughs.

“Whatever.” Louis pouts. “I’m going to go hold the babies because you’ll get all jealous. Then you’ll see how I feel.”

Seconds after he’s out of the room Zayn is right back up against Niall. “You should have told me you didn’t want to watch the movie.” Zayn says softly.

“I wanted you to be happy.” Niall blushes.

“Don’t worry about me Niall.” Zayn says. “You’re the one who needs taking care of right now.”

“I have a cold Zee. You’re the one who’s gone through the breakup.” Niall says softly.

Zayn turns away, something stormy crosses his face. “It’s fine. I- I just want you to get better.”

“I will. A few days of cuddling and soup and I’ll be fine. That recipe isn’t going to work so well for you though Zee.” Niall admits.

“Nialler, I promise you I am fine. Perrie and I were just going through the motions for a long time. I’m not as bad off as you seem to think. Soup and cuddles sound like a pretty good fix to me.” Zayn smiles.

“I have a better idea actually.” Niall grins. The idea just popped into his head, but it’s a perfect solution if Niall has ever had one.

“No!” Zayn groans. “Niall this idea is terrible.”

“What if I do it too then?” Niall waggles his eyebrows.
“But you said-” Zayn starts.

“I said maybe.” Niall leans in close. “Come on Zee. You know it’ll feel good.”

He’s close, so close and Zayn just wants that to not end. He’d probably agree to anything if Niall asked like this. The boy is intoxicating that way. It’s starting to become a real problem, and Zayn has only lived there for a few days. He needs to get his own place. Soon. “Fine.” he relents.

“Good.” Niall grins cockily. He hops out of Zayn’s Jag and runs up to the shop. Zayn turns it off and sits for a moment, wondering how he got here. Not the tattoo parlor, Niall directed him. This point in his life. This point where he wants so much he can’t have. Where he’d betray his common sense, his decency, for one night with this man.

He gets out of the car and walks into the parlor with Niall. It’s well lit and there’s a pleasant smell of incense in the air, similar to the kind Zayn used in his own flat. A pretty girl sits behind the counter, her look something Zayn would have liked when he was younger. She has black and blond two-toned hair and a sleeve of tattoos over her pale skin. Her voice is chipper when she asks “Anything I can do for you two?”

“I’ll uh- just take a look at the designs yeah?” Zayn mumbles.

She smiles and slides a large binder across the counter. “These are mine in this section. The other artist on duty is the last section. Feel free to pull from either one, or anything off the walls as they’re a bit more basic.”

“Cheers.” Niall giggles. He takes the binder and leads Zayn over to a set of chairs with a table in between. It doesn’t take Niall long to figure out what he wants apparently. He finds a Celtic knot four leaf clover in the other artists section and picks a font. “What do you think about me getting Samuel and Gemma done in this script with the clover in between?”

“I think Liam is going to kill me.” Zayn sighs. Liam hasn’t been mean or anything, but he hasn’t spent almost any time around Zayn. He’s probably still mad about his birthday. Then again Zayn spends all his time around Niall while Liam takes care of the kids near constantly, so it’s not that shocking.

“It’s my choice. I’m on enough Day Nurse to keep me from coughing and fucking it up, so I may be making a bad decision. But you’d tell me right?” Niall asks with a smile.

“You’re making a bad decision.” Zayn deadpans.

“Arse.” Niall rolls his eyes. “Seriously though. What do you think?”

“I think it’ll look amazing Niall.” Zayn sighs again. “Where you getting it?”

“Is it too cheesy if I get it over my heart?” Niall asks with a sheepish grin.


“Then it’s settled.” Niall smiles brightly. “How about you?”

“Don’t know yet.” Zayn shrugs. He turns to the girl’s section and flips through until a hand with crossed fingers catches his eye. It could be for luck, or it could be for a little white lie. Both seem appropriate in his situation, so he decides to get that one. “I like this.”

“Permanent good luck charm?” Niall asks. “Nice choice.”
“This way we can both go in the chair together and I can watch while you scream like a bitch.” Zayn laughs.

“Will you hold my hand if it hurts?” Niall asks quietly.

“Sure Nialler.” Zayn smiles. Of course he will. He’ll do anything for Niall.

“Where are they?” Liam growls at Louis. He scares the slim boy puttering around the kitchen, but he doesn’t care one bit.

“Jesus, Liam!” Louis yelps.

“Where are they Louis?” Liam asks again.

“Have you checked the bedrooms?” Louis questions. “Niall may have wanted a nap.”

“He’d have slept on the couch.” Liam sighs. Niall isn’t answering his mobile and neither is Zayn. Liam has been sitting in the nursery, playing with his son, while Harry rocked Gemma to sleep. He would have seen if Nial walked to the bedroom.

“Well I don’t bloody know then.” Louis says angrily. He’s sopping up the milk he was pouring when Liam scared him, and throwing a glare at Liam. “You act like I’m his bloody nanny or something.”

“You’re his best friend. You should know where he is.” Liam says defensively.

“You’re his fiancé!” Louis yells. “If anyone would know where he is, then it’s one of you two! And ever since Malik moved in I’m not even on the radar anymore.”

“Fine. Whatever Louis.” Liam sighs. He walks away, not wanting to get drawn into a row with the slim boy. The front door opens as soon as he turns around and Niall stumbles through with Zayn. He looks inebriated, even from this distance. “Where have you been? I was worried sick!”

“Li!” Niall smiles. He throws himself around Liam’s neck and presses a sloppy kiss to his cheek. “Hey baby!”

“Get off me Nialler. I can’t get sick.” Liam groans. Niall pouts and walks back to Zayn, wrapping his arms around the darker boy. “Where were you two?”

“Promise you won’t get mad?” Zayn asks with a sheepish grin.

“I do not. I do not promise that.” Liam glares.

“Look Li!” Niall laughs. He lifts up his shirt and it takes Liam a second to notice the large white square of gauze on his chest. “Isn’t it pretty?”

“Niall what did you do?” Harry laughs from the stairs.

“I got a tattoo like a badass!” Niall laughs loudly.

“Did you talk him into this?” Liam asks Zayn, doing his best not to sound too angry. It’s not working.

“Other way around Li. Nial dragged me there.” Zayn shrugs.
“When he’s sick and has never gotten a tattoo before. I find that hard to believe.” Liam glares.

“Well believe it mister.” Niall giggles. “Zayn needed some breakup therapy and I wanted one too. Now tell me it’s pretty.”

“Nialler, you’re still wearing the gauze.” Harry smiles sweetly. He walks to Liam’s side and whispers in his ear. “Let it go Liam. He can make his own decisions. Just be happy for him.”

Liam calms at Harry’s touch, his long fingers splaying over Liam’s back. “Well let’s see it then.” he sighs.

Niall skips across the foyer, struggling to remove his shirt over his head. He finally manages and then peels the gauze away. Underneath are the names Samuel and Gemma in a beautiful scrawl with a knotted clover set in between. Liam feels tears sting at his eyes and almost touches it before he remembers how much that would sting.

“It’s gorgeous Nialler!” Harry beams. He gives Niall a peck on the cheek and then walks over to Zayn. “What did you get?”

Zayn peels back a bandage on his arm and shows a hand with crossed fingers. “Niall called it a permanent good luck charm. Reckon I could use one of them.” He says with a smile. “Specially if Li beats me like a punching bag.”

“He’ll do no such thing.” Harry says sweetly. He throws a look at Liam and quells whatever anger he still has quickly. It’s not worth fighting about.

“It’s fine. I just wish you two would have taken my calls.” Liam says flatly.

“Couldn’t hear them over the music the artists were playing.” Niall admits.

“Or Nialler’s manly screams of pain.” Zayn laughs.

“You promised not to tell.” Niall pouts. “Oh, Zayn got the tattoo bird’s number. She thinks he’s hot, which to be fair, he is.”

“Did you take him drinking?” Harry asks Zayn.

“He took me to celebrate Haz.” Niall sticks his tongue out and then skips off to the kitchen.

“He was in a lot of pain during the whole thing, but he wouldn’t let them stop.” Zayn tells them. “He wanted to do something for the kids. Figured a pint would help. That turned into six and then he got like this so I figured I should bring him back home before anything happened.”

“Anything like what?” Liam asks. His voice is casual, but he’s suspicious after what Zayn pulled just a few months ago.

“Like him running around topless so he could show off the tattoo to everyone.” Zayn laughs. “He kept trying but Paul would just sit him back down.”

“Sounds about right.” Liam smiles. Niall has always been a happy drunk, if not a tad impulsive.

“Niall stop shoving your tit in my face!” Louis yells in the kitchen. Liam sighs and turns around to go help. At least this he knows how to handle.
“What are you doing Zayn.” Harry glares. He drops all pretense of joviality the second Liam leaves the room.

“What are you talking about?” Zayn asks. He’s not meeting Harry’s eyes so he knows exactly what he’s being asked.

“You can’t be serious.” Harry sighs. “You can’t be falling in love with him.”

“What?” Zayn yelps. There’s a blush staining his cheeks and Harry drags him up to his room so they can’t be overheard. “Harry- I’m not-”

“I know you Zayn.” Harry glares. “I know what’s happening. I went through it eight months ago.”

“I’ll leave. Tomorrow. I promise.” Zayn says softly. “I’ll pack up tonight and find a place in the city.”

“Zayn you don’t have to leave.” Harry tells him.

“Yes I do. I don’t want to do anything to mess things up for him.” Zayn growls. “It’s you too though. God I was in love with you for years. You say you know me, but you didn’t even see that. Just when I start to love something that belongs to you.”

“You’ve never-” Harry starts.

“I tried when we lived together Harry!” Zayn yells. “I tried to tell you, but you wouldn’t listen. You just pushed me back to Perrie. You never noticed me.”

It hurts that Zayn could think that. He’s always noticed Zayn. His beauty, his heart, all the things that make him so amazing. He’s noticed the best friend who’s always been there for him. He’s never noticed this though. Never noticed that Zayn looks at him with soft eyes and his touches always linger. “I’m sorry Zayn.” Harry says quietly.

“Can you just leave me alone? Just let me pack so I can go.” Zayn cries.

“You’re not going anywhere.” Harry says stonily. “I’ll talk to Liam and Niall about this. Maybe we can-”

“No!” Zayn yells. “I can’t do this. I can’t get between you three. Liam doesn’t even like me. You’re all in love with each other. You’re getting committed. There’s no room left for me. Besides, it’s not what I want. I just- I just want him.”

“There’s always room for someone we love Zayn.” Harry urges. He has loved the boy for as long as he’s known him. Maybe not the way Zayn has, but he has loved him. “I didn’t think that Liam would accept me. That he would let anything come between him and Niall. But now look at us.”

“All I do is look at you. I see how happy you all are and I have no right to put myself inside that.” Zayn says. He’s crying, tears rolling down his cheeks without any sign of stopping. “I can’t try to do this. I’m not that strong. So please Harry, if you have ever cared about me, just go.”

Harry wants to help his friend, wants to tell him that maybe it would work out. But he can’t. He can’t because it might not, and he doesn’t know how to say that. He leaves, closing the door behind him, and his heart drops when he hears Zayn sob through the wood.
“What are you doing?” Niall asks. He’s half asleep, but there’s been a constant noise for the last several minutes and he crawled out to the foyer. Zayn is carrying a duffel bag in each arm and his cheeks are wet.

“I’m going Niall.” Zayn says quietly. “I should never have moved in here in the first place.”

“Why?” Niall asks, suddenly awake. He doesn’t want Zayn to leave, for too many reasons to even start thinking about.

“It was a mistake Niall. Let’s just leave it at that.” Zayn smiles. He drops the bags and pulls Niall into a sweet hug. “I’ll miss you. I really will Nialler.”

“Don’t go then.” Niall mumbles into Zayn’s leather jacket. “Stay with us.”

“I can’t.” Zayn whispers. “I’m sorry Nialler. I’m so so sorry.”

He breaks the hug and wipes a tear off Niall’s cheek, and then he’s gone. Niall stands at the open door and watches as Zayn loads the bags in his backseat before getting in and driving away. He doesn’t even look back. Niall waits with the door open, hoping Zayn will turn back, hoping he’ll stay. Snowflakes start falling heavy and wet, blanketing the farm in a dreary gray.

He isn’t coming back, and that hurts more than Niall would have believed. He closes the door when a fit of coughing reminds him that he’s still sick. The cold isn’t going to help his sickness, or make Zayn come back. He walks upstairs and opens the door to the main bedroom. He walks up to the bed and curls between his boys and cries.

“Nialler? What’s wrong?” Liam mumbles sleepily.

“Zayn left.” Niall says. He can’t help the tears pouring down his face, and probably wouldn’t if he could.

“Oh.” is all Liam says. He rolls over and Niall against his chest. Harry stirs behind him and wraps his arms around Niall’s waist.

“Why did he just go?” Niall asks.

“He had to Niall.” Harry says softly.

Niall sits up, tearing their arms off of him. “What did he say to you Haz?”

“Niall, he didn’t want me to say anything.” Harry sighs.

“What did he say Harry?” Niall asks again, suddenly filled with rage.

“He said that he’s in love with you.” Harry admits quietly. It hits Niall like a bullet.

“So you kicked him out?” Niall screams.

“No Niall! He wanted to go. He knew Liam wouldn’t accept him. He knew he couldn’t be a part of this.” Harry says angrily.

“Why? Because three is the magical limit on this relationship?” Niall asks, venom dripping in his voice. “Shouldn’t we have at least talked about it first?”

“Because he knows how hard it was on all of us to get to this point. Liam said three and we both agreed.” Harry says, matching every ounce of rage Niall has.
“Haz.” Liam says softly. “We should have all talked about it. He means a lot to both of you. I could be open to adding him into that if you both are. You’ve opened my mind since you’ve been here.”

“What?” Harry asks. His face has gone from angry to extremely confused. Niall is almost as taken aback as Harry looks.

“I mean, it’s not like it was with you. I’m not already falling for him. But if you two want it then we could try, like, dating or something.” Liam shrugs. “I like him enough for that.”

“Since when?” Harry asks incredulously. “You hated him.”

“I did not.” Liam rolls his eyes. “I just didn’t like what he did. I was afraid he’d get in between us, but not that he’d want to be a part of it too. He’s a good bloke.”

“See? See what happens when you don’t consult us Haz?” Niall asks. “Your best friend is gone.”

“Stop it Niall!” Liam says harshly. “He didn’t do it to hurt you. He did it because he thought it was best for everyone involved. Frankly I hadn’t realized you were so far gone for him already. Guess it shouldn’t surprise me though, considering how this all happened in the first place.”

“Fuck both of you!” Niall yells. He storms out of the room and down the stairs. He grabs his wallet and the keys to his car off the table and runs out the door in his pajamas. He dashes to the garage and opens it, crawling in his car as fast as he can. When he pulls out he can see Liam and Harry running out the front door, but that doesn’t stop him. He doesn’t know where he’s going, but anywhere that isn’t here sounds like a good start.

Zayn’s flight is set for three hours from the time he buys his ticket, so now he’s sitting around in Starbucks, trying not to think about the boys. It’s not working. Every time he hears an Irish lilt, which is everywhere in the Dublin airport, he thinks about Niall. Whenever he sees someone add too much sugar to their coffee he thinks about Liam. Every time he hears someone laugh too long and too loud he thinks about Harry.

“Zayn?” A familiar voice asks. He turns to find a head of brown hair and shockingly blue eyes.

“Niall?” Zayn asks.

“You’re going back to London then.” Niall says. It’s not a question.

“Actually I’m going back to Bradford.” Zayn admits. If nothing else at least he can see his mum. She’ll help him through anything, not that he plans on telling her about this.

“I see.” Niall says quietly.

“What are you doing here Niall? In your pajamas?” Zayn asks.

“I’m going somewhere.” Niall admits.

“And that somewhere is?” Zayn asks. The Irish lad is beginning to worry him. He’s too quiet. He’s barely wearing anything. He obviously isn’t here for Zayn, so why is he here?

“You’ll tell Harry and Liam, so none of your business.” Niall says curtly.

“Niall stop.” Zayn says softly. “Go home. Go back to your boyfriends. Go back to your kids.”
“No!” Niall hisses. “I’m not going back there right now. I’m not going back to that life, where what I feel doesn’t matter.”

“Niall James Horan, you stop that right now.” Zayn glares. “Those two love you more than anything I’ve ever seen. I don’t know what you’re fighting about, but it’s not important enough to do this.”

“It’s you!” Niall yells. Everyone in the coffee shop stops and looks at them. Zayn shoots a fiery glare at them all and everyone goes back to their business. “We were fighting about you. Because you left and I was so furious I couldn’t stay there. It doesn’t matter to them that I love you.”

“Niall I chose to leave. I chose not to even try to be with you three. Don’t blame them for that.” Zayn pleads. He left so he could stop their relationship from coming apart, not so that it would.

“So what am I supposed to do? Just forget about it? About you?” Niall asks. “I just wanted to go away, so you know what? That’s what I’m going to do, just go. That’s obviously what you think I should do.”

He’s gone in a flash. Zayn struggles to follow him, barely keeping track of him in a crowd of taller people. Luckily the very distinctive blue pajamas he’s wearing stand out. Zayn rushes after him, taking advantage of his long legs to catch him. “Niall stop. You can’t do this.” Zayn gasps when he finally catches Niall by the arm.

“Don’t you dare tell me what to do!” Niall hisses. “You didn’t even tell me about this. You let Harry tell me. And now there’s nobody I can talk to because Harry and Liam are against me and you’re leaving.”

“And Louis? Your best friend? What about him?” Zayn asks. His breathing is returning to normal, so his lungs don’t feel like they’re about to burst. Smoking has it’s bad sides, and this is definitely one.

“He wouldn’t understand. He loves one person and one person only. Eleanor. He doesn’t know what it’s like to fall in love when you already are.” Niall says angrily.

“You’re the one who told me he’s good at helping Nialler.” Zayn sighs. “He may not understand what it’s like, but at least he’ll listen to you. You’re acting crazy right now.”

“That happens when you’re in love Zayn!” Niall groans. “You do stupid crazy things.”

“Well stop it.” Zayn laughs. “Go back to your family. Go home and get better so you can hold your babies. Let Louis help you with this. Let Harry and Liam talk to you instead of just running away. That isn’t you anymore.”

“I don’t know who I’ll be without you though.” Niall whispers. “You ground me Zayn. You help me try new things. You never judge me for letting out whatever is inside. You let me be me.”

It’s beautiful what he says, but it’s not everything. “I also make you doubt Niall. You ran away from a loving family because I chose to leave. I can’t do it. That’s all there is to it. I love you, love all of you in different ways, but that’s not enough.” Zayn sighs.

“Why not? Liam said he’s willing to give it a shot. We can start dating.” Niall pleads. That’s new information, but it doesn’t change anything.

“Because Niall, I’m not interested in a polyamorous relationship. I want one person for the rest of my life, not three.” Zayn smiles. “That kind of relationship isn’t for me.”

“You won’t even try?” Niall asks with wide eyes.
“Would you leave them for me?” Zayn asks.

“Zayn, no.” Niall says quietly.

“Exactly. You love them so much, and I’m not going to compete for that love. I’m not going to be able to split my focus between all of you. Not when I’d care about you more than them, even Haz who I was in love with for a long time. It’s not fair to any of us.” Zayn explains. It’s taken saying it out loud to process everything, but it’s what he feels.

“I need you though.” Niall starts to cry.

“You can call me any time Nialler. I’ll always be here for you. I just can’t physically be here with you. Not until I find that one person that can make me truly happy. I’ll always be too tempted to fall into you.” Zayn says slowly.

“Promise you’ll always answer?” Niall asks. Zayn wipes the tears off Niall’s cheeks and smiles. He leans in, holding Niall’s face in his hands, and puts their lips together. It’s slow and sweet, without any sense of trying to devour each other. They fit like puzzle pieces, and it’s so tempting to just let this moment last forever, but it has to end.

“I promise.” Zayn breathes. He presses their foreheads together and sighs. “So let this be the end of it. Let me find someone who loves me like you love them. Let me try and be happy.”

“I will.” Niall sniffs.

“And go back home. Take whatever Haz and Li throw at you, and apologize. They deserve better than what’s happened. They deserve to have you at your best.” Zayn smiles.

“Fine.” Niall laughs. “Be that way. Make me be a good person.”

“And give the twins a kiss for me. I can’t exactly spoil them rotten from another country, but I’ll send gifts.” Zayn grins.

“You’re still coming to the ceremony right?” Niall asks suddenly.

“Of course I will.” Zayn says happily. He’s looking forward to it actually. Even though he wants to be with Niall, wants to live his happily ever after with the Irish lad, he wants to see him happy more. He could never replace Harry and Liam in Niall’s heart. They’d end up resenting each other in the end, no matter how much they loved each other.

“Good.” Niall laughs. “Listen the same goes for me. Call me any time, for any reason. I want to talk to you. I need to. Tell me all your problems and the people you date and what you had for dinner. Nothing is too little. You can even tell me about your incredibly boring job. I’ll listen happily.”

“Of course.” Zayn smiles. “I need to go now Nialler. My bags are all on the plane so I can’t miss it.”

It’s a lie. One he hates telling, because he just wants to spend as much time with Niall as he can, but it has to be told. Niall has to go home, and Zayn needs to start to move on. He holds his newly tattooed are behind his back as a private joke with himself. A little white lie told to make everything better. He just hopes it actually does help make things better.

Harry doesn’t know what to do anymore. By the time he got his car going they couldn’t see Niall’s car anymore. They drove around town, looking everywhere that Niall could have gone. They’ve
checked the hospitals in case he was an accident. The Chair. Even Louis’ new house. He’s nowhere to be found.

Liam and Louis are still out looking, but Harry’s back at the house in case Niall shows up. There’s no tears left in his body to cry, he aches all over, and he’s absolutely no help to Eleanor with the babies. They can sense he’s upset and every time he picks one of them up they wail. She’s kicked him out of the nursery, in the nicest possible way of course. Eleanor is sweet that way.

Now he’s sitting on the foyer stairs and chewing his nails until they bleed. This is all his fault. He should have noticed sooner, noticed the way Niall had been slipping away from them. He should have seen that Zayn and Niall were falling into each other. He was too busy playing the father to pay attention to the way they needed him.

Truth be told, he’s not interested in adding Zayn into the mix. He loves him so much, thinks he’s gorgeous, but he’s not romantically interested in the other boy. It would have solved so many problems in his life if he had been, but he isn’t. He found the loves of his life in Liam and Niall. They form a perfect bond, one Harry had taken for granted.

He pulls out his mobile again, knowing Niall won’t answer. He hasn’t returned any of the dozens of calls Harry has made, nor any of the others that Louis, Liam, and Eleanor did. He listens to the familiar ringing of the phone until Niall’s voice-mail picks up. He listens to the sound of Niall’s voice, taking a pathetic amount of comfort in the Irish accent. He listens to the beep telling him that he needs to speak.

“Niall, I don’t know if you’re listening to these. I don’t know where you are or when you’re coming back. All I know is that I’m sorry and I hope you come home soon. I miss you. We all miss you—” Harry manages to say before his voice gives out. “I- I’m so sorry.”

“Haz, you’re not the one who should be sorry.” Niall’s voice says. Harry’s head whips around so fast it almost hurts. The front door is still closed, which means Niall must have come in through the garage. Harry runs down the steps and looks into the kitchen doorway. Niall is standing there in his baggy blue pajamas, looking more hurt and vulnerable than the day he fell off the roof.

“Niall!” Harry croaks. He runs as fast as his legs will carry him and wraps his arms around the small boy as tight as he can. Sobs start to shake his body, but no tears come out. His throat is as dry as his tear ducts and every sob feels like swallowing razor blades.

“Haz I’m so sorry.” Niall whispers. “I’m so so sorry.”


“Harry stop!” Niall yells. He pulls back away from Harry and the taller man feels as if a part of himself is being pulled apart. “I wasn’t lonely. I wasn’t looking for attention. I love Zayn. I love him almost as much as I love you and Liam. He feels like another piece of myself. I don’t know when it started, I don’t even know when I realized it, but I know this wasn’t because you stopped noticing me.”

“But I should have known Niall.” Harry says. Niall’s confession should have left him reeling, but all it does is make him feel worse. “I know you both like I know myself, and I should have noticed.”

“You’ve been busy Haz.” Niall says. He deflates, all obstinacy and rage draining out of him. He looks small and broken. “You’ve been dealing with the babies and the issues Grimmy dragged back up.”
“You’re still too important to have let slip through the cracks Niall. I can’t lose you. Please don’t leave us, leave me.” Harry begs.

“If I was leaving Haz, I would have gotten on the plane. I would have gone to Boston and not looked back. Or I would have followed Zayn back to Bradford.” Niall says quietly. That does leave him reeling. He feels like he’s been hit by a train.

“You were going to- You were going to get on a plane and run away from us where we’d have never found you? You were going to leave our family over him?” Harry asks. His lungs aren’t filling properly anymore. His vision is growing dark and blurry at the edges.

“I couldn’t do it.” Niall cries. “I couldn’t leave you. Not even for Zayn.”

“But you wanted to Niall!” Harry sobs. “We aren’t enough for you. Were we ever?”

“You always will be Harry.” Niall says in a voice thick with grief. “I love you.”

“Then why? Why would you even consider doing it?” Harry ask, a surge of anger clearing his vision.

“Because I love him Harry.” Niall says quietly. “You of all people have to understand that.”

“I don’t Niall. I don’t understand how you could leave us, leave our children. I love Zayn too, like a brother, but if I had known this would happen I would never have let him come here. I wouldn’t have let him take you away from us!” Harry screams.

“He didn’t take me away Harry. He told me what I needed to hear. He helped me see what I needed to see. My life is here alongside you and Liam. I love you both. I need you both.” Niall says desperately. He takes a step towards Harry, but the taller boy quickly takes one backwards.

“How am I supposed to trust you Niall? How are any of us supposed to trust you?” Harry questions with a fury he’s never known before. “You were willing to abandon us, our children. How do I trust you after that?”

“Haz I didn’t think-” Niall says.

“You never think Niall!” Harry screams. “You run around from fancy to fancy, doing whatever you want, whenever you want. You’re nothing but impulsive, and it’s beginning to lose it’s fucking charm!”

“Haz. Stop.” Liam says softly, approaching from behind. He places a hand on Harry’s shoulder and squeezes gently. Harry feels himself falling back into place. He didn’t mean half the things he’s said, not really. He just wanted Niall to know the pain he’s feeling.

“Li I-” Niall tries to manage a small smile, but nothing more than a twitch is managed before he starts crying again. Liam scoops the boy up in his arms, doing just what Harry should have been this whole time, loving Niall. He carries him over the the sitting room and holds him on the couch.

“It’s okay Nialler.” Liam soothes. He’s running his hand through Niall’s hair and rubbing soothing circles on his back. He’s comforting Niall as someone who’s just lost someone very important instead of berating him like a child who ran away. He’s being exactly what Niall needs instead of losing control of himself like Harry did. It must be killing him inside, but he still puts Niall first.

“It’s not Liam.” Niall finally says. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry I did this.”
“Don’t be sorry for falling in love Niall.” Liam tells him quietly. “You can’t help it and you shouldn’t be sorry. I learned that from you.”

“You did?” Niall asks. His voice is barely above a squeak, which is more than Harry can even manage.

“Yes. We both fell in love with Harry secretly. It almost destroyed me then, but now I’ve never been happier.” Liam says, glancing at Harry with a smile. “You should have told us about it, you wouldn’t be hurting so bad if you had.”

“I thought you’d be angry.” Niall says quietly. “I thought Harry would understand and you’d be angry.”

“Well that’s a fair assumption given our histories.” Liam smiles. “And I don’t think Haz was really angry, just scared.”

“I was. I’m sorry for those things I said Nialler.” Harry admits. He feels like a weight comes off his chest, even though he shouldn’t. Niall hasn’t forgiven him for being so cruel yet, if he ever does.

“I needed to hear them Harry. On one level or another we all know they’re true. I’m impulsive to a fault and I betrayed you both. I ran away again.” Niall says. The words clearly pain him to say.

“Nialler you didn’t betray us, and you didn’t run away. You came back.” Harry tells him.

“You picked us, and I know how difficult that can be from experience.” Liam smiles.

“It’s not the same Liam.” Niall says. “You just chose not to sleep with him. You weren’t in love with him. I repeated the pattern of hurting you because I only thought about myself. I’m not sure if I would have come back straight away if I hadn’t run into him at the airport.”

“You ran into him? You mean you didn’t follow him there?” Harry asks.

“I had no idea where he was. He ended up in a Starbucks in the airport and so did I.” Niall admits. “He calmed me down and got me to see what was really important, you four. I couldn’t give you all up just for him. I couldn’t face that idea once he set my head straight.”

“It doesn’t matter how it happened Niall. All that really matters is that in the end, you chose us, our family.” Harry smiles. It’s true. This has been a long road, full of twists and turns. Their paths may not always follow exactly beside one another. What’s important is that they try and walk hand in hand, not that it always happens.

“When do you think he’ll start sleeping in here with us again?” Harry asks.

“When he’s ready Haz.” Liam tells him softly. Niall has been back for a week, been healthy for four days, but he’s been staying in his room instead of with Liam and Harry. They’ve tried to get him to come back to their bed, but he politely declines. The rest of the day always goes well. He smiles and laughs like usual. He jokes and plays with the twins, but he slips off to his own room at night.

“Do you think that will be soon?” Harry asks him.

“I don’t know honestly. I’ve never seen him like this. He’s only really ever been in love with the two of us before Zayn, so I don’t know what he’s like when there’s been a major breakup.” Liam admits. When he and Niall broke up the Irish boy avoided him for months, ignoring any and all attempts at
communication.

“It’s not a breakup though, not really.” Harry says quietly.

“Close enough Haz. He was in love with Zayn, and then Zee fled the country. I’d call that a breakup.” Liam tells him. Six months ago things would have been different. Liam would have been furious about this. He might have even broken things off all together. Now though, now all he wants is to help Niall through it.

“Aren’t we enough?” Harry asks in barely a whisper.

“Haz, baby, yes.” Liam says. He rolls over to hold the lanky boy tight. “We’re enough. He wouldn’t have come back if we weren’t. This doesn’t mean he doesn’t love us. It means that Zayn was another part of him. He gave him something he wanted, but not what he needed. We give him what he needs.”

“Are you sure?” Harry asks. “I don’t want to lose him. I can’t lose him Liam.”

“We won’t. He has some things to work through, but I promise you everything will get better.” Liam says, gripping Harry even more tightly.

“You can’t promise that Liam.” Harry pouts.

“I can and I do.” Liam says, steadfast in his belief. Niall is going to be better soon. He has to believe it. He can’t even try and think of what will happen otherwise.

“Alright listen Twinkerbell, I haven’t had a chance to get you alone yet, but now we’re going to talk.” Louis says. Eleanor has given him the afternoon off from birthing class to have this talk, and Harry and Liam are at a checkup for the kids. It’s the perfect opportunity for it. They’ve talked about what happened, but they haven’t been alone for more than a few minutes

“Did you just call me Twinkerbell?” Niall laughs.

“I was going to call you something really mean, but then I found you just watching fucking Teletubbies without your kids. You’re unbelievable sometimes.” Louis sighs.

“I way have found a leftover joint in my room from when- when he was still here.” Niall says softly. “Want some? This show is great if you watch it right.”

“Keep it.” Louis rolls his eyes. “You obviously need it more than I do.”

“Cheers!” Niall laughs. He sparks up and takes a drag off the huge joint. If Louis’ experience is anything to go off of it was about the size of a finger before Niall started on it.

“Niall, we really need to talk.” Louis sighs again.

“No we don’t, Louis.” Niall giggles. He jumps up and runs out before Louis can grab him by the wrist. Louis sighs and follows him into the kitchen. Niall is struggling to hold about six large bags of crisps when he comes ambling out of the pantry. He drops them on the counter and then turns around, probably to go get more. Louis catches him this time and pins him against the wall.
“Niall stop!” He hisses. “I need to talk to you. I need you to talk to me.”

“Why?” Niall asks, cocking his head to the side.

“Because you left me behind too.” Louis says fiercely. “You’re my best friend and you just ran away.”

“Louis I’ve had enough of these talks over the last few days.” Niall huffs.

“And you’ve apologized to everyone except for me.” Louis glares. “It hurt Niall. You never even talked to me about any of this. You just abandoned me for Zayn even before he left.”

“I’m sorry alright. I’m sorry that I was going through something I didn’t think you’d understand. I’m sorry that I didn’t tell you I was in love with him so you could call me an idiot and run your big mouth off.” Niall glares.

“Is that what you think of me?” Louis asks. “That I’d be so awful to you?”

“I think you can’t understand what I’m going through, so why bother asking you to listen to it.” Niall says softly.

“So because I only love my wife, I can’t be there for you? I can’t be your friend because I don’t have a plural relationship?” Louis huffs.

“Of course you can. But it’s not like I can talk to you about it Louis. I can’t tell you things like that. You’re the fun guy. The one who can make me laugh and make jokes out of anything I do.” Niall says. It’s clearly meant to be kind but it just hurts more.

“So when I helped you when the twins came along, that meant nothing? I’m just a joke to you?” Louis asks. He lets Niall go and walks over to the counter, leaning on it for support.

“No Louis. You’re my best mate, but I don’t want to drag you into my shit. You don’t deserve to be pulled down by me.” Niall tells him softly from the spot Louis left him.

“It’s not pulling me down Nialler. It’s me pulling you back up! Sometimes we need to ask for help and that’s okay.” Louis yells. “I want to help you because you’re like a brother to me. I care about you okay? I know I’m not Zayn. I won’t take you shooting, or go get tattoos on a whim, or fall in love with you, but I’m here. I’m here for you.”

“Why?” Niall asks. “Why do you even want me around?”

“Because you’re the first person who has never judged me, but also calls me out on my shit. You let me be my unapologetic self.” Louis laughs. “You see past all the defenses I put up. Hell if I was gay I would have fallen in love with you too. Unfortunately I only like vaginas.”

“Such a shame.” Niall giggles. “You’re not really my type though.”

“Because I’m not a supermodel?” Louis scoffs. “I have a better arse than those three combined.”

“Doesn’t do me much good though does it?” Niall says with a smile. “Besides, I just don’t like guys who are shorter than me.”

“I am not!” Louis screeches. It’s an ongoing fight between them, neither willing to give an inch.

“Yes you are.” Niall laughs. “And even if you aren’t, it’s close enough that it doesn’t matter.”
“Rude. I’m attractive.” Louis pouts.

“Very.” Niall grins. “I mean that Louis. You’re very attractive, downright fuckable actually, but you’re way too high maintenance for me.”

“Yeah that probably wouldn’t get any better.” Louis sighs. “You really think I’m fuckable?”

“Extremely. I would do things to that arse you can’t even imagine. Eat you out for days. But that’s not in the cards.” Niall says with a wicked grin. “Besides, you’re like my brother too. I already went there with Liam.”

“I thought he was your daddy?” Louis says evilly.

“When it comes up yeah.” Niall laughs. “That hasn’t happened in a while though. Not since before the twins.”

“The kink or sex in general?” Louis asks.

“Pick one.” Niall sighs.

“Like none?” Louis asks. That’s surprising since they used to fuck like bunnies. He can’t count the number of times Niall has been too fucked out to properly exercise.

“Not even a little.” Niall groans. “Zayn and I came close at the airport. He said he had to leave and I dragged him into a bathroom stall. Before I could get his cock in my mouth though, some kid threw up all over the floor and ruined it. He has such a beautiful cock Louis. It’s so thick and long and perfect. Just like everything else. It’s so amazing. Like there should be statues erected- ha erected! Didn’t even mean to do that.”

“You were going to cheat on Harry and Liam in an airport bathroom?” Louis gasps, cutting him off before this can get any weirder. “What are you? A Republican US Senator?”

“See why I don’t tell you these things?” Niall glares.

“That’s what it would have been Niall.” Louis sighs. “You know I don’t lie to you.”

“Wish you would.” Niall mumbles. “Wish you’d tell me everything is going to be alright.”

“That wouldn’t be a lie Niall.” Louis smiles. “It’s the truth. Things will get better. It might take some time, but things will get better. The first step might be sleeping in the same bed as your fiancés.”

“I can’t yet.” Niall says softly.

“Why not?” Louis asks, genuinely curious as to why Niall has been sleeping away from the other two.

“You’ll make fun of me.” Niall glares.

“I promise, just this once, I won’t make any kind of joke or tell anyone.” Louis says.

“The bed still smells like his cologne, alright?” Niall asks. Tears well up in his eyes and it makes Louis heart hurt. He wraps his arms around Niall’s shoulders and presses the Irish lad to his chest.

“Have you talked to him yet?” Louis asks quietly.

“We agreed to take a couple weeks before we talked, after the bathroom thing.” Niall admits.
“We’ve texted a few times, little stupid things because we can’t keep to it, but nothing real. Nothing like before.”

“How long until you can actually talk?” Louis asks.

“Six days.” Niall sighs. “But I think we’ll actually need to go longer.”

“How come?” Louis asks.

“Because I don’t think I can get over him in that amount of time.” Niall says in a muffled sob. “I don’t think I can hear his voice and not beg him to come back.”

“God, Niall, you’re really that gone for Malik?” Louis groans.

“I am.” Niall sighs. “He brought out a part of me I didn’t know was there.”

“Well I’m here for you, not in like a sexy way though. You’ll have to sort that out on your own. But Nialler you’re going to have to start the healing process soon.” Louis says quietly. “Like it or not, you two aren’t together.”

“You’re lucky the weed is keeping me from getting too angry right now.” Niall says with a smack on Louis’ arse.

“Good thing then.” Louis smiles. “Seriously though Niall. He’s gone and unless you’re willing to abandon everything you have, you aren’t going to be together. All six of you deserve better than that.”

“I can’t leave my kids or the boys. I can’t.” Niall admits. “But that doesn’t mean it doesn’t hurt Louis. I wanted him to be a part of this. He chose to leave me.”

“Because this wasn’t the life for him Nialler. He wanted you more than he wanted them. It wouldn’t have been right.” Louis says with a smile he hopes is comforting.

“Sometimes I wish I had noticed how amazing he was when he was here to sign the contract. I wish I could have had him for longer.” Niall tells him.

“Your dad died!” Louis groans. “You can forgive yourself for not falling in love literally the day after that happened.”

“I spent quite a bit of time resenting him Louis. The contract, the thing with Liam, I didn’t even notice how perfect he was for me until the night with the guns. He tried to help me even though he thought I hated him. He was so good to me when I wasn’t to him.” Niall sighs.

“You never told me about the Liam thing. I can’t accurately judge the situation if you don’t. The contract ended up for the better, so that’s not really a fair thing.” Louis says, hoping to finally get to hear the story. He’s been insanely curious.

“He tried to shag Liam on the porch on his birthday.” Niall explains.

“Real winner you picked there.” Louis scoffs. How Niall could fall for Zayn Malik is beyond him. After Niall yelled at them in the nursery he realized Zayn was an alright enough bloke, but not someone who was worthy of Niall. He isn’t worth the tears Niall has been crying since he left.

“I know it’s weird, but he was testing Liam for Haz.” Niall says, throwing a hand up before Louis can say anything. “It was a bad decision, yes. But he did it for a good reason. He wanted to be sure
that Liam really loved Haz. It was stupid and ridiculous, but his heart was in the right place.”

“Whatever you say mate. I still don’t think he’s worthy of your affection or time. But that’s not my
decision to make, now is it?” Louis says bluntly.

“Well it’s not like I don’t value your opinion Louis.” Niall says with a kind smile. “You can’t help
who you fall in love with though.”

“Yeah yeah.” Louis rolls his eyes. “So bad movies and junk food then?”

“I thought you’d never ask.” Niall laughs. “I need to get more crisps first.”

“Six bags is plenty Niall.” Louis grabs him before he can dash back into the pantry. “Do you have
anything microwavable and loaded with cheese?”

“Tons!” Niall giggles. “I hide it in the back so Haz won’t notice.”

Niall ends up microwaving a veritable feast of junk food that Louis knows he’s going to regret
eating. It’s worth it though, to feel normal with his best friend. It’s the best feeling in the world.

“Pot in the house Niall?” Harry yells for the fifth time.

“Yes Haz, pot.” Niall sighs. He’s obviously done with this conversation, but Harry is just getting
started.

“What were you thinking? We have children.” Harry says angrily.

“I was thinking that I’m an adult that can make my own decisions. The kids weren’t here. There’s no
risk of them getting stoned off their arses.” Niall glares.

“That’s not what I’m worried about Niall.” Harry sighs. “You’ve been spiraling since Zayn left. I
understand it, I do. You miss him. That doesn’t mean you get to do whatever you want.”

“You think I don’t know that?” Niall hisses. “You think I don’t get that I’m going out of control? I
don’t know what to do anymore. I’m so mad sometimes I can’t even look at you, so excuse me for
wanting to relax for a few hours. Excuse me for wanting a few hours where I don’t feel like I’m
missing a limb and it’s screaming in pain. Excuse me for not wanting to feel like I’m falling apart.”

“Niall-” Louis starts to interject.

“Louis, you should come with me.” Liam says nervously from behind Harry. Harry hands Sam over
to Louis when he passes by.

“Is that what this is? You’re angry at me?” Harry asks. It hurts hearing Niall say these things, but he
wants to get everything out in the open. They can’t start getting better until it is.

“Of course I am!” Niall yells. “You didn’t even tell me. You made the decision for me like what I
wanted didn’t matter. So yes, Harry, I’m mad at you.”

“Well sod off.” Harry glares. “You are destroying this family.”

“I wanted to build this family!” Niall screams.

“Well we didn’t!” Harry yells. “Neither Liam nor me wanted to add Zayn to this. He was like a
brother to me, now I can’t even talk to him. And Liam won’t say anything, but I know this is tearing
him up. You’re so mad that I didn’t consider your feelings, but you haven’t thought about ours
once!”

“What feelings? I’ve been shut out of this relationship since the babies came along.” Niall glares.
“We’ve hardly talked about anything except for Sam and Gems since they were born. This is one of
the only real conversations we’ve had in over a month and it’s just you yelling at me again. I’m not
an equal in this relationship anymore. I’m just another kid for you to play Mister Mom with.”

“What the fuck Niall?” Harry asks angrily. “You’re the one that pulled away, not us. And yeah
we’ve both focused on the kids, because that’s what parents do.”

“We’re not their fathers Harry! Liam is, not us!” Niall roars. Everything goes silent. Harry can’t find
any words, the air expelled from his lungs. Nothing Niall could ever say could hurt worse than that.
Nothing.

“Get out.” Harry growls.

“Haz l-” Niall starts.

“Get the fuck out! Go!” Harry yells. “Go to Zayn. Go to Boston or London or fucking Cape Town!
Just fucking go!”

Niall bursts into tears and runs past Harry. When the door to the foyer slams, Liam comes running
just in time to catch Harry when he falls to his knees. This is it. Everything has come undone, and
Harry could never have seen it coming.

Chapter End Notes

Please don't be mad at me for killing Sophia off. She had to die so I could have babies to
play around with, because Daddy! Liam and Daddy! Harry are perf, and I already have
a love...whatever you'd call ziall/narriam. Square? Triangle with a line segment tacked
on? Whatever.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

This chapter is long. Like really really long. Longer than Harry potter and the Sorcerer's Stone long. And so much happens in it. Warnings for mentions of rape and thoughts of suicide. This chapter is intense and I'm almost sorry for that. At least it ends happy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Babe come back to bed.” A voice laced with sleep calls from inside the hotel room. He’s dark and beautiful, his voice scratchy from too many cigarettes. His hair is mussed, but somehow manages to still look good. All in all he’s a very appealing package to look at.

“Not yet. It’s gorgeous out here.” Niall laughs. In truth he’s freezing. He didn’t put on proper trousers before he sat out here, and his jacket is far too thin. It’s worth it though for the view. “And its Babes, not babe. Get it right.”

“Whatever. Your hour is up.” The man says, pulling back up his pants. “If you don’t want any more, then I should go. I can still pull another customer tonight.”

“Money is on the nightstand.” Niall sighs. He knows the procedure by now, half before, half after. It can vary from place to place, but that tends to be the standard.

“See you around Niles.” The man says before he walks out the door. The click of the latch echoes through the room like the bells of Notre Dame de Paris at noon. It’s a pathetically familiar sound for the Irish lad. He’s become accustomed to the late night walkouts by the men he hires.

Niall sits in silence on the balcony of his hotel room. Oslo looks amazing in the snow, even at two in the morning. It’s eating through his bank account like a shark, but what else does he have to live for. Harry kicked him out. Zayn rejected him again. His entire family is gone. Now he’s just waiting for his money to run dry and having as good a time as he can before he throws himself into oblivion.

His mobile rings and he considers not answering it. Liam has been calling him every day, and it’s beginning to run through the last reserves of his willpower not picking up, but Louis’ face is the one that pops up. “Do you have any idea what time it is Louis?”

“You know I bloody well don’t. You haven’t told me where you are.” Louis says angrily.

“Well it’s one in the morning where you are, so what do you want?” Niall sighs.

“Just thought I’d call and wish you a happy Christmas.” Louis huffs.

“Shite. Shite, Louis, I’m sorry. I completely forgot what yesterday was.” Niall says. “Happy Birthday Tommo.”

“It’s fine Niall. When you’ve been gone for five weeks, not telling me where you’ve gone, you missing my birthday is the least of my worries.” Louis says softly.

“You know why I haven’t told you where I am.” Niall says, all traces of regret leaving his voice.
“I won’t bloody tell them! We don’t even live there anymore. Your babies have been switched to formula so El can prepare for the triplets.” Louis sighs.

“They’re not my babies remember?” Niall asks venomously. His voice is getting watery and he does his best to choke it back. Every time he thinks about that fight he breaks down. He didn’t mean it. He’s never thought of the twins as just Liam’s. They were all their parents. He never should have said it. Harry hasn’t even tried to talk to him since. Liam has called almost every day, but Niall never answers. A clean break is best for everyone. That’s obviously what Harry wants.

“Yes they are, Niall.” Louis says angrily. “Liam may be their father, but you love those kids like your own. You wouldn’t have their names tattooed on your chest if you really felt that way. You also wouldn’t have me send you pictures every time I see them.”

“Then stop if you don’t want to anymore.” Niall says flatly.

“That’s not what I mean Niall.” Louis sighs. “There’s something you should know.”

“What?” Niall asks. He’s ready for this conversation to end.

“Loki and Thor passed. Loki had a heart attack, and then Thor stopped doing anything and died this morning.” Louis tells him softly. “I’m so sorry.”

“Happy fucking Christmas to me then.” Niall says. “Good night Louis.”

“Good night Niall.” Louis sighs.

Niall hangs up his mobile and tries his hardest not to cry. It doesn’t work. The dogs were like family to him. He’d seen them almost every day since they were born. He’s missed them since he left, and now he’d never see them again. It’s just one more part of his life that’s gone. No surprise there honestly.

The prostitute left a card on the nightstand, but Niall throws it in the bin on top of the used condom. He only picked the guy because he bore a passing resemblance to Harry. It wasn’t the same though. There was no spark, no connection. The guy fucked him, but that’s all. He couldn’t even remember Niall’s name. None of them ever do.

“Liam, talk to me.” Harry urges.

“About what Harry?” Liam bites out. Their relationship has gone downhill drastically since Harry kicked Niall out. Liam can barely stand the sight of Harry some days. They only really talk to fight.

“Anything. It’s Christmas. Can’t we set this aside for a day?” Harry asks. “My mum is coming in a few hours.”

“I spent every Christmas between the ages of five and twenty four with Niall, Haz. Last year I couldn’t see him because of him, but now I can’t because of you. I don’t even know where he is because of you. He won’t take my calls or texts, even when I send him a picture of his kids. He’s gone because of you!” Liam yells. “Is that enough talking for you Harry?”

“Liam I’ve told you I’m sorry so many times. I can’t keep having this fight with you.” Harry sighs.

“Then fix it Harry!” Liam roars. “You’re the only person who can.”
“I can’t. What he said to me was cruel.” Harry says, shrinking back from Liam.

“Just like what you said to him when he came back from the airport. Just like you were to him over something as stupid as a fucking joint, Harry!” Liam says angrily.

“Not like that. He knows how much the twins mean to me, and he said they weren’t mine. He said I’m not their father.” Harry says, tears forming in the corner of his eyes.

“Well I hope this is was worth it for you, because now none of us are happy. He’s god knows where. I wouldn’t even know if he’s alive if he didn’t check in with Louis once a week. He’s not even talking to Zayn now.” Liam says bitterly.

“He’s not with Zayn?” Harry asks.

“Zayn told him to come back home. He told him to try and fix things with us. When Zayn rejected him, he left, and hasn’t talked to anyone except Louis. He’s all alone somewhere.” Liam growls.

“I thought they were together. I thought they’d have-” Harry says quietly.

“It doesn’t matter what you thought Harry. You drove him away. And if I didn’t love you so goddamned much I would take the kids and go.” Liam sighs.

“It might be better than living like this.” Harry says angrily. “Being a ghost in my own house.”

“Then bring back the light Harry. Find a way to fix things with Niall. None of us can survive much longer without the others. I know I fucking can’t.” Liam bites. “We all need each other, and as awful as we’ve all been the last few months, we love each other. You know how much he loves you.”

“I don’t know how! I don’t know how to make things better! I don’t know how to get everything back the way it was!” Harry cries. “I don’t know how!”

“Try apologizing. Try fucking calling him.” Liam says, holding back the anger raging in his chest. “Try being Haz again, instead of whatever this thing is you’ve become.”

“And what if he doesn’t want to talk to me? What if he tells me he doesn’t love me anymore?” Harry sobs. It’s the first time Liam has felt any sympathy for Harry since Niall left. He pulls Harry into a hug, the first contact they’ve had in weeks. It feels good, holding him like this. It’s familiar and comforting.

“I know he does Haz. He still loves both of us.” Liam says. It’s become a sort of mantra for him. One last thing to hold onto when his life is falling apart. “He sent us Christmas presents you know.”

“He what?” Harry asks.

“I put them under the tree. He sent them last week.” Liam admits. “Figured we should wait because the paper says ‘Do not open before Christmas’.”

“Was there a return address? Somewhere we can track?” Harry asks, suddenly much more animated.

“If there were, then I wouldn’t still be here. I’d be hunting him down.” Liam sighs. “Our packages are small, but the twins each got something big. I think they’re probably toys the twins can’t even play with. He always was too eager.”

“Can we go open them then?” Harry asks.

“Don’t see why not. Go get the kids while I set up the camera?” Liam asks.
“Sure.” Harry smiles. He runs off to put the kids in their special outfits. They’re stupidly precious little onesies done up like Santa and Mrs. Claus. Liam secretly adores them. He sets up the camera, some state of the art thing Harry bought that Liam can’t figure out until a little red light says that it’s recording. He leaves it at that when Harry comes in holding the twins. He’s wearing some silly elf themed jumper and looks spectacularly cute. It would be a perfect image, but Niall isn’t there to complete it.

Harry puts the twins in these little bouncy seats that lay back which he bought, while Liam digs around for the presents Niall sent. He passes the large boxes over to Harry and holds their gifts for until after the ones for the kids. Harry tears them open to reveal a little truck for them to ride on, and an arch with hanging toys for when they lay on their backs. There’s a note attached to the second one that Harry reads out loud.

“To my darlingest Sam and Gems,” Harry starts. “I want you to know that I love you. By the time you’re old enough to read this note you’ll have long forgotten about me, but I won’t have forgotten you. I always keep you close to my heart. Even though you may not know who I am, I love you both so deeply. I hope your fathers will keep this note, so you can at least know how much I miss you. Love, Niall.”

“Does that mean-” Liam asks, his voice unable to finish the question.

“It means he isn’t planning on coming back Liam.” Harry says with tears flowing down his cheeks.

Liam rips open his box, and in it is a silver chain with a crunched piece of metal. There’s also a note. “I guess I was wrong after all.” Liam reads.

Harry opens the other box and starts sobbing. He pulls Niall’s engagement ring out and drops it on the floor with a shaky hand. Liam can’t move, can’t think or breathe. All the hope he had left vanishes in an instant. Niall really isn’t coming back.

Rome is definitely Niall’s favorite place so far. Berlin is a close second, seeing as there was almost as much to drink as there was back in Ireland, but Rome is definitely better. The city is so alive in a way Niall has never felt before. London is so dark in the winter, and Paris seemed to slow down with every step Niall took. Of course Oslo and Reykjavik are made for wintertime, but they didn’t feel quite so open and happy.

He has a favorite restaurant that he stumbled into his first day here. He ended up closing the place out, staying all day and eating food until the chef just had to meet him. He doesn’t bother waiting for a table, instead strolling straight through to the kitchen. “Niall!” the older gentleman says happily when he walks through the swinging doors.

“Angelo!” Niall laughs. He takes the crushing hug from the man without complaint and gives him a few pecks on the cheeks as is customary. “What are we up to today my man?”

“I was thinking I could teach you how to make your own gnocchi.” Angelo beams. He’s been giving Niall cooking lessons to help distract him from his life lately. They don’t really do him much good, seeing as he doesn’t have a kitchen in his hotel room, but it’s the most fun he’s had since he was kicked out.

“You’re the master. I am but your humble student.” Niall says with a shit eating grin.

“That is, how we say, cazzate.” Angelo says with a smile.
“It’s not bullshit, Angelo.” Niall laughs.

“Ah, but you are learning no?" Angelo says, clapping Niall on the back with a massive hand and steering him towards their usual workstation. “Humility is a waste Niall. Embrace yourself, though not in my restaurant if you would, huh. I think maybe, my cooks would not like that so much. Personally I think it would be better than anything they cook anyways, but these are the challenges we face, no?”

Niall cackles at that, earning him several pointed stares from the other members of the cooking staff. Angelo may be a dirty old man, but he’s a riot if anyone were to ask Niall. “Whatever you say Ange. You already workin on me order?” Niall asks.

“Yes yes, why you get so much is beyond me, Niall.” Angelo sighs. “Who can eat thirty meals in a day?”

“I give them to the homeless Angelo.” Niall explains.

“And eat none?” Angelo gasps. “You hurt me Niall.”

“We always eat what meals you and I make together.” Niall shrugs. “No matter how potentially lethal they are.”

“Your heart is good Niall, but your head not so much.” Angelo scoffs. “You think I eat anything not delicious?”

“I think you’re a sweet man who’d do just about anything to make somebody else happy.” Niall says with a grin.

“Maybe just you, no?” Angelo winks. “Now let us get started so your order does not get cold. No good giving these people food like that. Their lives are hard enough, no? Even if they have a little tesoro like you to help them.”

“I’m no angel.” Niall mutters under his breath. They spend the next hour or so making little potato pastas and then drink wine until it’s ready. And yeah, it’s really tasty, but that’s probably just because Angelo helped him so much. Soon enough he’s off for his first round of meal deliveries. He passes out a box of food to anyone he meets that looks like they need one.

He gets particularly emotional on his second round when he finds a family with two young girls and ends up spending a good half hour just talking with them in the little bit of Italian he’s managed to pick up. Luckily the father speaks a little bit of English too, so Niall can correct himself if he says something the wrong way. He’s only had a week to learn after all.

Once he finishes his fourth and final round he heads off to his next destination, Saint Peter’s Basilica. Things are different here, grander than anything Niall has ever seen back home. Groups of tourists shuffle through the place, snapping photos of anything they can see, while Niall takes the seat he’s come to think of as his usual. He never gives confession, just sits and contemplates how he got to this point in his life.

At one point he would have loved to travel through Europe, laughing and drinking, making new friends and memories, until he decided to go back to Ireland. Now all he can do is regret what he said that night. He’d done it in a haze of rage and pain he still hasn’t managed to quash down.

“Posso darLe un aiuto?” a soft voice says, pulling him out of his thoughts. He looks up to see an elderly priest with soft features smiling down at him kindly.
“Ma dispiace, ma non parlo bene l’italiano.” Niall admits. He can get by enough, but it takes him a long time and he doesn’t want to embarrass himself in front of the father.

“English?” the priest asks. Niall nods and the older gentleman sits down.

“You asked if you could help, yeah?” Niall asks quietly.

“Yes.” the priest nods. “Can I?”

“Can I, like, give confession without you giving me forgiveness?” Niall asks. He doesn’t want to be forgiven, he doesn’t deserve it. He just wants to talk to someone.

“I do not grant forgiveness mi bambino, I just help it along. Only God can truly forgive.” he’s told. “If you do not wish for it, then even he cannot give it to you.”

“I’ve sinned father. So many many times.” Niall admits softly. “I’ve said something I can’t take back, and now one of the only people I’ve ever loved hates me.”

“Do you wish to tell me what it is you’ve said?” the priest asks.

“That would require telling you a good deal more than you’re ready for.” Niall says with a small smile. “Let’s just leave it at this, I said it knowing full well it would hurt this person, that it was the cruelest thing I could say to him, and I did it anyways. I wanted to hurt him, and I did.”

“And why have you done this?” the priest asks.

“Because I don’t know how to let go of my anger anymore. He did something for us, but it hurt when he did it. And I know he wasn’t trying to hurt me, I know it, but I can’t just let it go. I can’t get over how he went behind my back, how he kept a secret like that from me, and then said he couldn’t trust me anymore. I can’t stop being mad because he told me that love is a good thing and then pushed away somebody else that I love. And yeah, maybe the guy was his best friend, but he’s also insanely perfect for me. He’s so amazing and kind and has the prettiest co- why am I telling you all this?” Niall asks, horrified with his rant that has the priest looking at him with an unreadable expression.

Niall makes to leave, tries to run out of one of the holiest places on earth in his religion, except he can’t. The main aisle off the pew is completely blocked by a procession of tourists, several of whom are staring at him with wide eyes. He’s in the Vatican, the only Major Basilica located in the Vatican proper in fact, one hundred feet from the place where the Pope gives holy ceremonies, and he almost shouted at a priest about Zayn’s beautiful brown cock. In front of an audience no less. Perfect. His mother would be thrilled.

Finally the crowd parts for him like the Red Sea and he rushes out, trying desperately to drag his breath out of his throat and stop the wells in his eyes that are about to burst. He runs all the way to the obelisk, his lungs screaming for air because he still can’t breathe. Finally he catches himself on a bollard, letting it’s strength do the work his knee feels like it can’t anymore.

He needs to do something, anything, to get his mind off of Harry and Zayn, and he knows just the thing. Once he feels his legs are steady enough to hold him again he walks towards a particularly ironic club he found. It’s called Blessings, and it’s less than a mile from Vatican City, but caters to a very unholy clientele. It’s early, only nine or so by the time Niall reaches it, but that doesn’t matter anymore. He can deal with the glances he gets, the stares for the pathetic lonely bastard who’s obviously just here for one of the whores that frequently pick up johns from the bar. He couldn’t pull anything without money.
And yeah, he finds someone. Tall, broad shoulders, and an impossibly familiar face. Niall is struck by the force of it, the resemblance to the man he’s known his entire life. It’s not perfect. His lips are a bit too wide, and his eyebrows too well maintained. His eyes are a steel gray, harsh in the dim lighting by the bar, not the sweet deep brown he’s come to love. Still, they could be brothers, his former lover and this man.

Niall walks up to him, ignoring the way these things usually go, the light flirting and discreet conversation, and without bothering to use the accent Angelo has been so carefully instilling in him, asks “Quanto costa?”

How much does it cost? It’s the first thing Niall learned in Italian, because this is how he spends his time now. He buys men for an evening because he doesn’t want to feel anymore. He doesn’t want to remember his name or why he’s doing this. He just wants to be used, wants to feel like the disgusting creature he’s become.

“For you?” the Liam-look-alike asks, glancing him up and down. Niall is pleasantly surprised he speaks English. So few of them do. “It’s going to cost you a lot.”

“I can do a lot.” Niall nods. The man smirks and follows him out the door. Niall’s hotel is only a few blocks from the club, picked carefully for its proximity to both Angelo’s restaurant and Blessings. He doesn’t drive anymore, or ride in cabs unless it’s to get to an airport. Ever since Bradford he’s too terrified to get into a car without alcohol coursing through his veins.

They don’t touch or talk on the way, Niall just walks swiftly until they reach the old stone building that’s playing home to him this week. His wallet feels heavy when he takes it out of his pocket, the product of his personal allowance for the week. The man raises an eyebrow when he notices Niall digging through thousands of euros for the hotel key-card he’s misplaced, but says nothing. Niall has no idea how much this will really cost him.

Harry is stretched out on the couch, Sam sleeping peacefully in his arms, and trying not to notice the way the leather against his skin reminds him of Niall. Everything does though. Every nook and cranny of his entire life now reminds him of the other man. When he opens the fridge there’s the memory of Niall ducking under his arm and laughing playfully while he grabs a Guiness. When he goes to bed alone, because Liam doesn’t talk to him anymore, let alone sleep with him, the pillow tucked beside him wraps imaginary arms around his chest and tickles his chin with not-really-there brown hair.

He can’t go anywhere here, or do anything at all, without thinking of the little Irishman who changed his entire world for the better every single day they’ve known each other, until he just wasn’t there anymore. That change wasn’t any good at all, and it’s Harry’s fault. He was too harsh on Niall about what happened with Zayn. He screamed and yelled and lectured, instead of just listening to him for a second.

His damned pride keeps getting in the way. It got in the way when Zayn admitted his feelings. It got in the way when he kicked Niall out. And now it’s doing it again because no matter how much he just wants to call Niall, to beg the Irish man to come back, that part of himself won’t let him be the first one to blink. Niall runs when things get hard, that’s something Harry has known since the beginning. Niall runs, and Liam bottles things up, and as for Harry? Harry sticks to his guns, no matter how wrong he knows he is, because, after Nick, he resolved never to let himself be that weak again. It’s stupid and childish, but it’s the only thing he has.

“Can we talk?” a voice asks, startling him so bad he almost drops Sam.
“I- uh- yeah, fine.” Harry nods. He stands up, and then puts Sam in the bouncy seat he dragged out here earlier. He points next to himself when he sits back on the couch, but he’s disappointed when Liam takes the other side of the U-shaped sectional. “What, um- What did you want to talk about?”

“This. Us.” Liam sighs. “What are we now?”

“I don’t know.” Harry admits sadly. “You stopped talking to me. We stopped even being around each other except with the babies. Do you want to go?”

“Do you want me to go?” Liam asks. His tone is flat, non-committal to hide whatever he’s really thinking.

“No.” Harry says, shaking his head. “But I also don’t want you to stay if you’re too unhappy to be here. If you were only here for Niall, and not me, then you should. If you didn’t love me, or just don’t anymore, then we can’t fix anything here.”

“I do still love you.” Liam says firmly. “I just don’t know what to say anymore. We had something so perfect, and then it was gone and I still don’t know why. I don’t get how this happened because Niall won’t talk to me and you won’t tell me and I’m just left by myself now. I thought we were going to try and work through things, and I left for just a minute, and then he was gone.”

“I told you what happened Liam.” Harry sighs. “I told you what he said to me. What he said about our kids.”

“But that doesn’t make sense Harry!” Liam says, his frustration bubbling to the surface. “Obviously he didn’t really think that. He has their names tattooed on his chest. He loves them as much as we do.”

“Then why did he say it?” Harry asks, trying unsuccessfully to keep down his anger.

“Because you were a hypocrite.” Liam snaps. “You kept what Zayn told you a secret, and then you acted like he wasn’t to be trusted. You hurt him so badly, and he just wanted to do the same thing to you.”

“I never meant to hurt him!” Harry hisses. “I tried to keep them apart, yeah, but because I thought it was what was best for all of us. Zayn is monogamous, so where could it have gone Liam? Either he left and broke Niall’s heart for a little while, or he took Niall with him and in the end none of us were happy. I never meant for any of this to happen.”

“But you didn’t do anything to stop it now, did you?” Liam asks, standing up on his feet to yell. “You kicked him out because he lashed out in a moment of anger, without even giving him the chance to apologize. He’s been gone for two months, and in all that time you still can’t forgive him? You can’t stop being so stubborn, can’t break for just a second and make that call?”

“You haven’t talked to me since Christmas, barely talked to me before that, and you have the gall to say I’m the only stubborn one?” Harry snarls. “It’s not like you’ve forgiven me. It’s not like you’ve done anything to try and keep us together. The only reason you’re even still here is to keep a roof over your head and give our babies some way to eat.”

“Is that what you think?” Liam asks, shrinking before Harry’s eyes. “Haz, I’ve stayed because I love you. I don’t want to lose you too. I don’t want to take our children away from their father. They’ve already lost Sophia and Niall.”

“Then why is this the longest conversation we’ve had in a month?” Harry asks. “Why have we both been so alone instead of helping each other start to breathe again? Because I can’t. I can’t do
anything anymore. I barely feel like a human because you’ve completely shut me out.”

“I don’t know what to do without him.” Liam admits so quietly Harry can barely hear him. “It took me four months last time to even do anything other than work, but at least then I knew he was okay. I couldn’t date for almost a year, but I’m still in a relationship this time. I’m not sure what to do with myself and there’s no guide for this.”

“Then we should be figuring it out together.” Harry says, walking around the couch so he can sit next to Liam, who has retaken his seat. “We can’t keep doing this being apart thing. I don’t know what to do without him either, but it would help if we both worked through it with each other, instead of alone.”

Harry doesn’t get a chance to say anything else before his phone starts ringing.

Niall is sitting alone in the dark when the call comes in. He hasn’t answered Louis’ calls in two weeks, doesn’t want to talk to anyone. He hasn’t been to see Angelo, but he has silently stalked the Basilica again. He only finds comfort in the sweet face of the Virgin Mother. He doesn’t know why he’s picking up this time, but something tells him he should.

“Fucking finally!” Louis yells at him as soon as he connects the call. He’s really got to stop listening to whatever told him to do this.

“Louis, now really isn’t a good time for this.” Niall sighs.

“Well too bad you raging twat, El is going into labor and I thought you should know.” Louis says quickly, as if he’s afraid Niall will hang up before he can get it out.

“What?” Niall asks, pulling out his laptop. He has a site bookmarked for airlines on it and clicks it open, looking for Rome to Dublin. There’s one leaving in an hour. That’ll be tight. “She’s not due for weeks yet.”

“It happens with triplets. They come early almost every time. It’s not good though. They’ll have to spend time in the neonatal unit.” Louis says, his voice going soft at the end.

“Well is it bad?” Niall asks. He quickly clicks through the menus that get him to the purchase screen and confirms it.

“Not yet.” Louis tells him quietly. “Listen, I know you’re gone, but please, just for a day or two, please come back. I need my best friend right now.”

“I’ve just finished booking a ticket Tommo.” Niall says. “I’ll be there as soon as I can, yeah?”

He hangs up after that. He doesn’t have any time at all to talk now. He shoves the few important things he has left in a bag, disregarding all the clothes and leaving a nice tip for the maid that will have to clear them all out. He’s lucky enough to catch a taxi, but he has to pop several tabs of Vicodin just to stay calm and reduce the pain in his ribs from the strap of his bag rubbing against him. They should last right up until he gets to Dublin, but he’ll have to drive the rest of the way on his own willpower. This is going to be a really rough day.

Harry is pacing through the waiting room at the maternity ward. Louis called earlier to let them know the babies were on their way, but he isn’t allowed into the room right now. Liam is at home with the
kids. He’s barely left them alone in the three weeks since Christmas, choosing to even sleep in the nursery with them. Harry is alone right now. Apparently no other moms are giving birth today. Louis comes walking into the room with sadness etched over his face.

“Louis, what’s wrong?” Harry asks quickly.

“Something is wrong with the babies. They’re taking El in for an emergency Cesarean.” Louis says blankly.

“She’ll be okay Louis. They all will.” Harry says softly, rubbing Louis’ shoulder for comfort.

“Like Sophia was?” Louis snaps bitterly.

“Sophia was a special case. It wasn’t the surgery Louis, she had ruptured an artery. This is different.” Harry says calmly.

“I hope to god you’re right Harry. I can’t lose any of them.” Louis cries. “I just can’t.”

“You’re not going to Tommo.” Someone says behind them. Harry’s heart stops at the familiar Irish accent. He turns around to see Niall, only it doesn’t look like Niall. His hair is black and all the color is gone from his face except dark circles under his eyes.

“You came.” Louis says happily. He breaks away from Harry and runs into Niall, crashing them both into the ground.

“Of course I came you stupid amadán.” Niall sighs from under the pile of Louis that’s laying on top of him. Harry can’t move. He can’t even breathe yet. Niall is right in front of him but he can’t think of what to do.

“I could cry I’m so happy.” Louis laughs.

“You’re already crying Tommo.” Niall groans. “Now get off of me. My knee hurts like a son of a bitch. The flight from Rome is a killer.”

“You stupid little shit. Rome?” Louis groans. “I should have guessed Rome.”

“Wouldn’t have done much good. I’ve was in London first. Then Paris, Berlin, Oslo, Reykjavik for a bit. Didn’t stay in any one place for very long.” Niall says. Louis climbs off of him and helps him to his feet.

“Is Zayn with you?” Louis asks.

“He didn’t want me.” Niall says softly. “Hi Harry.”

“Hi.” Harry says weakly. His voice is choked and dry.

“Tommo can we have a minute?” Niall asks. Louis smiles and leaves the waiting area. “How are the twins?”

“They like the arch. They can’t ride on the scooter yet though.” Harry says quietly.

“And you two?” Niall questions. He’s not meeting Harry’s eye when he asks the question.

“Terrible. Why would you wrap them Niall? Why would you make it seem like you still cared about us? Why would you trick us into thinking you sent Christmas presents, only to give those back to us?” Harry asks. The question has been burning in his mind since they opened the necklace and ring.
“They what? I told them not to wrap those, just the ones for the kids.” Niall says. “They were just supposed to send those in some boxes. Nothing wrapped.”

“Well at least you weren’t intentionally trying to hurt us more.” Harry spits.

“I never meant to hurt you like that Harry.” Niall whispers. Harry almost doesn’t catch it, but he’s hanging on Niall’s every word.

“I know.” Harry tells him. “I know you didn’t mean to Niall, but you did. You hurt us both. Liam and I have barely talked in two months. We just take care of the twins and try to survive each day.”

“I should go. I’ll come back when El’s out of surgery.” Niall says quietly. He turns to leave but Harry surges forward and grabs him by the shoulders.

“Please don’t leave Niall.” Harry says, barely holding back tears. “Please stay. Please please don’t leave me again.”

“Harry-” Niall starts to say. Harry cuts him off, crashing their bodies together like a wave. Their lips meet and it’s like a part of Harry slips into place. A piece that was missing isn’t anymore. They kiss like it’s the last moment before the world is destroyed, every word they couldn’t say suddenly spilling forth through the connection. Niall’s hand tangles in Harry’s hair and they fall back into the wall.

Niall grunts harshly, but pushes through whatever pain he felt. Harry doesn’t know how long it lasts, he’s out of breath by the time they break apart. Their foreheads are pressed together almost painfully, but they need the contact. Harry’s heart is pounding in his chest, a rhythm special for Niall. A tune of happiness and joy he hasn’t felt in months. “Stay.” Harry pleads quietly.

“I will.” Niall says softly.

They sit together, taking comfort in every bit of touching they can manage in a public place. Their fingers are laced and Harry won’t let Niall off his lap. Neither of them have called Liam yet. They want to wait until they go back to the house to make it easier for him. Harry seems obsessed with Niall’s skin, which has admittedly gone quite pale.

Niall hasn’t been eating almost anything since that night. The pain in his stomach helped relieve the pain in the rest of his body. He’ll eat when he absolutely needs to. He’s not developed an eating disorder or anything, just something to numb the pain. Copious amount of alcohol have helped too. It’s not healthy, but it’s a coping mechanism.

“What happened to your hair?” Harry finally asks. Niall has been waiting for it.

“I wanted something different. Black goes with everything.” Niall shrugs.

“I hate it.” Harry says with a smile.


“Why keep it then?” Louis asks.

“Because I felt like it was right that I didn’t feel right.” Niall says quietly. Harry curls around him tighter.
“Melodrama doesn’t suit you Niall.” Louis sighs.

“Sod off.” Niall laughs. It’s the first time he’s felt anything close to normal in two months. He hasn’t laughed in all the time he’s been gone, except for the week with Angelo. He hasn’t sang or told a stupid joke. He hasn’t been Niall.

“Kiss my big beautiful arse.” Louis giggles.

“Bring it over here and I will.” Niall says, waggling his eyebrows.

“This is hardly appropriate.” A stern voice says from the door. They all turn to see the doctor standing there.

“Is it El? Is she okay?” Louis jumps to his feet.

“She’s fine. They came through surgery beautifully.” The doctor says, a smile replacing his frown. “Your babies are doing well considering how early they are, but they’ll need to be in the NICU for a few weeks until they’ve finished developing fully.”

“Can I see any of them?” Louis asks desperately.

“Soon. Eleanor is still recovering and your children are being sealed into the machines.” The doctor explains. “I’ll have someone come get you the second you can see them.”

“Thank you Doctor.” Louis smiles. “Thank you so much.”

The doctor nods and then makes his exit. Louis collapses into the chair closest to where he was standing. He looks like he’s on the edge of a heart attack, but he’s also smiling.

“Can I call you Daddy now?” Niall asks with a cheeky wink.

“No.” Louis laughs. “I’ll spank you, and not for fun, if you do.”

“I told you they’d be fine.” Niall says. He’s beaming and Harry is wriggling with excitement underneath him.

“Yeah yeah. Don’t let it go to your head.” Louis groans.

“Too late.” Harry laughs. “He does so love being right.”

“God I’ve missed that posh little mouth of yours.” Niall giggles. He shows his appreciation with another kiss, pressing his lips lightly against Harry’s big smile.

“I’m not that bad, am I?” Harry asks.

“Let’s just say I know you’ve been bingeing on Downton without me.” Niall says with a grin. “You always talk like Mary Crawley after you do.”

“Sam likes the music.” Harry laughs. “He actually smiles when it plays.”

“Just like his da.” Niall says softly.

“Liam hates Downton Abbey.” Harry says with a confused look.

“He’s not who i was talking about, now is he?” Niall rolls his eyes. It’s the only way he can think of to apologize without actually saying ‘I’m sorry’ and opening that whole can of worms up. Right now
he just wants to feel a few minutes of happiness.

“Oh.” Harry grins.

“You always get there eventually Haz.” Niall sighs. He cuddles into Harry’s shoulder, reveling in the familiar warmth. “Oh, how did the purchase go? Louis told me you finally sold the Galways and the cattle.”

“We didn’t sell the sheep, just gave them to a preservation society. The cows got us a decent price. Li insisted on waiting until the new year so we could still collect the subsidy.” Harry says.

“What did you guys do with Loki and Thor?” Niall asks. He’s been afraid to know the answer, but it’s better if he does.

“Liam buried them by the old house.” Harry says softly. “He marked their graves so you could visit if you came back.”

“That sounds like Li.” Niall mutters.

“I’m sorry Nialler. I’m sorry this happened while you were away.” Harry says quietly.

“Don’t apologize Haz. I never should have left. I should have tried to fix us instead of fighting all the time.” Niall admits. He feels tears stinging at the corners of his eyes and, damn it, he’s not going to cry again. He spent the entire flight out here crying.

“I should have called. I’m just as guilty in this, if not more.” Harry says.

“Will you two please stop it.” Louis groans loudly. “I’m already freaking out. I have three kids now. I can’t sit here and watch this soap opera right now.”

“Of course Louis.” Niall says flatly. “We can just put our thing on the back burner. It’s not like this is important or anything.”

“I know it’s important you twat.” Louis glares. “I could use some help on the freaking out front though.”

“You’ve already been taking care of the twins for months Tommo. You already know how to be a good da. That isn’t going to change.” Niall smiles. “Your family is healthy and you can do this.”

“Well... whatever.” Louis huffs. A nurse appears at the door before he can make anymore snide remarks.

“Mr. Tomlinson?” She asks.

“Is everything okay?” Louis asks, his face suddenly twisted in fear.

“Your wife is waking up quicker than expected. She’s a fighter that one. Would you like to see her?” The nurse asks.

“Yes please.” Louis hops out of his chair. He follows her out of the room leaving Harry and Niall alone again.

“You were saying?” Niall asks.

“I believe it was something along the lines of I’m sorry I was such an arse.” Harry sighs.
“We could spend all day hashing this out Haz. Let’s just skip that part and realize we’re both idiots and at fault.” Niall says with a small smile.

“Now that we’ve done that, how about we sneak off to some dark corner and get reacquainted?” Harry giggles.

“I um- I can’t Harry. Not yet.” Niall says softly.

“Of course. That was stupid of me. It’s too soon for that.” Harry sighs.

“No, Harry that isn’t it. I want to, but I can’t right now.” Niall says. He has to explain it now, as much as he wishes he didn’t have to. “I um- I caught syphilis. I’m on an antibiotic regimen right now, and I can’t have sex until I get checked again. I’m in the final stage of treatment though, so kissing should be alright”

“Niall how did you catch syphilis?” Harry asks flatly.

“I um- I hooked up with a few guys when I was drunk.” Niall lies.

“Was it serious?” Harry asks.

“No. No, Haz, I promise. They were nothing to me.” Niall says. He steels himself for the fight that’s about to happen. “They were prostitutes I hired to help cope. I felt so alone and I just wanted to not be anymore.”

“You hired whores.” Harry says. He doesn’t ask it as a question, more like he’s trying to process it.

“Haz, I’m so sorry.” Niall can barely manage to say it above a whisper.

“It’s fine Nialler. I mean, it’s not fine, but I understand. You needed something and you found it wherever you could.” Harry sighs. “Are you clean other than the syphilis?”

“I am. I was checked out in Rome, and I haven’t been with anyone since.” Niall assures him. “I had a blood sample taken when I got here, and it said that I’m fine other than that.”

“Then come with me.” Harry whispers in his ear. It sends tingles down Niall’s spine and straight to his cock. He stands up, gently lowering Niall to his feet. They slip out of the waiting area and walk quickly down the hall until they reach another room. “They set this room up for us, but Louis wanted to wait in the maternity ward. Said he felt too secluded here.”

When he opens the door there’s a small couch and a few other things. A table and chairs. A television silently playing the news. Niall doesn’t really notice any of it though, because as soon as the door lock clicks Harry is on him. They stumble back onto the couch with their mouths locked together. Harry’s hands fumble with the clasp on Niall’s jeans until it springs open and he pulls them off. He, by the grace of god, doesn’t try to remove Niall’s shirt.

He slides off his own jeans and underwear, then lays Niall out along the sofa. They’re both already hard and the feeling of Harry’s cock pressed against his is fucking magical, even if this does make his chest feel tight and pained. Harry’s hand tangles in Niall’s hair, forcing his head back to bite at the pale skin along his neck. His other hand wraps around their cocks, his long fingers cold against the heated organs. He pumps once and moans into Niall’s neck.

Niall grabs Harry by the arse and pulls him so they rut against each other. His back and chest scream in pain, though he won’t let on. Harry picks up the speed, rubbing their cocks together while squeezing with his own hand. It’s clumsy, almost juvenile. Niall feels like he’s seventeen again and
hooking up with Sean Flannery in the back of his dad’s car. It’s better though, Harry is moaning and marking him as his own. He’s taking Niall back after everything he said. He’s banishing that night for just a moment.

That’s what gets Niall’s orgasm coming on so fast. Not the intensity or passion, though those things do help. It’s knowing that Harry still wants him that has him panting and moaning. He’s broken and diseased, but Harry still loves him. He cums without warning, spurtling onto his own still clothed stomach. He’s lost in the sensation of Harry, who has taken to kissing him again once he’s realized what’s happened.

Harry cums a few seconds after he does, his hips stuttering to a stop. He soaks Niall in an almost unbelievable amount of jizz before he finally stops. He gives Niall one more kiss, soft and sweet before standing to find something to wipe off with. There are paper towels next to a sink, so Harry takes a roll and brings them back. Niall dabs it up, going through half a forest’s worth of paper towels it feels like.

“So you really meant it when you said you’d been doing terrible then.” Niall says quickly.

“You thought that was terrible?” Harry asks, a wounded look painting his face.

“No, Haz that’s not what I meant. I just haven’t seen you cum that much since the first time we hooked up. You’d been celibate for three months then.” Niall says softly.

“Oh that. Well no, Liam and I haven’t been together like that at all.” Harry admits. He pulls back on his jeans and hands Niall’s to him.

“This shirt is ruined.” Niall sighs. He strips it off, Harry’s love of him having taken away his memory, until his rosary falls against his chest painfully and Harry gasps.

“Niall what happened to you?” Harry asks with wide eyes.

“It doesn’t matter Haz.” Niall says, trying to cover up the yellowed bruises that form a latticework over his ribs and back. His arms are too thin to do much, and the bruises on them are a darker color, not healing as quickly.

“Niall please. You can tell me.” Harry urges.

“I can’t Harry. I just can’t.” Niall shakes his head. He’d forgotten about them for just a second. Harry wasn’t supposed to see him this way. Niall zips the jacket he brought with him closed and clutches his hands to his chest to guard himself from Harry’s eyes.

“Okay Nialler. You don’t have to tell me yet. Whenever you’re ready is fine.” Harry tells him softly. Niall nods, but he isn’t sure he’ll ever be ready. He tries not to think about that night anymore. It always comes back though, in his nightmares.

Harry texted Liam three hours ago to tell him that Eleanor came through the surgery fine and all the babies are healthy. He also said they need to talk about something when he gets home, and Liam’s stomach is tied up in knots. Harry still hasn’t said when he’s coming home so Liam has taken to pacing in the sitting room while the twins occupy themselves with toys they got for Christmas.

They’re getting to the age where they can move things on their own, and Gemma has even started to stay sitting up on her own. They always keep a pillow tucked behind her though, in case she falls. He hears the door opens and walks to the foyer. Harry has his arm wrapped around some lad whose
face Liam can’t see. Before Liam can say anything Harry leans down and kisses the boy passionately, sending pangs of fury through Liam.

“So I guess by talk you meant break up then.” Liam says angrily.

“No. Liam, what?” Harry asks, his face a model of confusion. The black haired boy’s face is still turned away from Liam, his skin a disgusting sickly pale. He looks like he’s lived on the streets from the jacket pulled over what appears to be a bare chest.

“You leave for the triplets and then come back with this slag. What am I supposed to think?” Liam asks coldly. “What was all that talk about working through things together? Was it all just bullshit?”

“Liam!” Harry scolds angrily.

“It’s okay Haz. I’ve been called worse.” A familiar voice says. It can’t be. Liam’s ears are wrong or something. Niall isn’t coming back. He sent back his ring, and there was the note to the twins that Harry kept Liam from burning. Niall isn’t here, because he isn’t coming back. He just isn’t.

It is him, though. He looks at Liam through sad blue eyes, made all the more intense by the dark circles underneath. His cheeks are thinner and he’s so pale Liam could almost see right through him. He’s off, but it is him.

“Niall?” Liam asks in a whisper. Niall nods, his eyes darting down to the floor. He shuffles back and forth on unsteady legs in that way he does when Liam is angry. Liam isn’t angry though. A flood of relief surges through his entire body and he darts forward to wrap Niall in an embrace. Niall screams in pain when Liam grabs him tightly though.

“Liam you have to be gentle.” Harry says quickly, trying to pry him off.

“It’s fine Haz.” Niall grunts. Liam lets go and looks around in confusion. “Got a few bruises. That’s all.”

“How?” Liam asks, silently assessing how light Niall felt in his arms. He’s lost at least twenty pounds since the last time Liam saw him. His arms feel small and the jacket which should be tight hangs baggy over his torso.

“You’re going to have to be more specific with the question.” Niall says quietly. “How am I? How did I get the bruises? How long am I back? How could I be gone for so long without a word? What do you want to know?”

“All of it.” Liam answers. He doesn’t even know where to begin. He was almost sure he’d never see Niall again, and looking at him now that’s not a bad guess. Niall looks like he’s on the verge of death.

“I’m alive, so there’s that.” Niall shrugs. “I haven’t been good Li. I think it’s fair to say that none of us have.”

“You’d be right there. Where have you been?” Liam asks, trying to push down everything and keep his voice neutral.

“Taking the grand tour of the continent apparently.” Harry sighs.

“Let him answer.” Liam snaps. Neutrality isn’t an option. Too much has happened for that.

“Li, please, can we just talk? I don’t have another fight left in me.” Niall says quietly.
“Then you should have thought of that before you showed your face again.” Liam glares. “You’ve been gone without a word for two months. You wouldn’t even talk to me. I had no idea if you were okay!”

“I told Louis to let you know I was fine if you wanted to know.” Niall whispers.

“You think that’s enough? You think I want to hear from Louis that you’re still alive? I wanted to hear it from you. I called you every day until Christmas. Every day praying that you’d pick up. Just once, letting me know that I mattered enough to say anything to. That would have made all the difference in the world!” Liam says angrily.

“I wanted to make a clean break Li. I wanted you to move on and live happily with Haz.” Niall says weakly.

“Well that didn’t work.” Liam bites. “We’ve been a mess without you.”

“I know. Haz told me everything.” Niall admits.

“Did he tell you that I haven’t lived one day since you’ve been gone without crying myself to sleep? Did he tell you that I couldn’t stop thinking about taking the twins and leaving at first? Did he tell you I’ve considered just killing myself to make the pain stop? No, because Haz only knows how he’s felt through this, not how I have.” Liam roars.

“How could you leave me? Why didn’t you try to fix anything?” Liam asks desperately. He hates the neediness bleeding into his voice.

“Because I wasn’t sure there was anything to fix. We were broken before I left Liam. We’d been falling apart for a while.” Niall says. He’s obviously trying to sound confident, but his voice breaks on the last sentence.

“Because you fell in love with someone else.” Liam hisses. “You broke us.”

“I know.” Niall admits, shrinking back from Liam. “I know this is all my fault, okay? There are no words to say how sorry I am. I don’t know how to tell you what you deserve to hear. Either of you.”

“How long are you here for?” Harry asks, trying to change the subject.

“That depends on you two.” Niall says quietly. “I can leave if you don’t want me here. I came for Louis’ kids so I’ll probably stay at a hotel until they’re out of the machines. Maybe help him get things up and running if he needs it.”

“Do you want to go again? Do you just want to leave us behind again?” Liam asks.

“No, Liam, I don’t. But you obviously don’t want me here.” Niall whispers.

“Yes I do!” Liam yells. “I’ve never wanted anything more than to have you back here!”

Niall shrinks back into Harry, running from the force of Liam’s voice. “I love you Niall. I want you to come back, but only if you’re willing to stay. If you want to be a part of this family, to help make us a family again, then you have to stop running.” Liam says softly. “We have to be important enough to you. We have to be what you want.”

“You are. You all are.” Niall tells him. It feels real. It feels right again. Niall takes his hand and a
The surge of life flows through his veins. The words, the touch, everything feels like it’s falling back into place.

Telling Liam about the syphilis is hard. Telling him the lie about how he got it is harder. The disappointment in Liam’s eyes when he tells them everything he’s been doing over the last two months feels like a dagger to the heart. First he tells them about going to Bradford.

It’s raining, which seems appropriate given Niall’s life. He only realizes once he reaches the small town that he doesn’t actually know where Zayn lives. His rental is some old gas guzzler, so Niall turns it off when he dials out. Zayn picks up after a few painfully slow rings.

“Niall?” Zayn asks. “Niall are you okay?”

“I need to see you.” Niall says numbly. “I know we aren’t supposed to be talking yet, but I need you Zayn.”

“What’s wrong?” Zayn asks, worry lacing into his voice.

“I need to see you. I’m here in Bradford. Can we meet someplace?” Niall asks. There’s no emotion in his voice. He feels hollow.

“Sure. There’s a cafe on Thornton Avenue. Cristophe’s. I can meet you there in ten minutes.” Zayn says. He says something to a woman, who says back something Niall can’t understand, and then he hears a door close.

“Ten minutes. I’ll see you then.” Niall confirms blankly. It only takes him a few minutes to find the place and he waits inside.

True to his word Zayn shows up in exactly ten minutes. The cafe is bright blue inside, so bright that it hurts Niall’s eyes. They sit in a corner and Zayn looks like he’s rushed out the door without any of his usual vanity. His hair is unkempt, hanging in his eyes, and his clothes are a wrinkled t-shirt and a pair of worn joggers.

“Niall, what’s going on? Why are you here?” Zayn asks, his eyes lit up with concern.

“Do you still love me?” Niall asks suddenly.

“Of course I do Nialler.” Zayn says. He clasps his hand over Niall’s. “I’ll probably always love you to some degree or another. That doesn’t answer my question though.”

“I left them.” Niall says quickly. “Actually Harry kicked me out. It’s over now.”


“He got pissed at me for smoking a joint I found in your old room. I don’t think that’s what it was about though. We started in on everything and just fought again and again until I couldn’t take it anymore. They were so mad about me falling in love with you that I just said the meanest thing I could think of. I said that Harry wasn’t Sam and Gemma’s father.” Niall admits.

“How could you?” Zayn asks with a horrified look.

“I wanted him to make me leave. I wanted it to all be over.” Niall tells him quietly. “I wanted the
fighting to stop.”

“Niall you need to go back. Tell him you’re sorry. Work things out with them.” Zayn says sternly.

“Why? You’re the only one who has made me happy in months. We can be together now.” Niall urges.

“I’m not a consolation prize Niall.” Zayn whispers bitterly. “You chose them, and it was the right choice for everyone. I can’t be with someone who will end up resenting me.”

“I wouldn’t. Zayn, I love you.” Niall says, desperation creeping into his voice.

“And I love you, but Nialler, this won’t work. You came to me because you’re in pain. You didn’t come here for a real relationship. You aren’t ready to be with me right now.” Zayn says quietly.

“I am.” Niall cries. “I am ready.”

“No, Niall, you aren’t.” Zayn says firmly. “You didn’t choose me Niall. You chose them. You chose your family.”

“Well you didn’t choose me either!” Niall snaps bitterly. “You left me, remember? You didn’t even give me a shot.”

“Niall-” Zayn starts.

“This was a mistake.” Niall says curtly. He gets up from the table and runs out the door, leaving Zayn to pay for their drinks so he can’t follow. He unlocks his car and peels out just as Zayn walks out into the rain. He drives so fast he barely notices the red light until it’s almost too late. He comes to a sliding stop, nearly spinning into the intersection. A car honks and only just manages to turn out of the way in time. Once traffic is clear he goes through the intersection and drives with tears streaming down his face. Zayn was his only hope. Now he has nothing left.

“I haven’t talked to him since.” Niall admits. “I spent a few days in London after that, and then I flew to Paris. From there I hopped a train to Berlin. Then a bus to Oslo. Another train to Reykjavik. After all that cold I decided on Rome. I had to stay there for longer than usual to see the same doctor. I’d have been in Istanbul next. Found a tour.”

“Why did you need to stay for the doctor?” Liam asks.

“He already knew what had happened to me.” Niall shrugs. “It’s not like Turkey has top notch medical care.”

“What did happen to you?” Liam asks. “You mentioned some bruises. You’ve lost weight. Shagged your way through half the whores in Europe and caught an STI. What happened to you while you were gone?”

“I gave up.” Niall says softly. “I stopped caring about myself. I think I may have developed a drinking problem too. I can’t go a night without drinking anymore. If I hadn’t had to drive to the hospital for Louis I’d have gotten loaded on the plane.”

“We’ll get you all the help you need Nialler.” Harry smiles gently.

“I don’t need rehab Haz.” Niall sighs. “I need my family back. I need to hold my babies and know
that we’re all going to be okay.”

“It’s going to be a long road Niall. I think we will though.” Liam tells him. It feels like a weight being lifted when he does. “How about we start with you holding the kids though?”

“Please?” Niall asks. It’s just this side of begging, but he doesn’t care at all. He’d get down on his knees and grovel if that’s what it took. Liam lifts Gemma out of her seat and puts her in Niall’s arms and his heart flutters. She’s gotten so big he can hardly believe it. Her eye color has settled on a warm chocolate that looks almost identical to Liam’s and her short hair is extremely curly.

“She can sit up now, if we put her up that is.” Harry beams.

“Does she smile like Sam does?” Niall asks, remembering Harry’s story about watching Downton Abbey.

“Sometimes. I imagine that will change when she starts teething though.” Harry sighs. “Sam already has, but he’s a champ. Goes through teething rings like they’re dog toys, but he doesn’t cry as much as he did with the colic.”

“That’s early isn’t it?” Niall asks.

“Eh, it can be any time between three and nine months with most starting at six.” Liam explains. “They’re developing different things at different rates. Sam can’t sit up yet, but his hand eye coordination is better than Gemma’s. He’s even started to try and take the bottle a few times.”

“Sick.” Niall says with a smile. “Okay take her back. Can’t be holding a baby when I’m diseased and disgusting. Don’t want to cough anduck her up.”

“Niall, she’ll be fine.” Harry says with a smile.

“No, Haz, he’s right.” Liam sighs. “I’m sorry Nialler, but it probably is best if you wait until after the regimen and the blood test results clear you.”

Niall hands her back to Liam and smiles softly. “I know. It’s okay.”

“I really am sorry.” Liam says with a gentle look. “How long until you’re supposed to be cleared?”

“One more day.” Niall says with a pout. “El couldn’t hold off for one more day.”

“Don’t blame her for it.” Harry scolds. “It’s not like she knew or even could have helped it if she did.”

“Would you have told us?” Liam asks. “You wouldn’t have had to, but would you have?”

“I think so, yeah.” Niall says quietly. He doesn’t want to tell them how he got it, not the real story. The one he’s told was close enough. No need to tell them what really happened. It wouldn’t change anything. It wouldn’t take back what happened to him.

“Then will you tell me how you got those bruises?” Liam asks with more bluntness than usual. “Harry told me you didn’t want to talk about it, but I really think you should. Honesty is the only way we’re going to fix any of this.”

“You don’t want to know Liam.” Niall says darkly.

“Niall, I won’t judge you.” Liam tells him.
“Judge me? You think I wanted this?” Niall asks angrily.

“I think you’ve gone to a very dark place since you left.” Liam says calmly.

“Not that dark Liam. The guy who did this to me cracked almost all of my ribs. I can barely move my arms in the mornings. I can’t sleep anymore without waking up screaming.” Niall whispers.

“Did he-” Liam starts.

“Rape me? Yes, Liam, he did. I thought he was a whore so I brought him back to my hotel room. He beat me until I couldn’t move and then he raped me. He gave me syphilis as a parting present. To top it all off he stole every euro I had in my wallet, which was over five thousand.” Niall spits bitterly. “Are you happy now? Does me telling you this help heal whatever wound I left?”

“Nialler.” Liam says in a hushed whisper. He moves towards Niall, but the black haired boy flinches away from him.

“Don’t touch me!” Niall screams. Gemma goes off in Liam’s arms and Niall snaps out of whatever trance he was in. He didn’t see Liam, he saw the man who attacked him. Tears start streaming down his cheeks and he twists out of his chair and runs out of the house. Coming back was a mistake.

“Niall stop!” Harry cries behind him. He runs after Niall, eventually overcoming him due to his long legs. He catches Niall out on the gravel driveway, one hand wrapped around his shoulder, and the other holding a very angry Sam. Snow is coming down like a monsoon, only solid, and Sam isn’t dressed for it. Neither are Harry or Niall for that matter. “You said you’d stay.”

“I can’t!” Niall shouts. “I can’t stay after that!”

“Yet you can Niall. I know how hard this is. I know.” Harry says softly, pressing their bodies together to keep Sam warm.

“It’s not the same Harry. You didn’t bring it on yourself.” Niall whispers. “I did. I deserved it.”

“Nobody deserves that Niall.” Liam says, crunching his way through the snow with Gemma apparently still inside. “Take Sam back in Haz.”

“Not unless Niall comes back in too.” Harry says stubbornly.

“Take him back inside Haz.” Niall says softly. Harry’s face falls, but he does as he’s told and takes Sam back inside, closing the door behind him. The lights of the porch are all they have to see by, the moon being hidden behind thick clouds and heavy snowfall. “It was a mistake coming back here.”

“Why?” Liam asks, his voice steady.

“Because look at me!” Niall yells. He opens his jacket revealing the interlocked pattern of bruises that litters his body. His ribs are completely visible and his collar bones stand in stark contrast to the hollows around them. His stomach is concave, and still a dark purple instead of the yellow that dances across his chest. “This is what I deserve. Not you. Not Haz. Not this family. These. I deserve to be diseased and bloodied, because this is who I am now. I did something awful to you, and this is my punishment. It can’t be done yet. I haven’t gotten close to what I deserve.”

“Then why did you come back?” Liam asks. “Why come back to Mullingar if you didn’t want to be with us? If you don’t deserve it?”

“For Louis.” Niall says flatly.
“Don’t give me that rubbish. Maybe part of you came back for Louis, but we all know that isn’t the whole story.” Liam glares.

“It is.” Niall insists. It isn’t.

“Stop lying to me Niall.” Liam says firmly.

“I’m not.” Niall says.

“You are. Why did you come back if you didn’t want to stay?” Liam asks.

“I wanted to see you all one last time before I killed myself!” Niall screams finally. “I wanted to see my children before I wiped myself off of this planet! I wanted to see my best friends and lovers. I wanted one last look at my old home. I wanted one last good thing to hold on to while the life bled out of me in a bathtub somewhere.”

Liam steps forward and pulls him in tight. It isn’t what he was expecting and it makes his chest feel like it’s on fire, but he doesn’t break away. He doesn’t stop it even though he should. He doesn’t deserve Liam. Not after everything he’s put them through. “Please don’t. Please don’t Nialler. Stay here. Get better. Please don’t leave me again.” Liam mumbles into his shoulder.

“Why would you still want me after all this?” Niall asks. His body is starting to shiver from the cold.

“You’re my favorite person in the whole world.” Liam says, pulling back to look him in the eye. “You’re my best friend and soul mate. I need you.”

“But do you want me Liam? Do you really want this mess back in your life?” Niall asks. He almost hopes Liam says no, because he doesn’t know if he can handle someone so perfect still loving him after this.

“You’re the most beautiful disaster I’ve ever seen Niall. I’ll take whatever I can get from you.” Liam smiles. He can’t resist it. He falls back into Liam’s arms and they stay that way until Niall can’t stand anymore for the shivering and the pain in his knee. Liam carries him inside and Harry is pacing by the door. He beams when he sees Niall and runs over to them. It’s not perfect, but it’s a start.

Therapy is hard on all of them. They’ve started seeing a doctor three times a week to deal with their problems. It took some very careful searching to find someone discreet and experienced in this kind of relationship counseling. Liam doesn’t like her, at all. She’s quick to lay blame instead of helping them move past it.

She spent today’s entire session telling Niall how selfish he’s been, instead of even trying to see what had really happened. And yeah, he was selfish and stubborn and a whole slew of other things, but so was Harry. She never says anything about that though. She doesn’t focus on anything that happened before Niall started to leave the first time. Liam doesn’t even think she should have a license.

“I really hate that woman.” Liam grumbles when they walk out of the Dublin office. The drives here are annoying and they’ve had to hire on a nanny to watch the twins after Zayn, Louis, and Eleanor all left.

“I think she’s alright.” Harry shrugs.

“That’s because she likes you the best.” Niall rolls his eyes.
“Because I actually listen to what she has to say.” Harry pouts. “You two haven’t done a single homework assignment since we started.”

“I had enough homework in secondary school thank you very much.” Niall says grumpily.

“I did all your homework in secondary.” Liam laughs.

“Not very well.” Niall giggles. “My grades were a full level behind you in almost every subject.”

“Because you couldn’t have me do your exams for you.” Liam says pointedly.

“I do believe you’re both missing my point.” Harry groans. “Though I do also believe that’s intentional.”

“You always get there eventually Haz.” Liam smiles.

“Hey! That’s my line!” Niall say in faux anger. He’s been showing bits and pieces of his old self lately. He laughs more than he did when he showed up two weeks ago. He smiles even when he thinks nobody is looking at him. When they aren’t bickering he regales Harry with the stupid jokes he’s gathered while he’s been gone, including one he had to explain four times about a dog and drugs in French.

He’s not all the way back yet though. He wakes up screaming most nights, and he’s gone to the tattoo parlor three separate times when things got heavy, marking his skin with a guitar, another clover, and the twins birth date. He’d gotten a full sized rosary on the space between his shoulder blades when he was gone, along with a Derby Ram on his ankle.

“Yeah, but if I had let you say it, then I wouldn’t get to see your eyebrows get all crinkly.” Liam laughs lightly.

“You two are incredibly confusing sometimes.” Harry sighs. He starts the Rover while Niall climbs in the backseat with Liam. Another thing that Niall has developed is a skittishness towards smaller vehicles. He won’t drive his car anymore, which cost an arse-load to get back from the Dublin Airport. Liam’s truck is also out of the question when they travel too far because the back of the cab feels so tight.

Despite his anxiousness towards small vehicles, he sits as close to Liam as possible while still safely buckled in. He cuddles into Liam’s side and it makes the muscular man smile. “You should really shave that thing back down.” Niall giggles, rubbing his hand against Liam’s unkempt beard.

“I will when you take that awful black out of your hair.” Liam says gently.

“Lou isn’t available to strip it right now.” Niall pouts. “And I don’t want to dye it again.”

“Well then you’ll have to deal with this bush until she is, won’t you?” Liam asks with a grin.

“What if I ask really really nicely?” Niall waggles his eyebrows.

“Roma said no sex.” Harry scolds from the front seat.

“For one thing Haz, I didn’t say anything about sex.” Niall huffs. “For another, we went over three months without having sex.”

“No, Niall, Liam and I went over three months months without sex.” Harry says bluntly. “You did not.”
“Haz!” Liam says angrily. “There’s no need for that.”

“I know. I’m sorry Nialler.” Harry sighs. “The elongated celibacy is getting to me too, but I do think she’s right.”

“Fine.” Niall pouts. “I still think it’s stupid. If you want to stick to it though, I won’t argue.”

“I just think sex will drag up a lot of issues for us, that we’re still working on healing. I want to be sure you’re ready before we go to that place.” Harry says, his voice wavering.

“I was ready enough for you at the hospital.” Niall says with an eye roll.

“I didn’t know about what happened to you when we did that.” Harry says sternly. “It took me so long to trust anyone with my body after Nick, I don’t want you having that same distrust of us.”

“You two had sex at the hospital?” Liam asks. It’s the first he’s heard of it. Jealousy ripples through his chest. Harry and he haven’t touched in months, not since the hotel in London. That didn’t even really happen either.

“Kind of. Harry jerked us off on a couch in the waiting area.” Niall explains with a little flip of his hand. “It wasn’t much of anything.”

“Sod off. It meant a lot to me.” Harry says grumpily.

“I meant as far as sex goes Haz.” Niall apologetically. “It meant a lot to me too.”

“Why am I just now hearing about this?” Liam asks, trying to quell the envy snaking through him.

“Because we kind of got caught up in other things.” Niall says quietly. “When Haz didn’t bring it up with Roma, I decided not to either.”

“You could have told me outside of therapy.” Liam says with a tone of disappointment.

“We’ve all had a lot on our plate Li. Nialler most of all.” Harry pipes up from the behind the wheel.

“I’m sorry Li. I should have told you about it.” Niall says, cuddling back into Liam’s side. “Forgive me?”

“I’ve forgiven more than that.” Liam sighs. “Might as well add this to the list.”

“I can make it up to you.” Niall whispers in his ear. “And we don’t have to stop at hands like I did with Haz.”

“Naughty naughty Nialler.” Liam smiles. “Haz, Niall is trying to break the rules!”

“You little bastard!” Niall growls.

“Don’t blame him Nialll.” Harry says flatly. “At least I’m not the only one who cares about your recovery.”

“That’s not what that was.” Niall huffs. “He’s just getting me back for not telling him.”

“Guilty as charged.” Liam grins. He does care about Niall’s recovery, but Harry has taken over Liam’s role as the responsible one. He pushes too hard sometimes, so Liam gives Niall a shelter from that. He teases him and plays with him to let him know things are normal, or at least they can be. After the night Niall came back, when Liam just made everything worse by pushing, he’s decided to
let things just be easy.

“See if I make it up to you now.” Niall says with an angry pout.

“Not even if I ask nicely?” Liam whispers. He slides his hand up Niall’s leg and gropes when he finds Niall’s hardening cock.

“Not even.” Niall smirks. He bats Liam’s hand away and scoots away from him, laying against the car door instead. They spend the rest of the car ride in comfortable banter with Harry occasionally scolding them. It’s getting better. They’re not there yet, not to what they were before, but the road is a little less long and a little less lonely than it was before.

When Harry’s birthday rolls around two days later they decide not to have a party. Harry decides it actually. Niall has curbed his drinking, going most nights without a drop, but Harry doesn’t want him diving back in. Zayn hasn’t talked to any of them in months (except the long paper reports he sends to Harry about his finances and investments), Louis and Eleanor spend every day at the hospital with rotating visits from the boys. Will and Fiona are back up north until Spring starts, he’ll come back then so he can build the barn once the snow melts. There wouldn’t be much of a party to be had.

Instead they stay at home and cuddle up in front of the TV watching all of Harry’s favorite movies. It helps that there’s a bit of a blizzard going on that’s basically buried their house. Harry has the backup generator primed and ready in case the power goes out. Actually Liam has it primed and ready because just trying to figure the damned hunk of metal out nearly puts Harry into a stress induced fugue state.

“How’s it going?” Niall asks from Harry’s lap. “I think Li is about to go into some kind of coma.”

“I’m fine Nialler.” Liam smiles.

“You haven’t blinked in four minutes.” Niall says, sitting up and leaving Harry’s lap to grow cold. “You literally looked dead. Your eyes were all glazed over.”

“He’s totally lying Haz.” Liam says with a laugh. “I’m completely fine.”

“What are the main characters’ names?” Harry asks. He crosses his arms and cocks an eyebrow.

“Nick and Nora?” Liam asks.

“That was two movies ago.” Harry glares.

“Oh dear god, how long have I been out?” Liam asks, his face aghast.

“Long enough to get the message across.” Harry pouts.

“I’m sorry Haz.” Liam says quietly.

“You can’t blame him Haz.” Niall laughs. “He likes action and excitement. Your movies are sweet enough, but there isn’t really any thrill to them because they always end the same way and there’s no violence.”

“That’s the point.” Harry says grumpily. “I like movies where nobody gets punched in the face.”

“We know. Liam just needs a minute to stretch and recover.” Niall says gently. “How about I make
“You?” Harry asks. Maybe it comes out a little more incredulously than he meant it, but it’s a fair question. Niall grills, and occasionally he makes something simple like fajitas or Zayn’s dinner that night, but he hasn’t really cooked since he made Harry breakfast almost a year ago.

“I picked up a few things on my trip.” Niall shrugs. “There was this chef I met in Rome, and he—”

“No offense Nialler, but I’m still not ready to hear about all the guys you shagged.” Liam sighs.

“Ew!” Niall groans. “Li he was like sixty. He taught me some recipes in the kitchen of his restaurant. I did other things than fuck whores you know.”

“I mean, I know that, but I didn’t think you’d spend time learning to cook.” Liam laughs. “You used to hate to cook. You said it was unfair to have to spend so much time around food you can’t eat yet.”

“Well things change.” Niall pouts.

“We know Nialler. It just took us by surprise is all.” Harry says. He wraps an arm around the back of Niall’s neck and pulls him in to plant a quick peck on his cheek. “I’d love to try your new recipe.”

“Do we have any tomatoes?” Niall asks.

“We have cherry and regular big ass ones.” Liam says. “Either of those the kind you need?”

“Big ass is exactly the kind he said to use.” Niall giggles.

“Excuse me if I don’t know the proper tomato nomenclature.” Liam pouts.

“You know the proper use of the word nomenclature, but you don’t know Red Round?” Harry asks with a smile. Leave it to Liam to pull a big word out of nowhere, but not know something simple.

“Wait that’s the actual name?” Liam groans. “I just thought the produce boy was taking the piss. I told the manager he was a moron.”

“You didn’t.” Harry gasps. Liam hangs his head in shame and bluses deeply.

“Li you are a treasure.” Niall laughs. “I remember when you were too timid to be rude to poor grocery boys who were just doing their jobs.”

“I didn’t know!” Liam wails. “I should go back and say I’m sorry.”

“Not right now. Everything in town is closed Li.” Harry smiles. “To the kitchen!”

Niall jumps off the couch and runs as well as he can. His knee has been getting worse since he got here, but Louis isn’t really available at the moment. Harry is helped off the couch by Liam and wraps a blanket around himself before following. It’s a cashmere throw that Niall got him for his birthday and it feels like a cloud is nuzzling him.

“Haz can you go check the garage for another canister of petrol? I just realized we only have two with the generator and we might need a third if we need to fill up the whole tank.” Liam asks when they walk into the kitchen.

“Sure. Not like it’s my birthday or anything.” Harry grumbles. He leaves them in the kitchen and walks out the side entrance to the garage. When he turns on the light he realizes he doesn’t really know where the cans of petrol are so he has to root around through the shelves. He finally finds a
few stacked up behind the motorcycle and grabs one. Wait- motorcycle?

“Guys?” Harry calls.

“Yes Haz?” Niall laughs from the doorway.

“Why is there a motorcycle in our garage?” Harry asks.

“Because a cashmere throw isn’t really your present you git.” Niall beams. “Liam and I picked it out for you. Do you like it?”

“It’s gorgeous!” Harry laughs. “But it’s also February and Ireland.”

“Well I realize it’s not like Los Angeles where you can ride any day, but there are a few good months.” Liam says happily.

“What’s in the box?” Harry asks, noticing the big white box on top of the seat.

“Best way to find that out is to open it up, innit?” Niall smirks. Harry does and inside is a gorgeous leather jacket. He holds it close and smells the distinctive scent. His hands ghost over a patch on the back and he turns it over and reads “Haz’s Angels.”

“We have matching ones, but not the bikes.” Liam explains.

“That was all Liam’s idea.” Niall says, grinning up at the muscular boy. “Zayn designed the logo though. He wanted to do something special for you, even if you aren’t talking.”

“You spoke to Zayn?” Harry asks. “Is he alright?”

“He misses his best friend.” Niall says with a soft look.

“The day he moved in he said he reckoned you were his best friend.” Harry admits.

“Neither of us were in our right minds then Haz.” Niall says quietly. “He misses you, but he thinks you don’t care about him anymore. He’s looking for another job so he can just cut all ties to make things easier for you.”

“I can’t believe how alike you two are sometimes.” Harry sighs. “I can’t believe I didn’t see it coming.”

“Let’s not do this now.” Liam says. “Today is about you, not our past. Well I mean it’s kind of about the past, your birth and all. You know what I mean.”

“I do.” Harry smiles. “Did you guys get me a helmet too?”

“We thought you’d want to pick that out yourself.” Liam grins. “Niall picked out some gold sparkly monstrosity for you, but that’s just ridiculous.”

“Gold and sparkly you say?” Harry asks. “That’s, like, perfect!”

“Of course it is.” Liam sighs.

“I told you s-” Niall starts to say while he laughs loudly. Liam claps a hand over Niall’s mouth and holds it there while he does a little victory dance. He tears his hand away to reveal Niall’s tongue and groans. “Told you so.”
“Yes yes, you’re always right. Congratulations.” Liam rolls his eyes.

“I um- I’ve been afraid to ask, but did you keep my necklace?” Niall asks.

“That and the ring.” Harry smiles. “I’ve been waiting for you to ask for them back.”

“I don’t know if I’m ready for the ring again, but I would like the necklace if it’s alright with Liam.” Niall says softly.

“I’d love if you took it back.” Liam smiles. Neither of them notice how Harry’s face falls. He knew it was a possibility that Niall wouldn’t be ready for the commitment the ring means, but it still hurts. Niall has been holding them at arm’s length in a lot of ways, and this is just one more. He wasn’t expecting things to get back on track right away. Niall has only been home for two weeks or so after all. Harry canceled the ceremony back when Niall left, but the rings mean more than that.

“Liam can you give us a minute?” Niall asks. Apparently he did notice.

“Sure.” Liam smiles. Niall turns to him when Liam leaves them alone and walks over slowly. Harry keeps the motorcycle between them in hopes of not getting close and becoming overly emotional. It probably won’t work.

“Haz, it’s not what you think.” Niall says softly. “The ring won’t fit right now. I lost thirty four pounds. Look at me hands.”

He holds them up in front of Harry and for the first time Harry really notices how thin Niall has gotten. He’d noticed it of course, how his ribs stick out, how he gets cold so quickly, but he’d never really really seen it. His fingers are barely more than bones, and his skin still stretches so tight over some places it looks painful. He’s been put on a special diet by Louis designed to help him gain a healthy amount of weight, but his metabolism burns through it all too fast. He doesn’t look almost any better since the day he came back.

“How could you do this to yourself?” Harry asks. “You barely weigh over a hundred pounds now Niall. I didn’t even think that was possible in two months.”

“It is when you only eat to keep from passing out. I was on a mostly liquid diet, remember?” Niall says casually. He gets so aloof when they talk about it and Harry just wants to scream at him. He wants to pin him against a wall and yell until Niall understands how much it hurts to see him this way. “Atkins has nothing on the Whiskey-and-the-occasional-crisps plan.”

“I do. I remember everything you’ve told me vividly.” Harry says. “I don’t think it’s funny either.”

“I know. I’m sorry for trying to make a joke out of it Haz. Honestly I want to forget any of it ever happened, but according to Roma that isn’t healthy, so I relive it every moment of every day. I can’t stop thinking about it because I want to get healthy and be someone who you deserve again.” Niall says quietly.

“Niall-” Harry starts.

“I just wanted you to know Haz. I want the ring back, but I couldn’t stand the thought of losing it because it slipped off my finger. I don’t want to fight.” Niall says. He turns to walk away and Harry goes to stop him, but the motorcycle is in the way and he has to go around first. He gets tangled in his blanket and by the time he gets righted Niall is almost gone.

“Niall please come back!” Harry yells a little too loudly and a smidgen too desperately. It doesn’t matter to him though, not when Niall turns around. “Please stop leaving me.”
“I’m not leaving you Haz, I’m going inside to cook lunch. I’m starving.” Niall beams. “I don’t think pasta primavera is on Louis’ approved list, but it’s what I know how to make.”

“I need you to promise you’ll never leave me again Niall. That’s all I want today.” Harry says quietly.

“Wish you’d told me that before I blew half what I have left on the motorcycle.” Niall sighs.

“Half of what you- Niall you were worth over a million euros when you left!” Harry groans.

“I donated a lot of it to homeless shelters in every city I visited, or on Angelo’s food so I could pass it out to the needy. I also stayed in five star hotels so I could feel like I was home sometimes.” Niall says quietly. “And because I left I never got my final payment for the farm, which was fair, I didn’t have much afterwards.”

“I never told Zayn to pull that payment.” Harry says. “That wasn’t supposed to happen.”

“It’s not like I upheld my end of the bargain at all. I barely taught you a thing about farming.” Niall shrugs. “I was just happy I didn’t end up in jail for breach of contract.”

“I wouldn’t do that to you.” Harry scoffs.

“After what I said, I wouldn’t have fought it.” Niall sighs.

“So how much do you have left?” Harry asks.

“About fifty thousand or so.” Niall admits. “Those people needed it more than I did. I also stayed in luxury hotels and drank and fucked hookers. I burned through my money because I didn’t care what happened when it was gone.”

“Well you’re lucky you got a millionaire to fall in love with you.” Harry smiles. “Money isn’t a problem and you can always draw on my accounts.”

“I’m probably going to have to eventually.” Niall says quietly.

“What’s mine is yours.” Harry says happily.


“Best present I can imagine.” Harry beams. He wraps Niall up inside his throw and they stay that way until Liam pops his head out and asks if lunch is on hold. Niall laughs and walks back inside with Harry draped over his shoulders, even if the taller boy has to do all the walking on his own anyways.

The meal turns out well if Niall is any judge. It’s not fair though seeing as he’d eat pretty much anything. He looks at the others anxiously to find their plates still containing food.

“You didn’t like it then?” Niall asks, trying to hide the pain he feels.

“I loved it, but Niall you gave us portions you would eat.” Liam laughs.

“I’ve never eaten that much in my life.” Harry groans, rubbing his stomach. “It was tasty though. Much better than my recipe for it.”
Niall’s heart swells with that. He blushes and takes their plates. Harry’s hand shoots out and stops him though. “I didn’t say I was done. Can’t let that go to waste.”

“You don’t have to eat it Haz.” Niall blushes further.

“I want to though. It's delicious.” Harry beams. “Just give my stomach a second to settle.”

“That’s just going to make you feel even more full.” Liam says with a laugh.

“Oh yeah.” Harry pouts. “Well put the rest in a container so I can eat after I poop.”

“Sure.” Niall says with a roll of his eyes. God forbid there be any mystery in their relationship. He packs it away in the fridge and when he turns around they’re both gone. He finds them back on the couch cuddled under the throw. “I should have guessed I’d find you here.”

“Apparently you did.” Harry giggles.

“I didn’t hear him calling for us. Did you Haz?” Liam asks.

“I didn’t Li.” Harry beams.

“I didn’t think so.” Liam smiles.

“What are we watching next then?” Niall asks, plopping down on the comfiest section of the U-shaped couch. He loves having the lounge to himself sometimes, but now isn’t really one of them. He misses his spot with his head on Harry’s lap and his legs resting over Liam.

“It’s an Indie flick.” Harry smiles.

“I hear the acting is for shite, but the action scenes are really good.” Liam nods.


“From what I understand there’s plenty of romance too.” Harry grins wickedly. Niall is so confused right now it isn’t even funny. He settles against the cushion and braces himself for three hours of absolute awful, because that’s exactly what he’s come to expect from Harry’s taste in movies, and anything that ever has the word Indie in it.

It starts with two guys wrestling on a beach, and Niall wonders if he can discreetly sneak a nap. Probably not. He snores even worse now than ever. He picked up his smoking around Berlin and he hasn’t been able to kick his habit back down, despite having to smoke in his own bedroom with the window open because Harry disapproves, but also doesn’t want him to freeze outside. Maybe he can sneak off for a quick fag. Harry will pout of course, but he could fake having fallen asleep afterwards and miss the whole awful thing.

Except, as Niall keeps watching the two men, they don’t appear to be wrestling. Not at all. His interest is instantly peaked. What kind of kinky Indie film is this? He’s about to ask Harry, but then he notices that both he and Liam have disappeared under the now very animated throw. As he opens his mouth a loud moan comes from the television and Harry’s naked legs kick out from underneath the blanket.

He was definitely wearing socks and joggers before. Harry always wears socks unless- “Oi you two! Are you shagging under there?”

“Wondered how long it would take you to catch on.” Harry laughs as his head pops out of the other
“You gonna join in or what?” Liam asks, sticking his head out too.

“I’d miss the movie.” Niall says while he rolls his eyes.

“The movie is just to help facilitate things.” Harry grins.

“What happened to no sex?” Niall asks. “You were pretty sure about it the other day.”

“Special occasion.” Liam smiles.

“Have fun then.” Niall says. “I’m gonna have a quick fag up in me room.”

He jumps off the couch and heads upstairs. The lack of protest from Harry and Liam is upsetting honestly, but he doesn’t care that much. Let them have their fun. He’s had plenty of his own in the last few months, and the thought of doing something with Liam makes his skin crawl a little bit now.

He grabs his half empty pack of cigarettes off the dresser and lights up before he slides the window open. He chose the smallest bedroom because it has the best view and it’s own balcony, but it does mean he doesn’t have a sitting area, so instead he tucks himself into his bed and takes a deep drag.

He needs to empty his ashtray soon. It’s filled with butts and ash almost to the brim. He makes a note to himself to toss it in the bathroom bin before he takes out the trash next time. Harry and Liam peek their heads in through the door, stacked on top of each other like some ridiculous Scooby Doo cartoon. He’s in no mood for a lecture. “What do you two want?” He scowls.

“Well we wanted to fool around, but then you took off.” Liam says.

“To smoke, of all things.” Harry pouts.

“Hardly.” Liam scoffs. “You going to tell us what’s going on right off, or are we going to have to fight, cry, hug, fight a little more, cry a little more, and then you tell us after running away?”

“Nothing to tell.” Niall says simply. “’M not in the mood. You two seriously should though. I’m pretty sure you both need it a lot more than I do.”

“Niall, we’re not going to do it without you.” Liam says.

“Wait really?” Harry asks, looking down at Liam from where their heads are still stacked together.

“Of course not.” Liam glares.

“But it’s my birthday.” Harry pouts. He yelps a second later and Liam gets a smug look on his face. It doesn’t last as they come tumbling through the door, arse over head, and completely nude. “That hurt you prat!”

“You deserved it.” Liam grins as he pins Harry to the ground.

“Changing the scenery doesn’t make me want to watch you two shag any more than I did before.” Niall sighs. He flicks his ashes into the little clear tray and glares at the two boys wrestling for control at the foot of his bed.

“We didn’t want you to watch, we wanted you to join.” Harry says when he manages to roll over
and mash Liam’s face into the floor.

“And I told you I’m not in the mood.” Niall repeats. “You were right the other day. I don’t think I’m ready.”

“Wait what?” Liam asks with a mouth full of Berber carpet.

“I’m not ready. I thought I was, I really did, but I’m not. The thought of someone inside me right now just scares me.” Niall admits quietly.

“Niall we don’t have to do anything you aren’t comfortable with.” Harry smiles. Liam takes the opportunity to flip Harry over and pin his arms behind his head from underneath.

“He’s right Nialler.” Liam says. “We can do as much or as little as you want.”

“What I want right now is nothing Liam. I want to have a smoke by myself.” Niall sighs. It comes out meaner than he’d like and both of the other boys look hurt. “I just don’t want that. I don’t want to start something and then freak out because for one second I forget where I am and who you are.”

“Do you want to start seeing someone separately from us?” Harry asks. “A therapist more suited to this kind of issue?”

“Maybe.” Niall says. “But right now I just want to finish this fag and maybe take a nap if that’s alright.”

“Can we join you?” Liam asks. “For the nap I mean.”

“You two go shag. Have fun. I want you to.” Niall says weakly.

“I said we weren’t going to, and we aren’t.” Liam says as he lets Harry’s arms go free. Harry hops off of him and helps him up with a firm smack to the arse.

“Why?” Niall asks.

“Because the last time we started this relationship Haz and I shagged alone, and even though it was great, it wasn’t right. We’re starting over and the first time for us should be all of us together.” Liam says firmly.

“Haz and I already hooked up at the hospital Li.” Niall points out.

“Not the same.” Harry says. “Not that I didn’t like it, but we weren’t really back together yet.”

“So what, it was you cheating on Liam then?” Niall asks.

“Not the way I see it.” Liam huffs. “It was a very intimate re-connection.”

“Lovely.” Niall rolls his eyes. “If you guys are want to wait then do, but I want it on the record that I’m perfectly fine with you two shagging and it’s not even against the rules.”

“We will.” Harry says with a small smile. “So can we join you for a nap?”

“Fine, but let’s move it to the big bed so if the babies go off on Mary we can hear it on the monitors. She’s stayed way more than necessary considering we’re all here.” Niall sighs. He puts out his cigarette and closes the window, much to the relief of the other two if their faces are anything to go by.
“It’s not like she can drive home in this.” Liam smiles. “I’ll go let her know she can stay the night.”

“Should we tell him?” Harry asks with a goofy grin as soon as Liam is out of the room.

“If we don’t want a lawsuit yeah.” Niall sighs. “Liam!”

“I’m still naked!” Liam screams, running back into Niall’s room.

“Yes you are.” Harry smiles wickedly.

“I’ll go tell her. You two go get in the bed and maybe turn off the porno playing in the TV room.” Niall says with a small smile. “Honestly what were you two thinking with her in the house?”

“We were thinking that things were different.” Harry says quietly.

“Yeah, but I mean she isn’t Louis or El or Zayn. She isn’t our friend. If she walked in on us it would be ten times more awkward.” Niall sighs. “She already feels uncomfortable around us.”

“She does?” Harry asks.

“She’s a sixty two year old Irish Catholic. Of course she does.” Niall says. It really should be obvious.

“You can’t just make that assumption Nialler.” Liam says sternly.

“Yeah because I wouldn’t possibly know more about Catholics than you two.” Niall rolls his eyes.

“Not like you’ve been in a church lately.” Harry pouts.

“Harry, I was a catholic in Rome with syphilis I got when I was raped and thoughts of suicide. If you don’t think I went to confession you don’t know me.” Niall says quietly. “I went to Saint Peter’s every day, praying for forgiveness for my sins. I do a few hundred Hail Mary’s a day for good measure when I wake up. I was a lapsed Catholic yes, but I’m not anymore.”

“Does that mean anything for us?” Harry asks.

“How do you mean?” Niall asks.

“Well there are a bunch of things. I’m non-denominational and I’m not even sure what Liam is, so would you want things to change for our ceremony if we have it?” Harry asks.

“No. The church doesn’t acknowledge our union. It doesn’t matter to me though. I may have found my way back to them, but I don’t agree with everything they say.” Niall says firmly.

“And our children? What about them?” Harry asks. “I’m not certain I’d feel comfortable with them being baptized within the Catholic faith. For one thing god parents are supposed to be Catholic too, and I’m fairly certain we don’t have any candidates like that.”

“Of course not.” Niall laughs. “You think I want them growing up with the guilt the church instills? I’m probably the only Catholic in the world who doesn’t want their kids raised in the church, but I don’t. They shouldn’t ever feel the kind of shame the church teaches.”

“Okay then.” Harry says.

“I’m an agnostic, just by the way.” Liam says. “Doesn’t really matter one way or the other to me.”
“One last thing, and I promise however you answer won’t affect things between us, but does your rediscovered faith have anything to do with why you aren’t ready?” Harry asks.

“Haz, no. Just- just no. I told you, I don’t agree with everything the church espouses. I don’t think love or consensual sex should be considered sinful, no matter what. The pope can kiss my arse if he disagrees.” Niall says with a wide smile. He may have found his faith again, but that doesn’t mean he’s going to stop living his life his way. He sought the comfort the Madonna and Christ provide, not the strict ideology.

“Just making sure.” Harry smiles.

“Well someone really should go get the porn turned off. Mary is going to be heading down any time now to make the twins their next meal.” Niall says. “I’ll do my best to stall her.”

They each go their own way at the staircase. Harry runs downstairs to get the TV, Liam goes into the bedroom to start a fire, and Niall goes to speak to Mary. When he reaches the door to the nursery he finds Mary clapping for Gemma who’s sitting up and holding a small toy giraffe in her hand. Sam is ogling at her from in Mary’s lap.

“Hi Mary.” Niall says with a smile. “Hey guys.”

Sam gurgles excitedly when Niall talks and Gemma drops her toy to stare. “Is there something I can help with Mr. Horan?” Mary asks politely.

“Please call me Niall, it makes me uncomfortable being called Mr. Horan. The snow has gotten over a meter thick, so we wanted you to know you’re welcome to spend the night. Driving tonight probably isn’t safe.” Niall tells her, picking Gemma up when she holds up her arms.

“I wouldn’t want to impose Mr.- Niall.” Mary says gently.

“You wouldn’t be. The guest room is all made up, and the fireplace is gas so all you have to do is light a match if the power goes out. If you really aren’t comfortable staying, then Liam can try taking you home when the snow stops. We have a small plow for emergencies, but it’ll take a while to hook up.” Niall says.

“Are you sure I wouldn’t be a bother?” Mary asks.

“Not at all.” Niall says with a smile.

“Then I’d be more than grateful to stay the night, thank you.” Mary says, mirroring his smile. “May I use your phone to call my husband? He’ll be worried, and I can’t get a signal on my mobile.”

“Mary, you’re welcome to use anything in our home. Our food is yours to eat, and our phone, television, books, anything you’d like is free for you to use.” Niall says. They have this conversation almost every day, but the older woman is so sweet he doesn’t hold it against her. She’s just trying to be courteous. That or she’s got dementia and they really shouldn’t let her watch their children. It’s probably the former though.

“If you insist Mr. Niall.” Mary says.

“Harry, Liam and I are going to take a nap. Please let us know if you need anything or if the power goes out. There are torches in every room and battery operated lights that can be activated by a clap everywhere but the library, the foyer, and television room.” Niall says. He puts Gemma back down and hands her the giraffe before she can start to cry. He gives Mary one last smile before he leaves and closes the door behind him. Harry is sneaking back up the stairs with the throw wrapped around
“Hey gorgeous.” Niall smiles.

“Hey sunshine.” Harry grins.

“What took you so long to turn off the television?” Niall asks.

“Might have had a little wank.” Harry says with a blush.

“I get it.” Niall laughs. “I’m sorry I pulled such a one-eighty on this.”

“Don’t be.” Harry tells him softly. “Take all the time you need.”

“I hope it won’t be long.” Niall whispers. “I really hate not being able to let myself do this. You look so tempting and I just want to move past it.”

“Niall, I can’t tell you how long it will take for you to be able to trust someone with your body again, but I can tell you two things. Neither Liam nor I would ever hurt you, never. And you are the strongest person I’ve ever known bar none.” Harry smiles. “If anyone in this world can do this, it’s you.”

“You think so?” Niall asks. Harry’s words give him hope. Hope that he can get better. Hope that someday soon he can move past what happened to him.

“I’ve never been more sure of anything in my whole life.” Harry says. “Except that I loved you from the moment we met, when you fell on your face and showed me that perky little bum. I knew then that I’d want to spend the rest of my life with you.”

“That was almost incredibly romantic.” Niall giggles. “You ruined it with the part about my arse hanging in the air.”

“See that’s my favorite part.” Harry grins.

“Of course it is.” Niall rolls his eyes. He brushes past Harry and goes into the bedroom. A fire is already going in the corner and Liam is spread out completely starkers and snoring. Harry giggles at that and does a flying leap on top of him. Liam wakes up with a yelp and groans at the pressure on top of him.

“Hey there tall, muscly, and semi-hard.” Harry laughs.

“Get off of me you git.” Liam moans.

“But you’re such a comfy napping spot.” Harry teases. Liam grabs him by the shoulders and pushes him off to the side.

“You’re too heavy for that.” Liam mumbles. He rolls onto his side and falls back asleep with startling speed.

Niall crawls into the bed and collapses next to Harry. “You can lay on me if you want Haz.” He says with a grin.

“No offense Nialler, but you are bony as all hell.” Harry laughs.

“I have no defense for that.” Niall sighs. “I suppose that mean I can’t lay on you then, huh?”
“Would it be awful if I asked you to put a pillow between us if you did?” Harry asks.

“I can do that.” Niall says. He scoots up the bed to grab a pillow and feels the bed dip. He turns around just in time to see Harry flopping down on top of him. Harry presses feather light kisses all over his face and neck while Niall giggles. “You aren’t ready for a nap at all, are you?”

“I wasn’t exactly planning on it.” Harry smiles. “I was ready for something else when you decided to nap. I’m not like Li, I can’t just fall asleep at will.”

“I’m pretty sure you didn’t actually finish wanking if you’re still this awake.” Niall groans. “You always get sleepy after you wank.”

“I never said I finished.” Harry grins. “Porn doesn’t do it for me anymore. Only you two do.”

“Haz I told you I’m not in the mood.” Niall huffs.

“I’m not asking for that.” Harry says, nipping at the skin of Niall’s neck. “Just want you to sit there all naked and beautiful while I rub one out.”

“You what?” Niall moans, starting to get lost in the sensation of Harry against his neck.

“I want you to give me something to look at.” Harry smiles against his skin. “You don’t have to touch yourself if you don’t want to. I just want to see you.”

Niall hesitates for a second before saying “Haz, I look like a skeleton now. There’s nothing beautiful about me anymore. Not that there really was to begin with.”

“I disagree.” Harry moans. He pulls his face back and takes Niall’s in his hands.

“There’s your eyes.” Harry says before kissing each of Niall’s eyelids gently.

“There’s your lips.” Harry grins before pressing his own bright pink lips against Niall’s.

“There’s your smile and your laugh.” Harry says, pushing their mouths together once more. “There’s your heart.”

Niall blushes more deeply with each thing Harry says. Harry’s hands glide through his hair and Niall loves the feeling. Harry’s lips brush over his skin and it feels right. His teeth graze Niall’s earlobe, but it doesn’t hurt. “Everything about you is beautiful Niall. Everything. Your body is still beautiful, no matter what. You are still unbelievably devastatingly beautiful. I want you back healthy, but that doesn’t mean I don’t think you’re still perfect.” Harry says quietly.

“How did I ever do anything to deserve you?” Niall whispers.

“You were born. That was more than enough.” Harry grins. “So...?”

“I’ll do it.” Niall nods. Harry grins and leans back to help pull Niall’s shirt over his head. There’s a look in Harry’s eyes, a brief flash of something. Niall covers his chest with his arms. “Is it that bad to look at me?”

“No, Niall, I meant what I said. I did.” Harry sighs. “I’m still not used to seeing you all inked up like this. It’s strange, not bad.”

“I see what you and Zayn meant though, about it being like an addiction. I’ve started feeling normal under the needle.” Niall grins. “Gets me hard.”
“You know they’re going to stretch when you get back to a healthy size, right?” Harry asks.

“They’re what?” Niall hisses.

“Probably not much, but your skin will shift and they might get misshapen. Especially the guitar.” Harry explains. He runs his fingers over the tattoo version of Harry’s birthday gift to him, touching Niall’s hip where it sits. “It gets me hard too. I can’t help it. From the second the needle touches my skin I get going. It was pretty awkward when I got Brazil done.”

“That’s incredibly hot Haz, but are you serious about them stretching out?” Niall asks. He’s very upset about that.

“Not like a lot or anything. Not unless you get like genuinely fat.” Harry sighs. “The clover may not be fine because it’s on your bum, but the twins’ birthday should be alright on your wrist. So should the ram and probably the rosary. You got the names before the weight loss, so as long as you don’t get too much bigger than you were before, it will be alright too.”

“Would you get one with me?” Niall asks quietly. “When I’m back to normal that is.”

“I’ve been waiting for you to ask since you went out with Zayn.” Harry grins. He ducks his head into the crevice of Niall’s neck and starts mouthing gently at the skin while his hands undo Niall’s trousers. He glides his long fingers along the dips of Niall’s hipbones and back under the curve of his arse and slides his jeans down slowly. “I see you still don’t wear underwear.” Harry giggles with a cheeky wink.

“Nope. I had to buy new clothes wherever I went because I didn’t have any when I left, or a suitcase for that matter. So adding underwear to the bill just seemed unnecessary.” Niall shrugs. “London and Paris and Rome have amazing clothes, but they price their underwear so insanely expensively. I swear they forget that you can buy a pack of four for a few euros at a department store. Not that I ever went to department stores while I was there.”

“Niall.” Harry sighs and drops his head. “Let’s not do this. Let’s just stop.”

“What? Why?” Niall asks. Harry wanted this so much a few minutes ago, and now he’s stopping? Is it seeing Niall like this? Did all of his talk about how Niall is still beautiful even mean anything.

“You’re obviously not comfortable.” Harry says looking deep in his eyes. “You keep avoiding this by talking and talking. It’s okay Babes. I understand.”

He starts to pull away but Niall grabs his wrist and the back of his head, pulling him into a deep kiss. Harry’s lips don’t work at first, probably surprise, but then he’s kissing Niall back. Their tongues slide together and Harry’s body slots in between his legs. They stay that way for a bit, just snogging their brains out before Niall pulls away.

“I’m not uncomfortable Haz, not exactly.” he says quietly. “I’m just nervous. You said all the right things, but I still don’t think I’m beautiful. Last time you weren’t looking at my body, we were too busy for that. This time that’s all you’ll be doing. It’s scary.”

“I don’t want you to be afraid. Not with me.” Harry says. “So let’s stop.”

“Does it matter at all that I still want to do this?” Niall asks.

“Only if you’re being one hundred percent honest about it.” Harry whispers.

Niall grins wickedly and guides Harry’s hand down until it grips around his cock. He’s hard and
leaking, thrusting shallowly into Harry’s hand. “Does that answer you well enough, or do I actually have to say it?” Niall moans.

“Fairly certain that works just fine.” Harry grins.

“So um, how do you want to do this?” Niall asks. “I’ve never done mutual masturbation, so I’m not really clear on how it works.”

“Well we can do it side by side.” Harry says thoughtfully. “Or I could stack up some pillows and sit across from you.”

“I like that one.” Niall nods. Harry’s hand is still wrapped around him and pumping painfully slow. It feels so good, but he knows if this keeps up then there’s a chance he’ll have another panic attack. He wants so much to give Harry everything, he trusts Harry to never hurt him, but that doesn’t change that he isn’t ready to go there again. He needs the space between them right now. “Gives me a better look at you.”

“And here I thought I was supposed to be watching you.” Harry mumbles against his neck.

“Like I could watch you do that and just sit here.” Niall giggles. “Honestly I don’t know how Li is still sleeping with you like this.”

“He isn’t, because you two arse holes won’t just jerk off and shut up!” Liam grumbles. “Just do it already so I can sleep.”

“You don’t want to join Li?” Harry asks.

“I want to sleep.” Liam glares. “I’m the one who got up for the feedings last night.”

“We can go over to the sitting area if you want.” Harry offers.

“Please.” Liam says before he turns over.

Niall crawls to the edge of the bed and Harry plants a kiss on his cheek before they walk over to the chairs. Harry takes the chaise and lays out while Niall takes a wing back chair that lets him lay back just a bit. The cool leather would normally be too much on his bare skin, but with the fire roaring a few feet away it’s a nice contrast.

Harry looks gorgeous stretched out like this. His body is turned slightly towards Niall. One hand cards through his hair and the other is wrapped around his cock loosely. His eyes ghost over Niall and the black haired boy feels a shiver run through his body straight to his own prick. He wraps his hand around it and Harry bites his lip in an infuriatingly attractive way.

Niall starts to pump himself, setting a comfortable pace that won’t have this over too quickly. Harry goes slowly. He always goes slowly in everything he does. He speaks slowly, he moves slowly, he makes love for hours. It’s amazing to lose yourself in that and Niall feels his hand slowing down to match.

Harry has that effect on him. He wants what Harry wants, even if it wasn’t what he wanted before. He’s not being manipulated or anything, it just is. Harry probably doesn’t even know it happens. Niall falls into Harry. He’s like the sun warm and life giving. And Niall can’t resist the pull or the light.

Liam is the Earth with undeniable strength and unwavering stability. Zayn was the moon, secretly soft and beautiful beyond compare. Niall is just a helpless being caught in between. He’s drawn to
these things that are greater than himself, pulled by their gravity until he’s spiraling down.

“Niall?” Harry asks. When did he get in front of Niall? “Niall are you all right?”


“Niall you came over here and then just stopped moving.” Harry says. Niall looks down and notices it’s not Harry standing in front of him, but instead he’s straddling the curly haired boy and they’ve both gone soft. “What happened?”

“I got lost in thought. Started thinking about how beautiful you are and then I couldn’t stop I guess. I don’t even remember moving.” Niall says.

“Like a blackout?” Harry asks nervously.

“No, nothing like that.” Niall shakes his head. “Like auto pilot. You know when you get in your car and start thinking about something, but then you’re home and you don’t remember the drive? It was like that. I remember exactly what I was thinking, but I don’t remember what I did because I wasn’t really thinking about it.”

Harry smiles softly and pulls Niall down to rest his head on his chest. “What were you thinking about?” He asks.

“You’ll laugh.” Niall shakes his head.

“Promise I won’t.” Harry says softly.

“I was thinking about how you’re like the sun to me. You’re bright and beautiful and I need you to live.” Niall mumbles. “Liam is strong and supportive like the earth, but you’re more like the sun.”

“That’s funny.” Harry smiles. “Not like haha funny, but it’s funny because that’s how I always think of you. I’ve always thought of you as the sun.”

“I’m not the sun Harry. I’m nothing but a shadow.” Niall whispers.

“Stop that.” Harry growls. “Stop being so hateful towards yourself. You can’t imagine how much it hurts when you do that. You’re beautiful and smart and kind beyond anyone I know. You’ve made some stumbles along your path, but you are my whole world Niall. I love you too much to let you think you are anything but a sky full of stars.”

Harry’s arms hold him too tight and his voice cracks at the end, but it’s more amazing than anything Niall could have ever imagined someone saying to him. Niall doesn’t even try to stop the tears this time. Harry runs his hands through Niall’s hair soothingly. Niall cries into Harry’s chest until he feels himself slip into the darkness of sleep.

Liam wakes up a few hours after he laid down feeling a lot less miserable than he did when he finally fell asleep. Harry and Niall are snoring in front of the fireplace. Niall seems to have fallen off Harry’s top half and is laying at a weird angle half on the floor. Liam crawls out of the bed and goes over to them. He tucks his arms under Niall and lifts the small boy up to his chest.

Niall stirs a bit, but doesn’t wake up. Liam carries him to the bed and tucks him in under the covers before he plants a kiss on his forehead. He walks back to the chaise to carry Harry, but the tall man is already starting to wake up. “I can carry you back to the bed if you want.” Liam offers in a hushed
"Yes please." Harry says with a sleepy smile. He sticks his arms up and wraps them around Liam’s neck when he leans down. Harry has always been heavier than Niall. He’s taller and his muscle tone is fantastic. Liam has never really felt the difference until now though, it being so much more dramatic.

He has to carry Harry more like a child because his scar still burns if he does too much. Harry’s legs wrap around his waist and he cuddles into Liam’s neck. Harry’s breathing is shallow again by the time they reach the bed, so he plants Harry right next to Niall. The taller boy wraps around the smaller one and Liam wishes he had a phone to take a picture. Unfortunately it’s in his jeans pocket which is down in the living room.

He debates with himself for just a moment what to do now, but the answer is obvious. He opens the dresser and pulls on some joggers. He puts on a shirt and then pads out of the room. Mary is in the hallway and she gives Liam a smile. “Just laid them down to sleep Mr. Payne.” She says quietly.

“That’s all right, I’ll just watch them sleep.” Liam grins. It became his favorite pastime when Harry and he weren’t talking. They both sleep surprisingly well for their age, sometimes even making it through the night without waking up. Liam has a love hate relationship with those nights. On one hand they all get to sleep well, but on the other he doesn’t get to hold them.

“Whatever you say Mr. Payne.” Mary nods. She wanders over to the other guest room before Liam can correct her. They’ve all asked her multiple times to call them by their first names. It doesn’t seem to take.

Liam sighs and then walks into the nursery to find the twins sleeping peacefully and holding hands. They do that every time they get put down for the night, but it never ceases to make Liam smile. Liam takes his usual seat in the armchair and pulls his book off the dresser. He left it in there last night after the feeding, just like every night. He’s finished more books sitting with the twins than he had in his entire life before them.

“Mind some company?” a sleepy voice asks from the door.

“Course not Haz.” Liam smiles. Harry shuffles across the floor in a pair of Niall’s joggers that don’t even cover his ankles. He takes a seat on Liam’s lap and cuddles into his neck. Liam smiles and asks. “Did you seriously get up and put on joggers just to fall asleep on me?”

“Niall kicked me out of the bed in his sleep. Literally. He kicked me and I fell out of the bed.” Harry mumbles.

“Aw.” Liam coos. “How’d he manage that? His legs were like toothpicks even before the weight loss.”

“Well, he didn’t so much kick, as roll over and knee me in the crotch.” Harry sighs.

“Oh love, I’m sorry.” Liam says, putting a protective arm around Harry.

“First he gives me blue balls then he knees me in them.” Harry groans. “That’s not how you treat someone on their birthday.”

“Sorry this has been such a bad day for you.” Liam says quietly.

“What? Li that’s not what I meant.” Harry says in a panicked tone. “Today has been great, really. I love my gifts and you put up with my movies all afternoon. Nialler even cooked for us, which was as
exciting as it was tasty. No sex is a small price to pay for such a good day.”

“I thought you two wanked together. Didn’t that count for you at all?” Liam asks.

“Niall had some weird freak out.” Harry explains. “He just ended up crying and falling asleep on me.”

“Was it a PTSD episode?” Liam asks. Niall has had two more incredibly bad ones since he’s been back, both with Liam. Once Liam came up behind him while he was washing dishes and touched his shoulder. Niall screamed and broke the plate he was washing on the counter. It took Harry three hours to calm him down and Liam had to keep away. He spent the whole time crying and holding the twins.

The second time was during a particularly intense snogging session a few days ago when Niall joined him in the shower. Everything was going smoothly until Liam’s hands slid down Niall’s back. He pushed Liam into the wall and ran out, breaking the shower door in the process. Luckily it shattered against the wall so Niall didn’t cut himself, but Liam had to lay down all the towels he could reach in order to walk out of the shower. They still haven’t been able to go buy a replacement for Liam to install.

Liam has been very confused, because Niall always started everything between them. He’s been as flirty as ever until today. He’s even insisted he was okay to have sex multiple times, including just two days ago in the car. He’s changed so much in a very short time and Liam can’t keep up. He doesn’t want to push Niall into anything, but it’s hard to tell what will set him off now. Especially when he only talks to Harry after an attack.

“No, I don’t think so. He didn’t panic or anything. He said he got lost in thought and then went into auto pilot.” Harry says quietly.

“Did he tell you what he was thinking about?” Liam asks. It still may have been an episode, just less intense. Honestly he doesn’t know what Harry was thinking propositioning him after Niall already turned them down. He’d have stopped it if he hadn’t been overcome with exhaustion. Niall’s condition should have taken precedence, but he could barely move or talk.

“Us. He compared us to the sun and the earth.” Harry says. It’s almost a whisper.

“That sounds more like Zayn than it does Niall.” Liam sighs.

“Whether we like it or not, Zayn changed him.” Harry says sadly. “He’s not the same person he was when either of us met him.”

“Well of course not.” Liam smiles. “When I met Niall he was five. He spent his days giggling at the word poop and insisted on eating nothing but macaroni and cheese for a year.”

“And when I met him he was an overly-flirtatious little midget who only wanted to make me uncomfortable.” Harry grins.

“So what am I now?” Niall asks from the door. His eyes are rimmed with sleep and he looks like he needs to lean against the door just to stay standing.

“That’s for you to tell us.” Liam says softly. “You’re still kind and beautiful, but something in you is different than it was before.”

“Is that a bad thing?” Niall asks quietly.
“Nothing about you could ever be bad Nialler.” Harry smiles. “I already told you how I feel about that. Maybe you need to hear it from Liam though.”

He slides off Liam’s lap and steers Niall into the room before leaving. Niall shuffles uncomfortably from side to side. He’s only wearing Harry’s throw, but it’s wrapped tight around him like a suit of armor. Liam holds his arms out and Niall gives him a grateful smile and curls up in his lap. “So what did he say to you?” Liam asks.

“Some stuff.” Niall mumbles.

“Ah yes, and how am I supposed to compete with stuff?” Liam smiles.

“You don’t need to tell me anything Liam.” Niall says quietly.

“Yes I do. I need to tell you that I love you. I need to tell you that you mean more to me than you can possibly imagine. You’re my best friend and my lover. Nobody is more important to me than you are.” Liam explains softly.

“Except the twins and Harry.” Niall points out.

“Niall you all mean as much to me as each other. I don’t love them more than you, because it’s a different kind of love. You’re all important.” Liam sighs. “Please don’t think that just because we’re fathers our relationship falls to second place in my heart.”

“Harry said that’s what happens for parents.” Niall whispers.

“He was angry.” Liam explains with a soft look into Niall’s eyes. “You don’t know how bad he felt making you feel like you were less important to him. He’s never regretted anything so much.”

“How would you possibly know that?” Niall asks.

“Because it’s all he talked about the night you left.” Liam sighs. “He didn’t mean it any more than you meant what you said.”

“Really? Because I didn’t mean it at all. He’s a great dad.” Niall says with a small smile.

“You both are. And yes, really. I’m surprised he didn’t tell you.” Liam says.

“We haven’t really talked about the fight. We just agreed to forget it and move on.” Niall admits.

“You stubborn little fools.” Liam groans. “Did you ever think of talking about your problems instead of just rutting against each other like teenagers?”

“Our way is so much more fun.” Niall grins.

“And so much less healthy.” Liam scolds.

“You should give it a try some time.” Niall winks.

“Because that worked out so well for you two tonight.” Liam scoffs.

“I should have known he’d tell you what happened.” Liam sighs.

“Are you alright?” Liam asks. What Harry had said hadn’t really allayed Liam’s fears about Niall’s strange reaction. “Was it a panic attack?”
“No. Just got caught up thinking about you guys.” Niall says with a smile.

“Harry said something about the sun.” Liam says. He hadn’t really understood that part.

“And the Earth.” Niall nods.

“I don’t really get it, but okay.” Liam shrugs.

“You’re the Earth.” Niall says, like it should explain everything.

“I still don’t follow Nialler.” Liam says.

“You’re my strength, my stability. You’re beautiful beyond compare and you keep me going even when I’m not sure I can. You’re the Earth.” Niall says softly.

“So poetic.” Liam smiles. “You got that from Zayn.”

“Probably. I would have compared you to, like, food or something before what happened with him.” Niall sighs. “Grade A beef or summat.”

“It’s nice.” Liam says softly. “So are you the moon then?”

“No.” Niall shakes his head. “I’m not anything in this analogy.”

“Is there a moon?” Liam asks cautiously.

“You already know the answer to that.” Niall says softly. “I can tell by your voice. You’re still angry at me, aren’t you?”

“Nialler.” Liam says, pulling Niall’s jaw up so their eyes meet. “I never was and never will be angry about that. You can’t help who you fall in love with. I know that now. I’m so sorry that I blamed you for breaking us when you got back. It wasn’t your fault. You loving him is okay.”

“I was so jealous, so pissed, when he kissed you. I was so angry about him trying to take you away from us, and then I did so much worse Li. I betrayed your trust.” Niall says, tears forming in his eyes.

“No you didn’t.” Liam smiles. He wipes the tears from Niall’s eyes and plants a soft kiss on his cheek. “You didn’t betray me or Haz. You fell in love and that’s not something to be ashamed of. If it was then both of us falling for Haz would have been a betrayal. It turned out beautifully I think.”

“But this didn’t.” Niall responds. “Falling in love with him almost ruined everything for all four of us.”

“That doesn’t make it wrong. Love doesn’t always work out, but that doesn’t mean it’s ever bad. I can’t believe love can ever be the wrong thing. Not anymore.” Liam says. A year ago things would have been different. A year ago all he wanted was to be with Niall, only loving each other for the rest of their lives. Everything became different when Harry came along. Something changed inside Liam and he’s so happy it did.

“He’s right Nialler.” Harry smiles from the door. “I know I’ve been the most resentful out of anybody over what happened, but I was wrong. There’s nothing wrong with being in love, even if things don’t go well. I’m not going to say everything that happened was good, because it wasn’t, but you falling in love wasn’t a bad thing.”

“Teaming up on me isn’t fair.” Niall pouts. “What are you even doing here again? I’d have gotten you when we were done.”
“You two were taking too long and I wanted my sleeping spot back. Somebody kneed me in the nuts earlier and I had that spot first.” Harry says with a matching pout.

“Niall’s just grumpy because for once we’re right.” Liam laughs.

“It’s an unfamiliar sensation and I don’t care for it.” Niall crosses his arms and pouts even more dramatically.

“Well if you would stop feeling guilty about something you shouldn’t feel guilty about, then you’d be right too.” Harry grins. “Now get out of my spot.”

“Uh-uh. It’s mine now.” Niall smiles wickedly.

“That’s not fair.” Harry says with a frown.

“You’re the one who gave up this prime real estate.” Niall laughs.

“Please?” Harry pleads.

“Harry I have two legs. You can each take one.” Liam sighs. Niall adjusts, scooting back and putting his legs between Liam’s. Harry smiles and pads over to take the other leg. He’s probably not going to get any reading done, but when both of his boys snuggle into his shoulders and start snoozing that doesn’t really bother him.

Six weeks after their birth Louis and Eleanor finally get to take the triplets home. Johnathan, Edmund, and Tanner are all extremely tiny, but they’re healthy and that’s what matters. The boys bring Sam and Gemma because five adults and five babies matches up so well. Especially when it also happens to be four boys to four boys and one girl to one girl.

Niall is practically buzzing with energy by the time Liam pulls up to Louis’ house. Harry and Liam are both in the front seat to accommodate Niall’s new-found fear of driving, so he sits with the babies. Sam and Gemma have gotten so big it’s almost unbelievable. Niall can only carry one at a time now because they’re over twenty pounds of squirming little adorableness, and his arms have lost most of their muscle tone. Sam grabs at absolutely everything and chews on the shirt of whoever is holding him. Gemma is more polite, just like her father, and prefers to press open-mouthed little baby kisses to people’s faces.

There’s another car at Louis’ house that Niall knows doesn’t belong to the cinnamon haired lad or his wife, but he doesn’t give it much thought. Harry and Liam each take a baby carrier while Louis rushes out the door. Niall grabs the diaper bag and braces himself for a hug. Louis grabs Niall by the shoulders and says “We need to talk. Now.”

“Sure Tommo. It’s freezing out here though, so can we do it inside?” Niall asks.

“It’s really better if we don’t.” Louis says firmly. Niall nods and waves at Liam and Harry to go on in. Once they’re gone Louis turns to him with a desperate look and says “I didn’t think he’d come. I was just trying to be polite. I know that’s weird coming from me, but I’m a father now and I thought an attitude adjustment was in order. Soon I’ll have like PTA meetings and other shite like that and I can’t keep being a bitch or everyone will hate me. Their kids will ostracize my kids and-”

“Louis!” Niall says, grabbing the panicking boy’s face in his hands. “What are you talking about.”

“I swear Niall, I didn’t think he’d come. I never would have done it if I thought he would.” Louis
says, his air of desperation growing heavier by the word.

“Who?” Niall asks. He already knows the answer though. Nothing else would make Louis this afraid of Niall’s reaction. Well maybe Josh, but Louis would never do that. He doesn’t even know Josh.

“Zayn.” Louis tells him softly.

“It’s okay Louis.” Niall sighs. “I can manage an afternoon with Zayn without having some sort of breakdown and running away to Brazil or something.”

“That’s not all though.” Louis says weakly. “He brought someone.”

Niall feels his knees start to buckle a little. Zayn hasn’t told him about having met someone. They’ve talked a few times since he called Zayn to design the logo on the jackets. It’s awkward, but they’ve started slowly mending their friendship and repairing his relationship with Harry. Or trying at least. They’re talking. He’s really not ready to see Zayn yet, but seeing him with someone else already might cause some real problems. It might break him “Oh.” is all Niall can manage.

“It’s Perrie.” Louis tells him. That stops Niall’s heart. Harry comes running out the door a second later and reaches them just as Niall starts to fall to his knees.

“How could you?” He growls at Louis when he manages to catch Niall. “How could you do that to us?”

“Louis didn’t think Zayn would come Haz.” Niall says with a humorless laugh. “I can damn well bet he didn’t think Perrie would either.”

“I had no idea they were coming until they got here.” Louis says.

“You should have called. You should have let us know so we could have stayed at home and not spent a half hour getting the kids ready to go somewhere just to take them back home.” Harry says angrily. He turns to Niall and holds him tight against his chest. “Liam is bringing the kids back out. We’ll leave in just a minute.”

“Don’t go, please.” Louis pleads. “I’ll send them away. I promise.”

“You think we can even stand to look at you right now?” Harry hisses.

“Haz stop.” Niall says flatly. “Don’t be mad at Louis. He didn’t try and hurt us”

“You’re only six weeks into recovery Niall. Seeing Zayn could unravel all of the work you’ve done.” Harry says quietly.

“Is it really that bad seeing me?” a voice asks behind them. It makes Niall’s heart sink into his stomach and his neck snap around. He looks so beautiful. He’s dressed better than the last time Niall saw him. His scruff is trimmed and his hair looks perfect. Of course it does. “I thought we were okay. I thought we were making good strides.”

“Oh yeah.” Niall scoffs bitterly. “You must be making great strides if you’re back with her.”

“We’re giving things another shot. One last shot for things to work.” Zayn says firmly.

“I’ve heard that half a dozen times.” Harry says darkly.

“It’s different. She’s willing to try for a family.” Zayn lowers his eyes.
“Good fucking luck with that. Hope they end up being yours instead of some random guy from a club’s. I know that’s her type.” Niall snaps.

“I came here to see you guys again, not to fight Nialler.” Zayn says quietly.

“You should have told us if you were going to be here. Especially if it’s like this.” Harry says. “Ambushing us isn’t helping anything.”

“You wouldn’t have come.” Zayn whispers.

“Damn right we wouldn’t have.” Harry says angrily. “We’re trying so hard to pick up the pieces of our relationship. Talking on the phone is one thing. We can handle that. We can’t handle seeing you right now, especially with her.”

“Did you tell her? Did you tell her about us?” Niall asks quietly. It’s the only thing he can think about right now. He pushes Harry to the side and stands directly in front of the darker boy.

“No.” Zayn admits.

“That’s all I need to know.” Niall says. Liam comes out both of the baby carriers and walks to the car. Niall follows suit, but before he can get into the Rover a hand wraps around his wrist. Even without the context of the situation Niall would know who it belonged to. His fingers are always shockingly smooth, the result of his secret nighttime moisturizing regimen. His grip is tight, but not painful. It feels warm, just like it always did.

“Let go of him!” Harry roars. “If you had taken him back, in November, then maybe he wouldn’t have broken like he was.”

“If I had taken him back, then he wouldn’t be with you again!” Zayn yells. “I thought he went back to you. I didn’t know he would keep running. He belongs with you two, no matter how we feel about each other.”

“And if you felt the same way about me that I do about you, then you would have told her!” Niall growls. “Let. Go. Of. Me.”

Zayn releases his wrist and tears fill his eyes. “Niall-” He says quietly.

“Falling in love with each other wasn’t wrong, Zayn. I see that now thanks to Haz and Li. They’ve accepted what happened with more open-mindedness than I could have ever dreamed or deserved. They helped me see that falling for you wasn’t a bad thing.” Niall says. “But this, us, it wasn’t right. I could never have been with you, and you could never have been with me. The fact that we made each other happy, that we were in love, didn’t even merit a conversation for you. It didn’t mean as much to you.”

Zayn pushes Niall up against the car door and leans in. “It meant more to me than anything I’ve ever experienced in my life. I took her back because I can’t get over you and if I fuck up a relationship, at least it’s with someone who deserves it. I didn’t tell her because then, then I have to admit how badly I fucked up letting you go.”

Liam grabs Zayn by the shoulders and practically throws him. Niall is shivering, doing his best not to have a panic attack after Liam was so forceful. He hasn’t had one in almost two weeks, but he’s so close he can feel his breathing starting to restrict. Zayn doesn’t struggle, doesn’t try to get back to Niall. He just stands there looking defeated.

“He wants to go, so let him. Do one thing for him that actually makes him feel better.” Liam says
firmly. “Let him go. Let him move on.”

“Please. I just want to talk Nialler. Give me one hour, just one.” Zayn pleads.

“You tell her and maybe then we can talk.” Niall says.

“I’ll tell her now.” Zayn says with a nod.

“No you won’t.” Niall shakes his head. “Don’t ruin this day for Louis and El any more than we already are by leaving. It’s supposed to be a happy occasion.”

He turns to Louis who’s standing behind Harry looking absolutely devastated. The cinnamon haired boy just wanted to be nice, and now it’s blowing up in his face. Niall walks over and holds his hands. “Tommo, I’m so sorry. I know you weren’t trying to hurt us. I can’t stay here right now though. Please forgive me for this.” He says quietly.

“You don’t hate me?” Louis asks.

“I could never hate you. You’re my best mate.” Niall says with a small smile. “I promise we’ll be by soon to help out with the boys. Until then give them all lots of love for me. El too.”

Louis smiles weakly, but then he pulls Niall in for a hug and mumbles “I’m so sorry.”

“It’s really okay Louis. Harry had a strong reaction, but I don’t think he’s mad at you either. A call would have been appreciated, but I forgive you for that. He should have called us when he decided to come.” Niall whispers. “Please don’t be upset for too long. You’re no fun when you’re mopey”

“I can’t stay mopey. I have three kids to look after. There’s no time to mope.” Louis pulls back and grins.

“You don’t even know.” Niall laughs. He plants a peck on Louis’ cheek and then walks to the car. Zayn looks at him with tears running down his cheeks, but doesn’t try and stop him again. Niall climbs into the backseat and settles down between the twins. He doesn’t cry though. This time he won’t cry.

Harry is calming down by the time they pull into the garage, but his hands are still shaking. Seeing Zayn after he walked in, seeing Perrie come up behind him and smile like nothing was wrong, it lit a fire inside him. What’s strange though, is that he seems madder than Niall does. Niall has always been a fighter, been a little angrier than you’d expect with his cherubic face once he gets going. Now though, he’s just in the back playing with the twins like nothing happened. It’s probably the most worrying behavior he’s displayed in weeks.

Niall isn’t the only one that’s worrying Harry though. Liam has been completely silent for the entire drive and his eyes are stormy and dark. His knuckles are stretched so tight that Harry is afraid that the skin might split. His eyes never left the road to check either of the other boys. Stoicism is a good quality of Liam’s most of the time, but now it’s just reminded Harry of the two months where they almost never spoke. They were the worst and loneliest time of Harry’s entire life and he’s not eager to relive them.

“Anyone else starving?” Niall asks from the back seat with a laugh.

“I’m not hungry.” Liam says in the coldest tone Harry has ever heard from the normally warm and friendly boy. He gets out of the rover without another word and wrenches open the back door,
grabbing the carrier with Gemma in it. He doesn’t say anything else before he walks inside with their
daughter.

Harry gets out and grabs the door, taking a moment to steady himself before he opens it and grabs
Sam’s carrier. Niall puts a hand on top of his and looks him straight in the eyes. “I’m sorry you had
to go through that Haz. I don’t know why Louis only thought to warn me when you and Zayn have
fallen out as well.” He says softly.

“It’s not me I’m worried about Nialler.” Harry says with a small frown. “You have so much more
going on than I do with him. He wasn’t there to talk to me. He was there for you. Are you okay?”

“I don’t really know.” Niall sighs. “I left him in such a bad place last time, but I didn’t realize he
could do something so stupid.”

“Niall.” Harry says too harshly for the situation. Niall shrinks back from him, and Harry softens his
tone before continuing. “I’m not asking about Zayn. I’m not asking about myself. I’m asking about
you. How are you feeling?”

“I said I don’t know, Harry.” Niall says angrily. “My thoughts aren’t just on myself right now.
There’s Li, Zayn, and you to consider in all of this. Not to mention my best friend who I just
abandoned on one of the most important days of his life. I’m trying to figure out what I’m feeling,
but I’ve already been assaulted enough today. I don’t need you piling on top of it.”

Harry pulls back at that. He hadn’t meant to snap at Niall at all. His worry turned to anger when he
should have been trying to comfort Niall instead. For all he knows he could be driving the boy back
into the dark place he’d worried Zayn would bring him to instead. “I’m sorry.” Harry says softly. “I
should have thought before I said that. Of course you’re not just thinking of yourself. You never do
that.”

“All I did for two months was think about myself Haz. I’ve never been ashamed of myself in my
entire life until then. I never want to be that person again. I can’t ever be that selfish again.” Niall
almost whispers it, but Harry hears everything. It breaks his heart to hear Niall so down on himself.

“We were both selfish and stubborn Niall. Liam was the only one with any lick of sense during that
whole thing.” Harry tells him.

“That’s not true Harry. Zayn tried to send me back. He tried to stop everything before it started.
Twice. None of what happened was anyone’s fault but mine.” Niall says. “You were all just reacting
to the mess I created.”

“Give us a little more credit than that Nialler. We all made our own decisions before and after you
left. I got so mad over something so trivial because I couldn’t handle something else. I made as many
bad decisions as you did, if not more.” Harry smiles.

“Syphilis, Haz. Nobody made a worse decision than I did that night.” Niall says with tears rimming
his eyes.

“Hey.” Harry says softly. He takes Niall by the hand and kisses the pads of his fingers. “That wasn’t
your fault Niall. He was a monster and you could never have known what he would do. You would
never recognize that kind of darkness in someone.”

“I should never have been there though. You don’t know how many empty seats flew to Dublin that
were supposed to have me on them.” Niall says. “I almost came home so many times, but I couldn’t
bring myself to do it. I never thought you’d want to see me again. You never tried to call me and I
thought the best thing to do was stay away.”

“One more reason I’m just as at fault in this.” Harry sighs. “I was too stubborn to do anything right.”

“Hey!” Liam shouts from the door. “You two can have a conversation inside. It’s freezing and Sam could get sick.”

“Sorry Li, I kept him out here.” Niall calls.

“Don’t listen to him.” Harry laughs. “This was all my fault.”

“I could not care less who started this.” Liam says angrily. “All I care about is you all getting inside before you freeze to death.”

“Aw, you do care!” Niall laughs. Liam rolls his eyes and heads back inside without another word. It doesn’t seem as harsh as before, but Harry still can’t read him right now. He grabs Sam’s carrier out of the car and Niall slides out behind it. He presses tight against Harry and gives him a peck on the cheek. “When I figure out what I’m feeling, I’ll let you know. Just give me a little time.”

Liam is sitting in the nursery with the kids while Harry and Niall cook dinner. The twins have started rolling over from their backs, so Liam plays a game with them. Whenever one of them manages to flip over on their stomach Liam picks them up in the air and blows raspberries on their little tummies. After they giggle and tug at his hair he lays them back down on their backs.

It takes his mind off of everything that just happened. Niall and Harry have more invested in this than he does, but he has no idea what’s going to happen and that just makes him anxious. He doesn’t handle anxiety well anymore. There was a time when he could push it all down, trap it somewhere inside of him. Now he just feels like a giant exposed nerve, waiting for something to fly into him and wrack him with pain.

“Hey daddy.” Niall laughs from the door.

“Dinner done?” Liam asks. He hates how cold he’s being towards them both, but as soon as he sees Niall everything floods back. He’s just waiting to see how bad he’ll get hurt.

“Not yet unfortunately.” Niall sighs. “Just wanted to come talk to you. Harry can handle the rest.”

“I’m not really in the mood for a heavy conversation right now Nialler.” Liam says. Sam starts fussing as he’s flipped over and Liam stopped playing with him. He picks his son up and munches on his fingers. Sam squeals and tugs at Liam’s lip. In retrospect it’s probably a really bad idea because he hasn’t cut the twins nails in a week or so. He feels Sam slice the inside of his lip and holds him up for Niall. “Can you clean up his fingers while I take care of my lip?”

“Sure.” Niall says with a small smile. He picks up the chubby boy and catches his hand just before it reaches his mouth. “No no no Sammy, can’t have a little vampire baby around.”

Liam smiles at that. Niall is amazing with their kids, he always has been. That’s why what he said to Harry always struck him as particularly hurtful. He knows that it was just said to hurt Harry, but it hurt Liam as well to think that Niall didn’t think of the twins as his own.

“Li, your lip.” Niall says gently. It snaps Liam out of his thoughts and he reaches up to touch it. It stings a bit, but his finger comes away covered in blood. He walks into the attached bathroom and rinses a cloth in warm water to wipe it away. You can’t really put a plaster on your lip so he just rubs
some antibacterial cream on it and hopes for the best.

“Li!” Niall shouts from the other room and Liam rushes back in. Niall isn’t looking at him though, he’s looking at Gemma who is slowly scooting her way across the floor towards the bathroom. Liam’s heart swells and he scoops his daughter up into the air laughing so hard he can barely breathe.

“Baby girl!” He smiles and holds her up while she giggles. “You can’t be moving already! You’re growing up too fast!”

Gemma beams like she’s full of pride and Niall mirrors it across the room. “I always heard that was a problem with kids. Before you know it she’ll want a mobile and a pony.”

“Well soon we’ll have horses, so that will have to do.” Liam smiles.

“How’s that coming?” Niall asks. “You’ve kept me pretty out of the loop on the whole thing.”

“I told Haz when we started this was mine to do. I’ve kept you both out of it after how stressed you both got during the house construction.” Liam says simply.

“I wasn’t that bad during the construction, was I?” Niall asks softly.

“Obviously you’re forgetting how you were after I got shot.” Liam says flatly.

“Oh yeah.” Niall sighs. “I’m sorry Li.”

“Don’t be sorry.” Liam shrugs. “You were under an unbearable amount of pressure.”

“That’s not all I’m sorry about Liam. I haven’t apologized nearly enough for everything.” Niall says gently.

“I don’t want to talk about that right now.” Liam snaps. “I’m sorry, but I don’t. It feels like it’s all we ever talk about. So just once I want something else to be the focus of our conversations. I don’t want to talk about you leaving, or Zayn, or anything that takes away from the happiness of what our daughter just did.”

“Okay.” Niall whispers. He sets Sam down gently and leaves Liam alone. The second he leaves Liam regrets it. Niall is going through so much right now and all Liam is doing is pushing him away. It’s the only thing he can do right now. At least then he has someone to blame if Niall leaves.

Around three in the morning Niall gets a phone call. It wakes him up, but he ignores it and tries to fall back asleep. The third time his phone starts ringing he finally picks it up without looking and snaps “What?”

“I’m outside your door.” A familiar voice says quietly.

“Zayn, do you have any idea what time it is?” Niall mumbles.

“I have nowhere else to go.” Zayn tells him. “Perrie kicked me out of Louis’ place and I forgot my wallet.”

Niall sits there quietly for a second before sighing. “I’ll be right down.”

He slips out of the bed without waking Harry, taking note that Liam isn’t in the bed anymore. The
babies must have started fussing, so they’re probably all sleeping in Liam’s second bed. He does that sometimes and Niall isn’t sure how to feel about it. Niall shrugs on one of Harry’s jumpers and a pair of joggers and then leaves the room.

The foyer is cold this early in the morning. It’s difficult to keep such a large space properly heated so Niall makes sure to hurry down the stairs and pulls the sleeves down to cover his hands. When he opens the door an icy blast hits him in the face with a vengeance. Zayn’s face is red and he’s really not dressed for being outside. Niall pulls him inside and closes the door quickly.

“You can take my room for the night.” Niall says quietly.

Zayn ignores it and presses Niall up against the door and kisses him roughly. His hands grip around the back of Niall’s neck, and the Irish boy finds it difficult to resist. He melts into the darker man, letting him slot in between his legs. It’s aggressive, scratchy, and just too much, but Niall just wants to live in this moment. Nothing Liam said can hurt him here. Zayn pulls back with a blush and slurs “Just wanted to do that in case I never get another chance.”

“You’re drunk.” Niall huffs.

“On you.” Zayn smiles. Niall pushes him back and rolls his eyes. He takes a deep breath and he can actually smell the alcohol beading off of Zayn’s skin. He’s definitely drunk.

“Let’s get you upstairs.” Niall sighs. Zayn follows behind him, giggling at nothing, as they walk up the stairs. He leads the darker boy into his second bedroom. The door is barely closed when Zayn is on him again, pushing him into the mattress. This is more desperate than before, Zayn mouthing at his neck and face.

Niall starts to panic when Zayn’s hands slide under his jumper. He still hasn’t been able to work up to having sex with Liam and Harry yet, and this gives him pangs of guilt on top of the fear that usually courses though his veins when he gets too close to that place. “Need you.” Zayn mutters in his ear.

“No, Zayn.” Niall says quietly, pushing his hands against Zayn’s chest. Zayn pushes through and captures Niall’s mouth with his own. Niall turns his head harshly and forcefully says “Stop!”

Zayn jumps back and falls off the bed backwards. He hits the ground loudly and Niall takes a second to breathe before looking over the edge. Zayn is lying there with a pained look on his face. “I’m sorry!” he cries desperately. “Niall I’m so sorry!”

“Come with me.” Niall sighs. He tugs Zayn into the bathroom and starts the shower. Zayn strips off his clothes, but Niall pushes him into the shower before he can take off his briefs. “This is for you to cool off and sober up Zee, not just a change of scenery.”

“I know.” Zayn says quietly. He tilts his head back and lets the water run over his face. He looks so beautiful, but so sad. Niall doesn’t know how to react. On one hand, Zayn may be the most perfect match for him. He never judges Niall, just lets him be himself no matter who that is at the moment. Niall doesn’t feel any pressure to be perfect with him. Zayn loves him no matter who he needs to be. He’s a safe place for Niall.

On the other hand his life with Liam and Harry is finally getting back on track. He has the twins, the love of two amazing men, and his recovery is going smoothly, even if he spends half of it lying to them. They mean the world to him and he can’t give that up. Harry didn’t want to try and bring Zayn into the relationship, and Niall knows that wouldn’t work on any level.
“You’re staring mate. Not exactly helping me cool down.” Zayn says quietly, turning his face away with a light blush.

“I can go.” Niall offers. He hates the part of himself that doesn’t want to leave, but it’s there.

“Please don’t.” Zayn begs. “I’ve already been left once tonight. I don’t think I could handle it if you go too.”

“Perrie left you?” Niall asks, stunned that the blonde girl could be so foolish.

“She wasn’t content playing second in my heart.” Zayn sighs. “She didn’t want kids anyways. She just said that to get me back. She can’t afford to keep living in Dublin even without having to pay rent.”

“Stupid bitch.” Niall mutters under his breath. Zayn barks out a laugh and Niall blushes. He hadn’t meant for Zayn to hear it.

“It’s my own fault.” Zayn says with a smile. “I shouldn’t have taken her back just because she reminded me of you.”

“How could she possibly remind you of me?” Niall scoffs.

“She’s funny.” Zayn shrugs. “Her eyes are blue, even if they’re not the same. Nowhere near actually. She’s blonde like you were when we met. I don’t know, she’s just the closest thing I could find.”

“She has a vagina!” Niall groans. “Zayn you can’t base your relationships off of someone you used to love.”

“There’s no used to about it Nialler. I barely sleep or eat anymore. I only ever think about you.” Zayn says, looking directly at Niall with his piercing caramel eyes.

“That’s not going to change anything Zayn.” Niall says, probably too harshly. “We’re not going to work out, and we both know it.”

“What if I gave it a try with you three?” Zayn asks, his eyes softening to a desperate look.

“That’s not going to happen.” Niall shakes his head. “You don’t actually want that.”

“I could try.” Zayn says. He shuts off the shower and opens the door. Niall hands him a towel, but he doesn’t do anything with it.

“Zayn, Harry doesn’t want it either. I’m not sure Liam would even be willing to try anymore.” Niall admits. Zayn looks hurt when he says it and turns away.

“So that’s it? I just don’t matter?” He asks angrily.

“Of course you matter.” Niall says softly. “I love you so much, but Zee, if we tried that and you were unhappy it wouldn’t help things. I almost died when you left last time. I spiraled to such a dark place and it destroyed everything I was.”

“I didn’t fare much better Niall.” Zayn sighs.

“I’m willing to bet you didn’t go the same way I did Zayn. I ran around Europe fucking anything I could pay until some guy robbed me and beat me until I couldn’t move.” Niall says angrily. “And then- and then he raped me and gave me syphilis.”
“He what?” Zayn yells. His face looks torn between anger and horror.

“I don’t want to talk about it Zayn. I’m working through it in therapy, but I just want to move on.” Niall says quietly.

“Are you okay?” Zayn asks.

“I’m trying to be.” Niall admits.

“This is my fault.” Zayn growls. “I never should have let you leave that day.”

“And what if you hadn’t?” Niall asks. “We’d have been together, but I’d have lost my kids and my lifelong best friend. I need them Zayn. I need Haz and Li. I need Sam and Gems.”

“But not me.” Zayn spits.

“You’re wrong.” Niall says, moving in towards Zayn. He takes the unused towel from the darker boy’s hands and stretches it out. “I need you too, but us being together isn’t a realistic option, no matter how much I want it. We need to move on and try to be friends.”

“I don’t know if I can do that.” Zayn says quietly. Niall rubs the towel through his hair and smiles.

“I think we can. Losing you forever is what I can’t do.” Niall says gently.

“How can we be friends Nialler?” Zayn asks. He takes the towel from Niall’s hands and drops it on the floor. “How can we be friends when all I want to do is this?”

He presses into Niall’s body softly. One of his hands wraps behind Niall’s back while the other finds his jaw. He gently lifts the smaller boys chin and connects their lips. This time is tender. His lips don’t part, just work against Niall’s. It’s soft and meaningful, so easy to get lost in. Niall’s hands wind into Zayn’s hair and they stay that way, gently kissing until they can’t breathe anymore.

Niall grabs at the doorknob and they stumble backwards into the bed. Niall slides off his jumper and Zayn touches his chest. “Niall, what happened to you?” He asks quietly.

“I lost thirty four pounds.” Niall says shyly. “I’ve gained back about ten.”

“You got more tattoos.” Zayn says, tracing the ink spread across Niall’s hips with his soft fingers.

“We should stop.” Niall sighs.

“Is that what you want?” Zayn asks.

“No.” Niall admits in a whisper. Zayn surges down and reconnects their mouths. Niall can feel Zayn growing hard from where his cock is pressed into the Irish boys stomach. For the first time since that day on the couch with Harry, Niall doesn’t feel panic swelling in his chest at the prospect of being with someone. He does feel guilt though. On one side of his room is Liam sleeping with their children, and on the other, past the bathroom, is Harry sleeping alone.

“What do you want Niall?” Zayn asks gently.

“I don’t know.” Niall says. “I don’t know what I want.”

“Do you want me?” Zayn asks more firmly. Niall swallows past the lump in his throat and nods. Zayn climbs off of him and stands back. “And what about now? Do you still want me more than you don’t? Do you want me when your mind isn’t clouded?”
“Yes.” Niall says, nodding again.

“What does this mean if we go here?” Zayn asks. “This isn’t exactly a step towards friendship.”

“It means we can finally have some closure.” Niall says. “I think maybe if we do this, there’s no more ‘what if’s. We can move on.”

“Sex isn’t going to put us farther apart Nialler. That’s not what it does.” Zayn says firmly.

“Zee, is this what you want?” Niall asks. It seems like Zayn is trying to talk him out of it, more than into it.

“I don’t know.” Zayn says. “On one hand I’ve never wanted anything more than I want this moment with you, but on the other I think it will make things harder on both us and the boys.”

“Stop worrying about the future. The boys don’t have to know.” Niall says, already feeling disgusting for having the thought.

“Yes they would Niall.” Zayn glares. “I can’t do this.”

“Fine.” Niall growls. He tugs Harry’s jumper back over his head and makes for the door. Zayn grabs him by the wrist and Niall can’t seem to move his feet.

“I can’t let you make this mistake Niall.” Zayn says softly. “If I’m going to try and be friends with you, then I can’t be that weak. I can’t let myself fall into you if you won’t take all of me.”

“And what if I need to fall into you?” Niall asks, keeping his head turned from Zayn. “What if I need a second to breathe and feel like I don’t have to be perfect?”

“Then we can talk.” Zayn says. “Friends talk, they don’t fuck.”

“Liam and I were friends for sixteen years.” Niall huffs.

“That’s different.” Zayn says softly.

“Why?” Niall asks, although he already knows the answer.

“Because you chose them, Niall.” Zayn says with an edge in his voice.

“And you chose not to give them a chance.” Niall says, turning to face him. “You chose to leave me, and then come back expecting everything to be the same, but nothing is Zayn.”

“I’m sorry.” Zayn says with tears rolling down his cheeks. “I’m so sorry.”

Niall wasn’t expecting that, although he should have been. Zayn looks as broken as Niall feels. His shoulders are drooping and he looks smaller than usual. Niall hadn’t noticed before, but Zayn has also lost some weight. His ribs stand out more than they did before and he has hollows above his collar bones. “If I could go back and change things, I would. You would have been safe if I had stayed. He wouldn’t have hurt you.” Zayn tells him quietly.

“You didn’t want this life, even though it had me and the twins.” Niall says sharply. “This wasn’t the life for you.”

“Any life with you would be the life for me, Nialler.” Zayn says almost pleadingly.

“Then you should have stayed. You should have given me a chance to make you happy.” Niall spits.
“Now we can’t be together and we don’t have any kind of closure. There’s no winning anymore.”

“I know that!” Zayn snaps. “I know I ruined everything for everyone involved. Your children grew up without a father for two months, Harry hates me, Liam hates me, and you-. I don’t even know how to handle us anymore.”

“They don’t hate you.” Niall says, softening towards Zayn. “Harry wants so badly to have his brother back. Liam just hates what happened, but not you.”

“The horrid part Nialler, is I don’t care.” Zayn says flatly. “I only care about what you think of me.”

“I think that I was ready to do something with you I can’t even manage with Harry and Liam.” Niall says quietly. “I think that you are the perfect person for me, and if things were different, we could have lived an amazing life together.”

“But I fucked everything up.” Zayn says, lowering his head.

“No, you just aren’t the only person I’m in love with.” Niall explains. “You want one person completely devoted to you, but I can’t give you that, and I never could have. Liam and Harry will always be a part of me.”

“So what do we do?” Zayn asks, looking back up to meet Niall’s eyes.

“There’s two things we can do.” Niall says softly. “We can try to be a part of each others lives, or we can completely separate.”

“Which do you want?” Zayn asks. “Because I’ll do whatever you want Niall. If you want me to leave and never come back I will, no matter how much it hurts.”

“I already told you I want you in my life Zee. I want you to be a part of me too. I want you.” Niall tells him. This time he’s the one who takes charge, pushing Zayn down onto the bed. He doesn’t kiss him though. Instead he climbs over him and lays down with an arm draped over his chest. “I want my friend back.”

“I thought we were going to shag.” Zayn laughs.

“We were, and then you turned me down. Again.” Niall grins.

“Why am I such a bloody moron?” Zayn sighs, dropping his head against the pillows.

“Because you’re a good man.” Niall says, nestling his head into Zayn’s shoulder.

“No, I’m pretty sure I’m a moron.” Zayn grumbles. “I never do the things that would make me happy.”

“Or me.” Niall complains.

“You really want to then?” Zayn asks. “It wasn’t just that we were already so close?”

“I already told you Zee, I haven’t been able to do that with Harry or Liam.” Niall smiles. “That was the only time I’ve felt comfortable in a sexual setting in almost two months.”

“Do you-” Zayn says, not finishing the question.

“A little, but I’d rather just lay here and cuddle with you. Sleep sounds amazing.” Niall mumbles into Zayn’s shoulder.
“We could always cuddle afterwards.” Zayn grins. “I’d love the chance to stop being a moron and suck your cock.”

“Stop.” Niall groans. “You woke me up after only four hours of sleep. Let’s just do that instead.”

“Yeah, alright.” Zayn smiles. He rolls onto his side and wraps an arm around Niall’s waist. “You be the little spoon though.”

“Can’t we stay like this?” Niall asks. “I like the idea of facing you.”

“Just don’t blame me if I can’t resist snogging your face off.” Zayn smirks. Their knees intertwine and their ankles hook together while Niall pulls up the duvet. It flutters over both their heads and it feels like they’re in another world, devoid of anything but each other. Their mouths meet instinctively and they kiss lazily until they fall asleep.

When Harry wakes up he’s alone and the bed is cold all around him. Liam probably left to sleep with the twins, but Niall always stays with him until he wakes up. Harry gets up and pads over to the bathroom, checking to see if Niall just needed a wee. He isn’t there though. Harry shrugs on a pair of jeans and thinks to check Liam’s room. As soon as he enters the foyer though, he hears Niall’s trademark laughter coming from the kitchen.

He shuffles down the stairs, thanking god he got the heated floors in the foyer because his feet are freezing. He sees Niall standing at the stove and laughing in the direction of the pantry. “You two make up then?” Harry asks with a smile.

“Harry!” Niall yelps and jumps back. “Wait!”

It isn’t Liam that walks out of the pantry, it’s Zayn, and he’s not wearing anything other than a pair of Niall’s joggers. Harry can actually feel bile rising in his throat at the sight. “What the hell are you doing here?” Harry growls.

“Perrie kicked him out of El and Tommo’s house. He forgot his wallet so I let him sleep here.” Niall says quickly. He rushes around the island and walks over to Harry. “Haz, please can we talk?”

“What about?” Harry spits. “You obviously slept with him last night because the bed was cold.”

“Haz please.” Niall pleads. Harry turns his body and holds out a hand to indicate they can go somewhere else. They walk into the home theatre in the basement because it’s soundproofed.

“Did you fuck him?” Harry asks angrily.

“No.” Niall shakes his head. “But we almost did. I stopped it and then he did when it almost happened again.”

“So he comes back and suddenly you’re ready?” Harry asks, feeling tears burning at the corners of his eyes already.

“I can’t explain it Haz.” Niall says quietly. “I’m sorry.”

“Sorry because you can’t explain it, or because you wanted to cheat on us?” Harry snaps.

“Everything.” Niall whispers. “I’m sorry I’m just not good enough.”

Harry softens immediately, his rage giving way to sympathy. He grabs Niall around the waist and
pulls them both down onto a seat. “Nialler, stop that.” Harry says softly.

“I’m just telling you the truth.” Niall says, turning his face from Harry.

“How many times do I have to tell you that you are?” Harry asks. “Because I’ll tell you as many times as you need.”

“Telling me doesn’t matter if you don’t mean it Haz.” Niall says, pushing off of Harry’s lap. “It doesn’t matter what you say if I don’t feel like just being me is enough for you.”

“I’ve never wanted you to be anything else.” Harry says angrily. “Maybe I didn’t want you to cheat on us, but I don’t think that’s too much to ask.”

“Have you forgotten how we got together?” Niall snaps. “I cheated with you, but I haven’t cheated on you.”

“Only because Zayn stopped it!” Harry yells.

“Well can you blame me?” Niall shouts back. “He comes back and I feel like me again! Everything is easy with him, unlike with you two!”

“Love isn’t supposed to be easy Niall!” Harry yells forcefully.

“It isn’t supposed to be this hard either!” Niall screams. “Everyone either walks on eggshells around me or they just lose their shit and yell at me! Zayn just lets things be how they are. He doesn’t sit there and wait for the broken pieces to fix themselves before he loves me again!”

Harry steps back. “What are you talking about?”

“I’m talking about the fact that I feel like you care about my recovery more than whether or not I’m actually happy.” Niall says, deflating and stumbling backwards into the wall. “Maybe once in a while it would be nice to focus on something other than what happened to me.”

“And you couldn’t just say this?” Harry asks. “You had to go running back into his arms the second he showed up instead.”

“You make me feel like I need to be perfect all the time. I can’t just be me anymore. If I don’t show you that I’m getting better every second you treat me like I’m going to fall back into the darkness. I’m not.” Niall says carefully.

“It’s okay not to be okay Niall.” Harry says kneeling down in front of the smaller man. “I will always love you, no matter how you feel at the time. You can just be if that’s what you need.”

“But I can’t!” Niall snaps. “I can’t be weak around you, because you deserve more than that. You look at me with so much pity. I miss when I could look up and your eyes would be filled with love instead. When I could feel you smile across the room without even a glance. You haven’t looked at me like that once since I’ve been back.”

“What am I supposed to do about that Nialler?” Harry asks softly. “I feel the same way for you I always have. I love your smile and the way you laugh in your sleep because your dreams used to be funny instead of terrifying. I love the way you used to just come up and hug me for no reason. I love you, but you aren’t you anymore. You’re angry and hateful towards everyone except the guy who sent you spiraling in the first place.”

“Then maybe I should just leave with him!” Niall says angrily. “Because he can see that underneath
I’m still the same person. I haven’t let this destroy me. Yes I get mad sometimes, but only because I can’t let down my defenses around you.”

“Don’t you dare threaten that unless you mean it.” Liam roars from the basement stairs. “If you want to leave, then go. But you never come back. You never see the twins again. You never see or speak to us again. I can’t keep doing this Niall.”

“You can’t do anything anymore Liam!” Niall yells. “You’ve barely spoken to us since Zayn showed up. You’ve withdrawn almost as much as you did when I left, according to Harry. At least I know he feels something, even if it’s only pity, because he doesn’t act like a robot.”

“I’m just waiting to see what you’ll do Niall.” Liam says firmly. “I’ve been ready to spend my life with you since we were twenty one, but you keep running away from me.”

“And I was ready at sixteen. I stood by you through every terrible relationship you had for five years, waiting for you to realize that I was in love with you. I was happy for three years until you ruined it with Danielle. You were the one running Liam. My big strong hero was the one who couldn’t face things.” Niall says angrily.

“I’m not your hero Niall.” Liam says quietly. “I’m not any kind of hero. The thought of losing you again scares me so badly I can’t think of anything else. I’ve walled myself off just to try to survive when you finally decide you want him more than us.”

“If either of you had actually bothered to ask him instead of just yelling at him all the time, he’d tell you he picked you. You two and the twins are the only family he has, but you ignore the way he actually feels in favor of what you think he should be.” Zayn says harshly from the top of the stairs.

“Zee, please.” Niall pleads. “You aren’t helping anything, even though I know you’re trying to. This has to be just us here.”

“No, let him speak.” Liam says calmly. “Whether we like it or not, Zayn is a driving force in this conversation.”

“I agree.” Harry nods. He doesn’t like that Zayn has inserted himself in their relationship once again, but he has a right to be heard. He’s a part of this no matter what Harry wants.

“That’s exactly what I’m talking about.” Zayn sighs. “You don’t even listen to him. He wants this conversation to be between the three of you, but that doesn’t matter to you. Nothing he says or thinks does unless it fits in line with what you think it should be.”

“He told you all this then?” Harry asks.

“He didn’t have to.” Zayn says quietly. “You didn’t close the door when you came down here. I heard every word. I heard you yell and not bother to actually hear what he’s saying.”

“How is this how you feel Nialler?” Liam asks. Niall nods, but doesn’t say anything. He’s literally backed himself into the corner and he’s shrinking in on himself. It’s such a change from a minute ago when he was yelling that it’s almost shocking. Harry wants to hold him, but Zayn crosses the room first and wraps his arm around Niall’s shoulder. “Then talk to us. I promise we’ll listen to what you have to say. We want this to work.”

Niall curls further into Zayn and he looks so small. Zayn tilts Niall’s head up gently and looks him deep in the eyes. “Nialler, you have to do this.” He says softly. “This is your chance to fix everything that I broke. I hate putting that burden on you, but it will help. I promise.”
It sickens Harry how good Zayn is with Niall. He can so easily do what Harry has been trying to manage since the Irish boy came back. Niall talks to him, he laughs with him, and Zayn is the only one who actually deserves it. Harry gets so wrapped up in his own perception of who Niall is, to listen to who Niall says he is. Zayn handles things so easily, telling Niall exactly what he needs to hear, but never hiding the truth of things.

Harry can tell Liam is thinking the same thing. His eyebrows are crinkling in that way only Niall can manage to make happen. It’s somewhere between thoughtful and frustrated. He takes a seat next to Harry and they sit waiting for Niall to say something. He doesn’t though. He just stands there with his eyes locked with Zayn’s. They seem to be having an entire conversation without saying a word.

“You have to talk in order for us to listen.” Harry sighs. Liam lightly grabs his hand and intertwines their fingers.

“Give him all the time he needs Haz.” Liam says softly. “This has to be difficult, and we haven’t made it any easier.”

“Okay.” Niall sighs, finally breaking the nearly unblinking eye contact he’s shared with Zayn. “First I want to say that Zayn was right. I chose you. I don’t want to leave. I care about you two and the twins so much. But I need Zayn in my life. I need him as my friend, and I need you to be okay with that.”

Liam nods next to Harry, but Harry doesn’t move. Forgiving Zayn is something that Harry doesn’t know if he can do so easily. He misses Zayn almost every day, but once again he’s thrusting himself into Harry’s relationship. It’s a thing he’s always done, but never in this way. Harry doesn’t even really understand how Niall and Zayn are supposed to be friends. It’s clear that the feelings between them haven’t dulled at all. In fact it seems like they’ve grown.

“I know it’s a lot to ask.” Niall says softly. “But he gives me something you guys don’t. It isn’t your fault, but it’s true. I need to feel like I can be imperfect. I need to feel like if I’ve hit a rough patch I can tell someone without them trying to fix me. I need to be able to scream, or shoot, or hit something and not have you worry about me like I’m breaking.”

“And we don’t do that for you.” Liam says quietly. It isn’t a question, more just Liam trying to process what’s being said.

“Li, you guys give me so much, but not that. You in particular have completely pulled away from me. Last night you as much as said you don’t care. You don’t want to talk about it anymore, and Haz, you push so hard that you can’t see that it isn’t helping. I have to do this my way and in my own time.” Niall explains, raising his voice until it’s almost at a normal pitch.

Harry wants to deny it, wants to tell Niall he’s only trying his best to help, but deep inside he knows it isn’t true. He’s pushing so hard to get Niall back the boy he fell in love with, but that may never happen. He’s been through so many traumatic things in his life. It was bound to happen that one would eventually change him. Harry just doesn’t know if it’s something they can come back from.

It hits Liam hard when Niall says he thinks Liam doesn’t care anymore. All he does is think about Niall. He thinks of the past Niall, who trusted him more than anyone in the world. Who would whisper all of his secrets in Liam’s ear because he knew they would forever be safe. The Niall who loved to spend every second of the day with Liam just pissing around because it didn’t matter what they did, as long as they were together.
He thinks about who Niall is now, a stranger who can’t seem to settle on what he wants. He changes his mind so quickly, flashing from warm and happy to frigid and furious without any warning. Liam knows Niall is trying so hard, but maybe that’s the problem. Maybe trying so hard is what’s making him so angry. Maybe he really does just need to not be okay sometimes.

“There’s one more thing, but I don’t know how to say it without destroying everything.” Niall tells them quietly.

“You can tell us Nialler.” Liam says. “We’re here to listen. We want to make this work.”

“I want to have sex with Zayn.” Niall says so soft Liam barely hears it. Harry’s hand squeezes so hard against Liam’s it almost jerks him out of the sense of shock he’s feeling. “And I want you two to be there, but not participating with us...”

“Fuck off Niall.” Harry says angrily. “If you want to fuck him, that’s one thing, but you can’t honestly expect us to have to watch it.”

“Why do you want this Niall?” Liam asks. He feels completely numb. This isn’t a step forward at all. It’s not working towards becoming friends either. He’s pushing the boundaries of what even Liam can stand.

“Because I need to trust someone with myself, and he’s the one I do.” Niall says. “And I need to have him for closure. I need to stop thinking ‘what if?’ in order to be friends.”

“Not that.” Liam says quietly. “Why do you want to have us watch? Why would you want us to go through that?”

“Because if I do freak out, then I need you there. Because I need to link you in my mind to it being okay. Because this way neither of you resent the other for being the first person I let touch me again.” Niall explains.

“You’re awfully quiet all the sudden Zayn.” Harry says angrily. “What do you think about this?”

“Niall already talked to me about this when we woke up.” Zayn admits. “I said I’d do it, but only if you both were one hundred percent sure about it.”

“Of course you did.” Harry huffs.

“Give us some time to think about it.” Liam says, trying his hardest not to let his voice break. “Please?”

“Take as much time as you need.” Niall nods. “It can wait until you’re both ready.”

“Whatever.” Harry says angrily. He gets up and takes the stairs out of the basement two at a time. Liam follows behind him and grabs him by the wrist. He doesn’t say anything, and neither does Harry. They walk up to the main bedroom and close the door behind them. “You see what this is right?”

“I don’t think we see this the same way Haz.” Liam says shakily.

“He just wants to have sex with Zayn. This isn’t going to help anything.” Harry snaps. “He’s just trying to push us further away.”

“I don’t think so.” Liam says with a shake of his head. “I think he needs to feel comfortable with someone, and we haven’t been doing very well at that lately. We haven’t been doing very well at
that for about half of the time we’ve all known each other actually.”

“What are you talking about?” Harry asks angrily. “Everything was fine until Zayn came along.”

“If everything was fine then he wouldn’t have fallen for Zayn.” Liam says adamantly. “We both know that he was falling away from us from the day the twins were born, and instead of us helping him, Zayn did.”

“Because the twins were a day old!” Harry groans.

“And in that one day things changed for all of us.” Liam says sternly. “We were lucky. We wanted children, but Niall wasn’t sure about it. He was thrust into a completely different relationship and he doesn’t do well with change. We never tried to make him feel okay with things, we just expected him to adjust.”

“So this is all our fault?” Harry snaps. He rips his wrist out of Liam’s hand and crosses over to the floor to ceiling windows. Snow is coming down in flurries so hard and fast that Liam can’t even see it on the ground twenty feet below them.

“That’s not what I’m saying Haz.” Liam sighs. He wraps his arms around Harry’s chest and nestles his chin into the curly haired boy’s neck. “We just lost our connection. The best way to get that back is to let him be comfortable.”

“So you’re okay with this?” Harry asks.

“Not yet.” Liam admits. “But I think I can be. After all, if Niall hadn’t cheated on me, then we wouldn’t be together. I wouldn’t have the most amazing partner I could imagine.”

“Stop being sweet.” Harry smiles.

“Never.” Liam grins.

“This is serious Li.” Harry sighs. “I don’t know if I can be okay with this.”

“That’s okay. You can take all the time you need. I know I’m not quite there yet either.” Liam says softly.

“And what if I just can’t get there?” Harry asks.

“Then we may have to let him go.” Liam tells him quietly.

“So our choices are to literally watch him cheat on us, or lose him forever?” Harry asks, turning angry again.

Liam turns him around and puts his hands on Harry’s soft wet cheeks. He doesn’t say anything yet, just presses their foreheads together. He thumbs the tears off the sharp cheekbones and sighs. “Haz, he needs to be comfortable with us. He needs to trust us, and we need to do the same. We’ve spent so much time trying to help him stand up, that we haven’t seen if he can do it on his own. We need to trust him to pick us in the end, because that’s what matters.”

“So your theory on this is push baby bird out of the nest, impaling him onto another man’s cock, and see if he flies back.” Harry says flatly.

Liam really wasn’t expecting that, and he reacts accordingly. He laughs hard. It’s painful almost. He hasn’t laughed like this in months. His lungs burn with it, and when Harry starts laughing too, it just
makes him laugh harder. He falls backwards onto his arse and lets himself just revel in it until he can’t breathe. Harry lays down next to him and they hold hands, calming down in the loose embrace of their intertwined fingers. “That’s not the way I would have put it.” Liam giggles.

“No, you’d have been all tasteful and soft about it.” Harry sighs. “Because even if it isn’t an easy subject, you’re still Liam. Stoic, stable, and sensible until the end.”

“Maybe, but I just don’t know if I could have used the words ‘impaling him onto another man’s cock’ without losing my shit.” Liam grins. “Only you could think up a metaphor like that.”

“And only you could convince me this is the right thing to do.” Harry smiles. “Not that you have yet, mind you. It’ll take a bloody miracle to get me to agree to this.”

“Remember when you were the tasteful soft one?” Liam laughs. “You used to get all red and nervous whenever we said anything even slightly dirty.”

“Niall shocked me out of that after like, a month.” Harry shrugs. “Eventually it just stopped affecting me. It was obvious that it wouldn’t go anywhere if I blushed every time anyone flirted around me or with me.”

“It’s not like you completely stopped though.” Liam says. “You still blush when I tell you you’re beautiful.”

“Can’t remember the last time that was.” Harry mumbles quietly.

“Me either.” Liam sighs. “I should be telling you every day. Every hour.”

“You tuck that bullshit away.” Harry grins. “Don’t need you waking me up when we’re sleepin’ jus cause you want to be all romantic or summat.”

“You’d love it.” Liam laughs. He rolls over on his side towards Harry and moves a wayward curl out of his face. “You really are beautiful you know. Stunningly gorgeous.”

Harry lights up like a Christmas tree right on cue. Red fingers rush across his cheeks and down his neck. It dips between Harry’s swallows and Liam decides to chase it. He presses his lips to Harry’s cheek, and the mouths his way down the curly haired boy’s neck. Harry moans when Liam’s hand slides up his shirt, and Liam takes it as encouragement. He nibbles at Harry’s collar bone in the way he knows drives him wild. It doesn’t take long until Harry is melting into the touches and making needy noises.

Liam, ever the people-pleaser, decides to give Harry everything that he needs. He slips Harry’s shirt over his head and straddles over his waist. Roma be damned, they’re going to have sex now. Niall said it was fine, and even though it feels wrong to exclude him from it, this is what’s necessary. Harry and Liam have grown apart and they need to reconnect. Niall basically blew that idea out of the water anyways when he came up with his plan with Zayn.

“Are you sure?” Harry asks, as if he’s reading Liam’s mind.

“Positive.” Liam grins. He lowers his mouth back down and chews on Harry’s earlobe just a bit. “I’m done waiting to have a piece of you.”

“And which piece were you thinking?” Harry giggles playfully.

“Well I was thinking I could bottom again.” Liam smiles against Harry’s neck.
“Would you mind topping?” Harry asks.

“Not at all.” Liam says. “Just want to do whatever makes you happy.”

“Thank god.” Harry laughs. “I’ve been gagging for it lately.”

“I know.” Liam grins wickedly. “You left your toy drawer open the other day. I noticed the purple one was missing.”

“Had to soak it in the sink.” Harry shrugs.

“Haz.” Liam groans. “I brush my teeth in there.”

“Li, focus before I decide this is a terrible idea.” Harry sighs.

“And why would this be a terrible idea?” Liam asks, mouthing his way around Harry’s bare chest.

“Because you’re trying to seduce me to get my mind off of what just happened.” Harry moans at the contact.

“That’s not what I’m doing at all.” Liam says, sitting back up.

“It isn’t?” Harry asks, looking more than a little confused.

“I’m trying to reconnect with my fiancé.” Liam tells him. “I walled myself off for so long when Niall was gone, but I shouldn’t have. We were both lonely and I regret doing that to you. You’re just as important to me as Nialler is, and I want you to know it.”

“I already know it Li.” Harry smiles. “You don’t have to prove yourself to me.”

“Well there’s also the fact that you’re incredibly, insanely, indescribably gorgeous and I just want to wreck you.” Liam says.

“Now that’s a good reason.” Harry laughs. “What are you waiting for then? Wreck me.”

That’s all the invitation Liam needs. If Harry wants to be wrecked, then Liam is glad to oblige. He hoists Harry up off the floor and carries him over to the bed. Harry’s long legs are locked behind Liam’s waist, so when he gets laid down the muscular man is dragged down with him. That doesn’t really bother him at all. He likes being this close to Harry.

Their mouths work against each other hungrily. Liam can already feel Harry growing hard against his stomach and he loves it. He ruts against Harry and is rewarded with a delicious moan which he swallows eagerly. Niall is a fantastic lover, but Harry has this delicious purity that Liam just loves to bask in. Every time feels special and exciting, like it’s the first time all over again.

“Liam I called- Oh!” Niall says walking through the door.

Liam scrambles backwards, falling off the bed in his attempt to stand upright. Harry bursts into a fit of giggles and his feet kick wildly in front of Liam’s face. Liam can already feel a blush creeping into his cheeks. “You were saying Nialler?” he groans.

“I called Mary to tell her not to come in today.” Niall mumbles. “The snow is coming down too hard for it to be safe.”

“I meant to do that.” Harry laughs. “I swear I did.”
“Got a little caught up did you?” Niall grins.

“Little bit.” Liam groans.

“I’m glad. You two should keep going. I’m taking Zayn back to Tommo’s house to grab his bags and wallet, so I won’t be interrupting anymore.” Niall smiles widely.

“If Mary shouldn’t drive, then neither should you.” Liam says responsibly.

“Well Zayn will be driving of course, but we should be fine. Tommo only lives ten minutes away. Mary has a longer drive, and honestly I mostly did it because having her here right now might be even more awkward than it already is.” Niall shrugs.

“He can stay here and his bags can wait. There’s more than enough clothes here that would fit him.” Harry sighs. “Don’t risk getting hurt for something like that.”

“We’ll be fine. If it gets too bad we’ll go to the Chair. Paul will let us stay at his flat. You guys need some space and time.” Niall says. “We do need to use the truck though for the four wheel drive.”

“Let him go Haz.” Liam says quietly. “He’s right about the space and time thing. Using the truck is fine Nialler. My keys are in the bowl.”

“What about the twins?” Niall asks. “We can stay downstairs with them until you’re ready.”

“They’ll be fine in the playpen.” Liam tells him. “You should go before the roads get any worse if you’re insisting on going.”

“Alright then.” Niall nods with a smile. “I’m glad you two are doing this. You both need it.”

“Then let us get back to it.” Harry groans.

Niall slips back out the door and Liam pops up off the floor with a rub on his sore arse. “You could have said that more nicely.” He mumbles.

“And you could be fucking me right now instead of complaining.” Harry says with a grin.

“I thought we’d start off with something more like this.” Liam says. He reaches down and hooks his fingers into the waistband of Harry’s joggers. Harry’s cock has this beautiful way of springing to life and it stirs something in Liam. He knows he’s not as good at oral sex as Niall and Harry are, having spent a good portion of his sex life learning how to eat out girls instead. He does his best to make up for his lack of experience with enthusiasm though. He has next to no gag reflex, a trait he shares with Harry, but not Niall, and it makes it easy to swallow the curly haired boy down in one go.

He can feel Harry’s shudder as it runs down his spine. Harry’s hand tangles in his hair, cut short again, but not buzzed all the way down. Liam has a secret love of when someone pulls on his hair and Harry obviously knows it. His knuckles curl all the way down into the scalp and he tugs just enough to make it hurt, but not enough to make him stop.

“You’ve gotten so good at that Babes.” Harry mutters in an encouraging tone. “So bloody good.”

Liam, naturally desperate for approval, takes encouragement very well and rewards it accordingly. He takes Harry all the way into the back of his throat and uses a trick he learned one particularly raunchy night back in July. His throat flexes and tightens around the cock stuffing his mouth while he hums around it. The vibrations feel spectacular in his opinion, and based on the loud unabashed moan Harry lets out, he agrees.
When he can’t breathe anymore, his nose pressed into the neatly trimmed hairs Harry insists on keeping regardless of their newly ended chastity, he slowly slides back up to the tip. His hand takes over, using his own saliva as lubricant, while he kisses at the bright pink head. His other hand searches towards the drawer, but he can’t reach from his current vantage. He sighs before moving his body away.

His hand keeps up its ministrations, but they’re clumsy because Liam has to focus on trying to find the bottle of lube in the cluttered drawer. He finally finds it underneath a six month old decorating magazine that Harry refuses to get rid of. He squirts some onto his palm in a particularly deft feat of dexterousness. It’s gone bad though, and runs off his hand like water. “I didn’t even know lube could expire.” he sighs.

“Um, neither did I actually.” Harry giggles. “Do we have any more?”

“Not that I could find.” Liam tells him. This puts quite a dampener on things. Lube is pretty essential for what they were planning.

“Well I guess that’s that then.” Harry groans.

“Don’t give up on me yet Haz.” Liam grins. He flips Harry onto his stomach and dives down after separating his legs. Liam doesn’t know why he loves eating ass, but he does. He’d never tried it, or even considered it, until he caught Niall wanking one day to a video on the internet. Once he had though, he fell in love with it. It always gets the loudest and filthiest moans which just drives him wild.

His tongue presses flat against Harry and immediately the curly haired boy moans into the duvet. Liam’s hand runs up Harry’s back, lightly massaging at the muscles. His other hand helps spread the cheek of Harry’s arse, giving him better access to lick at the hole. It only takes seconds before Harry unravels underneath him. He can actually feel the tension leak out of Harry’s back muscles, so he leans up and puts his fingers near Harry’s face and utters a quick “Suck.”

Harry does so dutifully, sucking down Liam’s fingers with vigor. This is going to be a very rough shag, but neither of them seem to mind that fact. It’s more important that it happens than that it goes perfectly. While Harry works on wetting his fingers, Liam does his best to soak the bright pink hole. Harry pulls his mouth off with a very wet pop and Liam pulls back the hand. He drops a glob of spit onto Harry’s hole and pushes in the first finger.

Harry gasps and drops his head back onto the duvet, but he doesn’t complain so Liam doesn’t stop. It’s been a while for both of them, so he makes sure to go slow. Harry doesn’t like it as tight as Niall does, so Liam has to go all the way to three fingers. By the time he pushes in the final finger Harry is pushing back and fucking himself onto Liam’s hand. His moans somehow echo off the walls of the huge bedroom.

“God, Li I need you inside me.” Harry growls. “Like right now.”

“My cock is completely dry Haz.” Liam mumbles. He pulls his fingers out of Harry and leans back to grab the bottle of lube. It’s watery and thin, but it’ll have to do. Harry flips over on the bed and Liam barely sees him out of the corner of his eye before he feels Harry’s mouth on him. It’s sloppy and overly wet, but that’s the point, isn’t it?

“It’s not now.” Harry says with a cheeky grin. He flops backwards onto his back and pulls his knees into his chest. “Now for the love of all that is good and decent in this world, get in my arse.”

“Ever the romantic.” Liam giggles. Before Harry can complain Liam presses the head of his cock
into Harry’s eager entrance. It’s rougher than Liam would like, and Harry hisses.

He starts to pull back out when Harry shoots him a glare and says. “Don’t you dare pull out. I swear I will murder you in your sleep.”

“Allright.” Liam says, throwing a hand up defensively. He presses further into Harry, going slowly until he bottoms out. It takes almost two minutes to do it and let Harry adjust, but even without moving Liam feels close to orgasm. He’s thrown all of his energy into Niall’s recovery and the twins lately, so he hasn’t even wanked in weeks. “This is probably going to be embarrassingly quick for me Haz.”

“I don’t even care.” Harry moans. He starts bucking his hips up onto Liam’s hip, so Liam takes that as the sign to get started. He pulls his hips back and snaps them forward. Harry is warm and tight, squeezing at Liam greedily. He quickly finds a good rhythm, matching the slow pace Harry uses on his own cock. It’s helping keep his orgasm at bay, but unless they change positions it’s still going to happen soon.

Harry cums before Liam does, which seems to surprise him as much as it does the muscular man. It doesn’t take long for Liam to finish after he watches Harry writhe through his orgasm. He pulls out to save Harry the discomfort of coming down and still having Liam inside him. After just a few tugs he’s streaming so hard that his knees buckle and he has to catch himself on the edge of the bed. It’s almost painfully intense, but the waves of pleasure that rock his body leave him breathless.

He collapses forward and nips playfully at Harry’s neck. He landed partially in a puddle of his own cum, but he doesn’t mind. The best part of the entire experience though is the way Harry wraps his arms around Liam afterwards. They stay that way until the baby monitor starts letting them know that Gemma is no longer content to just sit and play in the pen.

“I’ll get them, you just go take a bath.” Liam smiles.

“How about we all take a bath together?” Harry asks. “They need one anyways, and so do you.”

“Deal.” Liam grins. “Just make sure you don’t make it scalding. I know how you like your water.”

“I will. You grab the bath seats from the other tub.” Harry smiles.

They work so well when it comes to the kids, but Liam hasn’t felt this close to Harry in a long time. It isn’t just the sex, it’s everything. They’ve been so focused on Niall that they almost forgot each other. Now though they’ve had a chance to both just focus on the other and it feels great. Niall problems can take a backseat for a moment.

“What the hell are you thinking?” Zayn hisses as soon as Harry and Liam disappear up the stairs. He never talked to Niall about anything like what he’s proposing. It’s insane in every sense. His cock doesn’t seem to agree though, and he silently chastises the excited organ.

“I already said what I was thinking.” Niall says simply. “You didn’t have to lie to them.”

“It was better than smacking you in the back of the head and yelling ‘You’re a bloody mad man’ in front of them.” Zayn fumes.

“So you don’t like the idea then?” Niall asks, pressing into Zayn’s body. He slides his hand down Zayn’s chest and stomach until he captures the darker boy’s cock. “Because I think you do.”
“Don’t.” Zayn says harshly. He wrenches Niall’s hand off of himself and walks away. “That idea is crazy Niall. I told you last night that I can’t just push my feelings down, especially if we sleep together. Did you even think of how I’d feel being used as a tool to get you back together with your boyfriends?”

“Then tell me you don’t want to do this.” Niall says calmly. “Tell me no and I’ll drop it.”

“I can’t.” Zayn all but whispers. “I want you however I can get you. I hate myself for it, but I do.”

“That’s not what I wanted from this Zayn. I don’t want to make things harder on you.” Niall tells him softly. “I just don’t know how else to do this anymore. I’ve been trying since I came back to let myself be comfortable with them, but I haven’t been. Things are different with you though.”

“God, we are so messed up.” Zayn sighs, collapsing into one of the theatre seats. It’s shockingly comfortable, but of course it is if Niall picked them out. He loves ridiculously comfortable things that still manage to look good. He finds the perfect balance of style and function. “I won’t say no to it, but I think I need to take some time as well to think. It’s a lot to ask of all of us Nialler.”

“I know.” Niall says. He looks like he’s going to take the seat next to Zayn, but instead he takes a seat in his lap. Zayn instinctively wraps his arms around Niall’s waist. The Irish boy drops his head against Zayn’s shoulder “I’m sorry for dragging you into this.”

“I’d do anything for you.” Zayn says, nuzzling his cheek against Niall’s forehead.

“But it has to be alright for you too.” Niall says gently. “Don’t want our only chance to be together like that to be bad for you.”

“As long as you’re there it couldn’t be bad for me.” Zayn smiles. He presses a kiss to Niall’s forehead and settles into the chair. He can hear one of the babies starting to fuss, but he’ll give them a minute for Liam or Harry to stop whatever they’re doing and get to it.

“It so could.” Niall giggles. “I could like, fart, or something. Or spontaneously combust. Or have a heart attack. Or-”

“I get it you ridiculous prat.” Zayn laughs. “You’re so much like Haz sometimes, it’s scary.”

“Yeah, but Haz doesn’t want to suck your dick like I do.” Niall says with an eyebrow waggle.

“We can’t.” Zayn says firmly.

“I mean, we could.” Niall says cheekily. “Or we could just like snog for a while.”

“No, Niall, before he came down here, Liam left the babies in their high chairs with some cereal, but I don’t think he’s with them right now because I can hear Gems crying.” Zayn explains.

“Shite.” Niall mumbles. He jumps off of Zayn’s lap and takes off up the stairs. Zayn follows behind slowly, not wanting to expose himself to anymore raw hatred than he already has if Liam and Harry actually are upstairs. Liam hasn’t actually said a word directly to him, but that in and of itself is indicative of how much Liam dislikes him. The muscular lad has always been of the creed “If you can’t say something nice, then don’t say anything at all.”

Harry isn’t even trying to hide his disgust, and that hurts more than anything. It’s worse than him not even noticing than Zayn had feelings for him. It’s worse than the look on his face when Zayn admitted that he was in love with Niall. It’s even worse than the way Niall blurted out that he wants to shag in front of them. Harry was his best friend for years, but now he isn’t sure that relationship
can be saved at all.

Luckily, neither of them appear to be upstairs when Zayn reaches the kitchen and Niall has his mobile tucked under his chin. “Thank you Mary, but today it’s just too dangerous for you to drive in. We won’t be going to Dublin today, so it’s really not necessary anyways. No don’t worry, this won’t affect your pay. You can’t control the weather. You too.”

He hangs up the mobile and slips it onto the table so he can focus on a very angry Gemma in his arms. Her cereal is all over the floor, so Zayn goes to work sweeping it into a pile with his hand and then scooping it into the bin. He pours another small pile onto the tray of her highchair and Niall gives him a grateful smile and a peck on the cheek. He tucks Gemma back into the seat and she wails until she notices the food in front of her.

She sets about eating while Sam snoozes on the tray. Cheerios are stuck to his face and Zayn sneaks a quick picture on his mobile because it’s entirely too cute. “We should go get your things from Tommo’s house.” Niall sighs.

“I know. I just don’t know how to face Pez.” Zayn says quietly.

“I’ll go in and get your stuff for you.” Niall offers.

“No. It has to be me. She has every right to hate me.” Zayn tells him.

“Fine, I won’t interfere.” Niall says softly. “She doesn’t though. She’s hurt, but she doesn’t hate you. It’s me she hates now.”

“I doubt that.” Zayn smiles. “Nobody in their right mind could hate you.”

“Zee, she texted me this morning. She’s furious with me. She called me the worst looking other woman of all time.” Niall explains. He pulls up the message on his mobile and hands it over to Zayn. It’s several texts long and uses more colorful epithets than Zayn has ever seen in one go, including one comparing Niall to Salome from the bible. She makes it pretty clear though that Niall is the one to blame in her eyes. Zayn gets off easy.

“I’m sorry she said these things to you Nialler. It was completely uncalled for.” Zayn says softly, handing him back his mobile.

“It’s nothing worse than I’ve already thought about myself.” Niall shrugs. “Well maybe that thing about me arse hole and a fire ax, but other than that it’s pretty standard.”

“I don’t even know how she came up with that.” Zayn laughs. “That’s like some next level shit.”

“Fuckin birds mate, never understood how you and Li did it. They’re all completely buggered in the head.” Niall giggles.

“I wouldn’t agree with you, but that’s only because El and my family are super sweet.” Zayn smiles. “Every girl I’ve ever dated has been crazy though. Don’t know what that says bout me.”

“I’d say it’s not really a pattern, but here we are and I’m not much less bonkers than she is.” Niall grins.

“Don’t expect me to deny that.” Zayn says with a sly smile.

“Prat.” Niall laughs.
“Nutter.” Zayn retorts.

“Bodalán.” Niall mutters.

“Not fair using words I can’t understand, you haramzada.” Zayn smirks. It’s the Urdu word for bastard, but it’s pretty tame. Urdu has a lot of extremely intense insults that aren’t really appropriate for silly banter. Especially since so many revolve around fucking someone’s mother in horrifying and inventive ways. Oftentimes with farm animals involved.

“It means prick.” Niall giggles. “Yours?”

“Bastard.” Zayn shrugs.

“I have to say, Irish Gaelic is a lot sexier sounding than Urdu.” Niall admits with a laugh.

“I can’t even disagree.” Zayn smiles. “I’m just glad you didn’t call it Arabic. Different languages and all.”

“I do my best to remember that kind of shit.” Niall grins. “I insult people intentionally. Doing it any other way is just rude.”

“That’s so like you.” Zayn says with a smile. “The nicest little shit I’ve ever met.”

“I’ll go tell Haz and Li that we’re going to get your stuff now. We need to get out there before the snow gets too bad. You don’t mind driving right?” Niall asks.

“Not especially, I guess.” Zayn shrugs. “My jag isn’t really good for snow though. Getting here last night was a nightmare.”

“You were drunk, of course it was. Liam will probably let us use the truck.” Niall says. “You okay watching them for a minute?”

“Of course.” Zayn nods. “You should put on some proper clothes though.”

“I’ll grab you something too. As much as I like your bare chest, it probably isn’t the best thing to wear in negative temperatures.” Niall winks. “Don’t know how you’re only wearing joggers right now.”

“I like the way you keep staring.” Zayn shrugs. “I’m actually bloody freezing.”

“Cheeky bastard.” Niall laughs. He saunters out of the room and Zayn turns his attention towards the twins. Sam is still sleeping and Gemma is content to pick at her cereal. It doesn’t take long before Niall is back downstairs dressed more appropriately for the weather. Zayn didn’t hear any yelling while he was gone, so he takes that as a goodish sign.

Zayn shrugs on the jumper Niall hands him, and shimmies out of his joggers to put on the jeans. Niall is supposed to be putting the children in the play pen upstairs, but instead he stays to watch the show. Zayn makes sure to do it slowly, overly attentive to the way Niall’s jeans cling tight to his legs. The Irish boy is a good deal shorter than Zayn is, but his jeans fit well enough. They’re both incredibly thin so the waist really isn’t a problem. It hugs a little in the bum than Zayn would usually like, but Niall seems to enjoy it quite a bit.

Zayn picks up Sam, trying his best not to wake the boy. It doesn’t work, but Sam doesn’t cry. Instead he curls into Zayn’s neck and clutches at his collar. Zayn picks the cheerios off of his face and then carries him upstairs behind Niall. As soon as they drop the babies off in the play pen Niall
gives them both a kiss. He switches on the baby monitor and then they leave.

He hears it when they walk back past the main bedroom, a loud and filthy moan. His eyebrows spring into his hairline and he turns to see the look on Niall’s face. He’s wearing a huge smile that just puzzles Zayn. “I know that moan.” Niall giggles. “Li’s eating him out.”

“Good God, you people are crazy.” Zayn sighs. He pads down the stairs quickly and waits for Niall. The Irish lad gives the door one last smile and then heads down after him. He grabs a set of keys off a table and hands them over to Zayn. “That doesn’t bother you at all?”

“Why should it?” Niall asks. “I told them they should when I was up there. They were already getting pretty hot and heavy then.”

“I don’t understand you three at all some times.” Zayn says with an eye roll.

“Yes you do.” Niall grins. “This is good for them. They need it.”

“Even so, it just seems like odd timing.” Zayn says, turning to walk to the garage. Niall slips his hand into Zayn’s and they walk quietly out to Liam’s truck. Zayn takes the drivers seat and Niall climbs into the other side. He hits a button on the visor and the garage door opens. Zayn is concerned about the snow flurries coming down in thick sheets, but Niall squeezes his hand reassuringly. They’re probably going to get stuck at Louis’ house if it keeps coming down like this, but as long as Niall is there he’ll be okay.

“What the hell were you thinking?” Louis hisses at the boys when they walk through the door. He looks like he hasn’t slept at all and Niall feels a pang of sympathy for him. He remembers the first few nights with the twins, and they were awful.

“Zayn needs his things.” Niall says simply.

“So you drove here in a bloody snow hurricane to get them?” Louis groans. “As if I don’t bloody have a million bloody things to bloody take care of al-bloody-ready? Last night’s row wasn’t enough Malik? You want to put my kids through worse?”

“Louis William Tomlinson you stop that this instant.” Eleanor says sharply from the couch. “Your things are here next to the sofa Zayn. Niall love, it’s good to see you.”

“You too El.” Niall beams. “You look a good sight better than this one.”

“Bugger off.” Louis grumbles.

“I’m really sorry for what happened here last night. I shouldn’t have done that here.” Zayn says quietly.

“You shouldn’t have done it at all you miserable piece of shit.” Perrie says angrily from the hall. Niall hadn’t seen her come out, but he knew that it was a good possibility. “And you, you man stealing little rat. Two wasn’t enough? You really needed to have Zayn too? You should watch out Eleanor, Louis is probably next on his list. He’s got to collect them like bloody footballer cards.”

“Stop!” Zayn says angrily. “Say what you want to me, but leave these three out of it. There are children here for god’s sake.”

“I’m just trying to warn El that this slag may seduce her husband.” Perrie glares. Niall feels a tint rise
in his cheeks and turns his face towards the floor.

“Pez, honey, I know you’re upset, but please stop.” Eleanor says gently. “There’s no need to be nasty. Especially to Louis and I.”

“El’s being polite. I personally think you should just shut the hell up.” Louis snaps. “Niall didn’t do anything wrong.”

“He stole my fiancé Louis.” Perrie says angrily. “I’d say that’s pretty wrong.”

“I left you because you habitually cheated on me and you didn’t want kids even though I did.” Zayn says. Niall can tell he’s doing his utmost to rein in his temper, but it isn’t quite working. His face is fierce in a way Niall has never seen before. He’s normally so calm and aloof, but right now he’s furious. “Niall had nothing to do with it, and we aren’t together.”

“Whatever Zayn. Honestly I couldn’t give a shit. You’re going to pay for what you did to me.” Perrie spits and then she disappears into a bedroom.

“Louis, El, I’m so so sorry for that and for last night.” Zayn says quickly. “I’m sorry I brought her here.”

“She’s helped with the babies, so there’s that.” Eleanor offers.

“She also kept us up half the night complaining.” Louis mutters. “Just get your stuff and go. I don’t have the patience for any more drama right now. Niall, lovely to see you. Stop by when this is all wrapped up.”

Zayn nods and goes over to get his bags. Niall grabs Louis by the wrist before he can walk away and pulls him in for a hug. “I’m sorry I’ve been such a shit friend lately.” He whispers. “I promise I’ll try and do better.”

“I’m going to hold you to that you little shit.” Louis laughs.

“Send me any baby bills until you get back to work.” Niall nods. “Take as much time as you need too. And call me if things get too intense. Liam, Haz, and I can watch the babies while you unwind. Or we can just talk or something.”

“Stop being such a woman Horan.” Louis laughs. “Next you’ll offer to drink wine and watch trashy celebrity gossip shows with me.”

“I’m not allowed to watch those.” Niall sighs. “Harry says most of the people they target are actually quite lovely.”

“Don’t care.” Louis shrugs. “I love watching them destroy someone because their floral print was out of season or some shit. They’re so awful. I love it.”

“I know.” Niall grins. “Call me tonight. Let me know how things are going with the triplets.”

“Will do.” Louis smiles. Zayn comes over with his bag and nods at Louis. “You on the other hand need to learn what a polite invitation is, versus a real one. And learn how to rent a hotel room.”

“I have.” Zayn says quietly. “I thought we were actually friends, but I guess not.”

“We are friends. If we weren’t I would have left you outside.” Louis laughs. “Now go away so I can grab ten minutes sleep.”
Niall smiles and waves to Eleanor and then heads back out into the freezing cold with Zayn. They climb into the truck and start the trek home. It’s only supposed to be ten minutes, but Zayn is overly cautious so it takes closer to half an hour. They don’t talk or listen to the radio so the focus is entirely on the drive. When they finally pull into the garage Niall lets out a breath he didn’t even realize he was holding in.

He isn’t expecting it when Zayn starts to cry, but he should have been. He can’t really get past the console to comfort the darker boy, so he squeezes his hand to let him know that Niall is and always will be there for him. They sit in silence for a while, because Zayn doesn’t sob when he cries. He shuts his eyes and tears roll down his cheeks, but he never makes a sound.

“I’m sorry she said those things about you.” Zayn mutters quietly. “She had no right.”

“She’s hurt and angry. I can forgive it as long as you don’t believe what she said.” Niall tells him.

“Of course I don’t.” Zayn says. “Louis isn’t your type at all.”

“Harmzad.” Niall laughs.


“Haramzada.” Niall repeats, moving the word around in his mouth to familiarize himself with the way it feels on his tongue. “Har-um-za-da”

“You got it.” Zayn smiles. “But seriously, I don’t agree with her at all. She’s completely wrong about you.”

“Is she though?” Niall asks. “She’s right in a way. I had two wonderful guys, but this all still happened because of me.”

“No it didn’t.” Zayn tells him. “We fell for each other and I let it happen. I didn’t even try to pull back once I started. I moved in here and I shouldn’t have. I should have walked away instead. I should have left after that day we went shooting.”

“Why that day?” Niall asks. It’s a very specific time and Niall doesn’t quite understand why he picked it.

“Because that’s the day my feelings started.” Zayn admits. “That’s the day you came into my heart. I was so excited when you looked at me with pride after I fired that gun. I was so happy that you trusted me with the hardship you were going through even though you didn’t even like me at the time. It’s twisted, I know, but it’s what happened.”

“It’s not twisted.” Niall tells him softly. “I didn’t realize it was that early for you though.”

“What about you?” Zayn asks. “I mean, you don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to. I’m just kind of curious.”

“I’m not sure exactly.” Niall admits. “I only realized it when you left, but it had been longer. I don’t know exactly when it started. All I know is I’ve never fallen so hard and so fast in my life.”

“It wasn’t that fast.” Zayn smiles. “Harry says you hated me for that contract trick.”

“Oh I did. I really really did.” Niall laughs. “But it turned out so well at first that I forgave you. Then you pulled that thing with Liam. Hated you for a bit after that too. I’m a total hypocrite.”
“Not saying anything to that.” Zayn says, throwing his hands up defensively.

“Haramzada.” Niall huffs.

“Stop using that against me.” Zayn pouts.

“Don’t be feckin rude then.” Niall laughs.

“Rude would have been agreeing outright because it’s kind of true.” Zayn smirks.

Niall pouts and slips out of the truck. He’s not really that upset. He adjusted to the thought that his relationship with Zayn was all kinds of messed up a long time ago. He just wants Zayn to baby him and maybe apologize with a few kisses. He isn’t disappointed when Zayn races out of the truck and catches him by the wrist. He’s pulled around in a twist and Zayn’s arm curls into his lower back. Their lips meet quickly, but Niall hooks his hand behind Zayn’s neck so he can’t pull away.

Zayn doesn’t seem to mind and he turns them so that Niall is pressed flat against the truck. It doesn’t scare him though. If Liam had done this the intensity would have him knee deep in a panic attack right now. Zayn makes it soft and sweet though. Every touch is filled with so much tenderness Niall can’t help but melt into it.

It’s not that Harry or Liam are rough with him. They have the same level of gentleness that Zayn does most of the time. Zayn just manages to say how much he loves Niall with every single touch in a way that nobody ever has with him before. It whispers across his skin from the pads of Zayn’s fingers. He can taste the dark sweetness of it on the tip of Zayn’s tongue. His lips tingle with the electricity of a thousand murmured “I love you”s Zayn holds inside of himself.

Zayn has a way of making Niall feel like the universe is inside of them, bursting with energy and life. He feels like he’s the only person that matters in the entire world when Zayn is with him. It’s a complete change from the way he feels around Liam and Harry. He always feels important to them, but he knows that occasionally they need each other or the babies instead.

It was always something that Niall knew would happen in a relationship like this. There are times when he needs Harry and stupid jokes and popcorn while they snog on the couch. There are other times when all he wants is to be outside with Liam and throwing a rugby ball too far just too watch the way he grins like a puppy if he manages to catch it. Sometimes he likes to cordon himself off with the twins and play with the colorful pillows that litter the nursery to make a fort they aren’t old enough to enjoy properly.

With Zayn though, he just exists happily. He floats on a cloud of euphoria because nothing in his past matters with Zayn. Nothing else matters except how they connect in this one second. He feels guilty for the thought, but he wishes he could just live in this moment for the rest of his life. No more fighting, no more guilt or sympathy, just a perfect moment.

Of course it has to be ruined. Niall hears the door open and immediately Zayn flies backwards. He’s grateful that the Range Rover is between them and the door, but mostly because of the way Zayn looks absolutely terrified. “You two alright out here?” Harry calls.

“We’re fine Haz. Perrie just said a lot of shit and we needed a few minutes to calm down.” Niall calls. It’s eerily reminiscent of the way Niall felt the day in the kitchen when Liam nearly caught him cheating with Harry. The thought twists in his gut like a knife, because, like then, he doesn’t want to feel dirty for connecting with someone he loves. He wants to just be able to say he was making out with Zayn, but that can’t happen.
Zayn gives him a grateful smile and Niall just nods back. Harry calls out “Well we have a proper breakfast set up in here whenever you’re ready.”

“We already had breakfast.” Niall laughs.

“Cereal and toast is not breakfast Niall. It’s a joke, and not a good one.” Harry says sternly. Niall can’t see his face, but he knows exactly what it looks like. There’s a slight eye roll and a wearied expression on his mouth. Niall hears the door close and sighs in relief. He presses back into Zayn, but the darker boy slips away.

“I don’t know if I can do this Nialler.” Zayn says quietly.

“That’s okay.” Niall tells him.

“No, I mean this plan that you have.” Zayn says a little louder. “That fucking kiss. I’ve never felt that amazing in my life, and it was just a kiss. I don’t know how to pull back from you if we were together.”

“Oh.” Niall says, drawing back. “That’s um- that’s okay too. I’m sorry for even suggesting it.”

“Just give me a little more time.” Zayn says. “Let me figure out how to love you and still be friends with you afterwards. Let me figure a way through this without ending up with my heart shattered in a thousand tiny pieces.”

“Zee, you don’t have to do anything.” Niall says, shaking his head. “I don’t want to hurt you. I’ll tell Haz and Li it’s off. I’m sure they’ll be glad to hear it too.”

“I’m asking for more time, not an end to it.” Zayn says desperately. “I want this so much. I just need to gather my thoughts.”

“Zayn this is obviously too much. It was a stupid and selfish idea.” Niall chastises himself. He doesn’t even know where it came from. It popped into his head and seemed like a perfect solution. It gave him what he needed with Zayn, but included Harry and Liam. It was supposed to give him closure, but all it’s doing is tearing all of them apart.

Zayn surges forward and connects their mouths in a soft kiss. It doesn’t last longer than a couple seconds, but it’s filled with so many emotions Niall can’t process them all. “Please don’t take this away from me.” Zayn whispers. “Please don’t take away my only opportunity to be with you.”

“I can’t keep hurting you Zayn.” Niall tells him. “I can give you time, but only if we can come out of this okay.”

“We can.” Zayn nods against Niall’s forehead. “I promise we can.”

Breakfast may just be the most awkward affair Harry has ever lived through, and he found his vomit up on eBay once. Niall is positioned at the end of the table opposite from Zayn, but the darker boy’s eyes never leave him. Harry positioned Liam and himself between them on purpose, trying to show that there is a boundary there. It’s petty and possessive, but he really feels it needed to be done. He’s about ten thousand steps from being on board with Niall’s proposition, and he doesn’t see himself getting there any time soon.

Niall is laughing and telling them a story about something that happened in Reykjavik. Something about a Rabbi falling into a frozen water fountain and sliding across it like a hockey puck. Harry isn’t
really paying that much attention. He’s much more focused on the way Niall grins and laughs, but his eyes keep darting back to Zayn. His eyes don’t sparkle like that for Harry anymore. Not really.

Then again, Harry hasn’t exactly been open towards anything with Niall lately either. He spends all his time walking on eggshells around the other boy, and it’s the wrong kind of love. He’s been nurturing Niall like he’s one of his children instead of loving him like a partner. He’s been- oh dear god this is exactly what Niall was trying to say this morning. This whole thing isn’t Niall’s fault. It’s Harry’s.

“Jesus fucking Christ.” Harry mutters under his breath.

“Something wrong babe?” Liam asks.

“No. Not really.” Harry smiles. “Just had a sudden realization.”

“Bananas will be back in season soon so you can eat nothing but them for a week again?” Niall asks.

“Not quite as good as that, no.” Harry laughs. “Don’t worry about it. Finish your story.”

“He already did.” Zayn says quickly. “Like a full minute ago.”

“Oh.” Harry blushes. He hadn’t even noticed a lull in the conversation. He was too wrapped up in his own thoughts. A small pout forms on Niall’s lips, so Harry leans over to kiss it. “Sorry Babes. You want to tell it to me again?”

“Nah, it’s not that good of a story anyways.” Niall says with a small smile. “You can make it up to me later.”

“I’m going to regret this aren’t I?” Harry asks.

“Oh yeah. Tonight is my night for bathing the twins.” Niall grins wickedly.

“Actually Niall, we-” Liam starts. Harry kicks out viciously at Liam’s shin before he can finish the sentence. It isn’t the kick that stops him though. It’s Zayn’s loud and sudden yelp. Oops.

“The fuck Haz?” Zayn groans.

“I think he was trying to stop Liam from finishing his sentence.” Niall says with a knowing smirk. “Please Li, continue your thought.”

“We already gave the twins a bath earlier.” Liam says quietly.

“Oh did you?” Niall laughs. “Then I guess I’ll have to come up with some other chore for Haz to do. I believe someone owes Zee an apology.”

“Sorry Zayn.” Harry says childishly.

“Who even does that?” Zayn asks. “Like people in movies and shit, but real people don’t do that. It’s not like it’s so distracting people forget the conversation that was going on.”

“It was a desperate attempt to profit from Niall’s ignorance.” Harry pouts.

“He watches too many romantic comedies for his own good.” Niall laughs. “Don’t know why he thought it would work out any better for him than it would for Julia Roberts. Now he owes me twice.”
“How did it go from one thing to two?” Harry asks.

“Once for not paying any attention during my story, and once for that pathetic attempt to manipulate me.” Niall explains. “I’m thinking a foot rub for starters.”

“How did it go from one thing to two?” Harry asks.

“Not unless you wash those nasty things.” Harry laughs. “Your feet are rank.”

“You’re going to be smelling me on you for days.” Niall cackles. He spins in his chair and plops his feet down right in front of Harry.

“Niall, Maura would spin over in her grave!” Liam chastises. “Get your feet off the table before I give you a smack.”

“I am so going to tuck my dirty socks into your pillow tonight.” Niall grumbles.

“We have like two dozen pillows. I’ll grab a new one.” Liam says with an eye roll. Niall pulls his feet off the table, much to Harry’s relief, and pouts for a little while. A smile spreads across his face soon enough though, and Harry doesn’t understand why.

“Make me a Niall Cake. Worst thing about the continent is no Niall cake or Nialler-cakes. Nobody makes anything good in Paris.” Niall laughs.

“I can safely say from experience that you’re completely wrong.” Zayn smiles. “There’s a little ice cream shop right on the Seine that’s open at night. Best fucking thing I’ve ever had in my life. Had a red currant sorbet that changed my whole worldview.”

“I didn’t know you went to Paris.” Harry says.

“Yes you did.” Zayn huffs. “I was there with you for your contract negotiations two years ago. We went to that champagne breakfast the next day. I talked you out of buying a cheese shop.”

“Oh my god yes!” Harry laughs. “I remember that now! You got all upset because the guy kept insisting on giving you more and more free samples to convince you it was a good idea.”

“It was a terrible idea. You were completely pissed.” Zayn mumbles. It’s weird remembering how close he and Zayn used to be. In the last few months they’ve barely spoken, and a lot of that has been antagonistic. They used to spend a lot of time together. They’d go to movie premieres and dinners. Whenever Harry had a breakup Zayn brought him frozen yogurt and terrible movies. They’ve cleared out more than a cellar’s worth of wine together over the years.

Having him here at the house feels like a terrible idea, but at the same time Harry wants to be friends with him again. He wants things to go back to the way they were. That isn’t possible though. Zayn and Niall are in the most complicated relationship Harry could possibly imagine. Both Zayn and Niall said that he chose Liam and Harry, but that doesn’t erase the way they look at each other. The way they feel about each other is too intense for this to end well.

But Harry keeps his mouth shut, because Liam is right. Niall has to choose to stay with them or it will never work. He can’t disparage Zayn, can’t try to get in between them, or he may end up making things worse. He’s, for lack of a better word, impotent in this situation. “This conversation is fascinating and all, but I want some feckin cake.” Niall whines.

“I’ll make it to go with lunch.” Harry sighs. “You’ve already eaten two breakfasts.”

“Sure, not like I have over twenty pounds I need to put on or anything.” Niall mumbles. Fuck, that’s right. Niall is nowhere near being back to his original weight. He’s only a little over a quarter of the
“Yes, but you need to gain it back healthily Nialler.” Zayn says helpfully. “Eating nothing but sugar and fat won’t help. Especially if you’re as worried about your tattoos getting misshapen as you were this morning.”

“Ugh, Haz why did you ever have to tell me that would happen?” Niall groans. “Ignorance is bliss and all that.”

“Because you’d have been upset I that I hadn’t told you otherwise. There was no winning in that situation.” Harry says. “Zayn is right though. That guitar will get really funky looking if you gain the weight back as a little pudgy belly. Not that I’d mind either way. It would actually be kind of cute.”

“It would not!” Niall yelps with a horrified expression.

“Actually it probably would be.” Liam smiles.

“Zee, back me up here.” Niall says desperately.

“I can’t.” Zayn shrugs. “You would look cute with a little belly.”

“You’re all terrible human beings.” Niall groans. “Absolute shite. Give me the babies. They need a good human being as a parent to help keep their sanity.”

“Don’t be rude.” Liam pouts, handing Sam over from the high chair.

“Hey baby boy.” Niall beams. “At least you love me, isn’t that right?”

Sam, in his non-talking capacity, has excellent comedic timing. Normally when babies spit up, it’s a small dribble out of their mouths. Not this time. This time it’s a projectile stream right onto Niall’s chest. It’s brilliant and Harry can’t even attempt to hold back his roars of laughter. “Every man in this house but me is a monster.” Niall groans.

He hands Sam back to Liam and walks out of the room, stripping off his shirt. Harry wants to follow him and apologize, but Liam gives him a look and he stays put. Zayn doesn’t seem to get the message though and shuffles out after Niall like a lost puppy. “What?” Harry huffs.

“That is exactly what he asked us to stop doing.” Liam says flatly. “He wants us to back off a bit, so he felt like you were making fun of him.” Liam explains. “I know Niall well enough to know he doesn’t want to be around someone who wounded his pride.”

“Then you should have gone instead of letting Zayn.” Harry hisses.

“And leave you two alone to start a fight?” Liam asks. “It’s better this way. Zayn knows you weren’t trying to be mean, and he’ll tell Niall as much.”

“Or he’ll twist it to his advantage.” Harry argues. “Niall may have said he chose us, but that doesn’t mean Zayn doesn’t still want him. He may still try to steal Niall away from us.”

“Haz, he’s not some nefarious mustache twirling villain from a silent film.” Liam sighs. “He was your best friend and he just wants Niall to be happy. And Niall isn’t a possession, he can’t be stolen because we don’t own him. If he chooses to leave it will break our hearts, but it is his choice.”

“Why aren’t you fighting for him?” Harry snaps. “Why are you just sitting back and letting this happen? You of all people should be on the front lines of this.”

“That is exactly what he asked us to stop doing.” Liam says flatly. “He wants us to back off a bit, so
I am. It’s time we stopped suffocating him and just let him be. Did you even notice he hasn’t yelled once since they got back? We just left things alone and he was happy.”

“I don’t know if I have it in me to just back off.” Harry grumbles. “If he leaves us, and I can’t say I did everything possible to keep him here, then I’ll spend the rest of my life hating myself for it.”

“We’re not prison wardens Haz.” Liam says softly “I’ve loved Niall in one way or another for almost my entire life. It would kill a part of me to let him go. The eleven months after we broke up, and the two after he left, were the hardest times of my life. We can’t keep him here though if that’s not what he wants. That’s not love, it’s possession. I know Niall loves us, even if he has been occupied with Zayn. I have faith that he’ll pick us.”

“I hope you’re right.” Harry whispers. “I don’t know what I’ll do if you aren’t.”

“Niall stop.” Zayn huffs when they reach Niall’s room. For someone with a bum knee, the Irish boy can go up stairs remarkably fast. The tightness of the jeans Zayn is wearing slowed him down.

“Stop what?” Niall asks. “I need a new shirt.”

“So you’re not upset?” Zayn asks.

“Of course not.” Niall laughs. “That was hilarious. I’ve never seen anything better timed in my life.”

“Then I regret chasing you up the stairs.” Zayn sighs. “Thought you were mad about the pudgy belly thing.”

“Nah.” Niall shrugs. “I know you’re all wrong, and that’s what really matters.”

“Keep thinking that.” Zayn smirks. He sits down on the edge of the bed and falls back. It’s insanely comfortable, and Zayn didn’t get nearly enough sleep. The only reason he didn’t have a horrid hangover is because Niall made him some mystery drink when they woke up. He can already feel his eyes starting to close when Niall drops down onto the bed beside him. The Irish boy tucks into his side and emits a pleasant warmth that just draws Zayn further towards the realm of sleep.

“Fancy a kip do ya?” Niall asks. Zayn just nods in response. “That’s okay. I’ll just go take a shower and then leave you alone.”

“A shower you say?” Zayn asks, popping one eye open.

“None of that ya cheeky bastard.” Niall giggles. “You’re the one who wanted time, and it wouldn’t be right.”

“Doesn’t mean we can’t take an innocent shower together.” Zayn smiles.

“Nothing about you is innocent.” Niall says with an eye roll. “Especially your intentions.”

“Scout’s honor.” Zayn says, holding up his hand.

“One, you were never a scout.” Niall grins. “And two, it’s just these three fingers.”

“How do you even know that?” Zayn asks, mimicking the gesture Niall is making.

“I watch a lot of television.” Niall shrugs.
“Well regardless of your strange scout trivia, I promise I won’t try anything.” Zayn says firmly.

“Yeah, but I might.” Niall laughs.

“Remember when you thought wanking to me was cheating?” Zayn asks suddenly. “Such a change.”

“Wasn’t just you. Don’t get a big head.” Niall huffs. “But thank you for reminding me why it was a bad idea.”

Niall jumps off the bed and rushes into the attached bathroom, locking the door before Zayn can follow him. He knocks on the door a few times, but Niall doesn’t answer. He shouldn’t have brought it up. He gets so fucking stupid around Niall sometimes. It’s almost physically painful how dumb he feels right now. “Niall, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it like that.” Zayn calls through the door.

“I know exactly what you meant Zayn.” Niall yells back. “You think I’m a cheater. This is an affair to you.”

“It’s hard not to feel that way when you’re engaged to two people Niall. I feel like the other man.” Zayn says softly. He’s pretty sure that Niall can’t even hear him because the shower has started running, so he turns around and slumps down to the ground. It’s not his best idea, as the door opens a few seconds later and he tumbles backwards.

“So we’re both other men?” Niall asks. He’s stark naked and staring down at Zayn with a grin. “How does that even work?”

“I don’t even know.” Zayn sighs. “Especially since we haven’t even like, actually done anything together.”

“And we aren’t going to unless everyone gets on board.” Niall says sternly. “You can join me in the shower if you behave yourself.”

“So no snogging?” Zayn asks with a pout.

“Maybe.” Niall shrugs. “Probably not though. I mostly just need you in there to wash my back and feet. I can’t bend my leg the right way anymore.”

“I’m good with that.” Zayn grins. “Although I’d really like the snogging.”

“Be a good boy and maybe.” Niall laughs. “You coming or what?”

“I don’t know.” Zayn says with a wicked smile. “The view from down here is pretty fantastic.”

“Slut.” Niall says, matching Zayn’s grin in both size and mischievousness.

“Tease.” Zayn counters. He doesn’t know how Niall is staying soft, because he certainly isn’t. Niall’s jeans feel like they’re suffocating him.

“Oh I haven’t even begun to tease you.” Niall winks. He turns around and saunters over to the shower. Zayn follows after him and strips off his clothes. He takes a moment to breathe and wills his erection down when Niall steps into the glass doors.

“Have you talked to Louis about your knee?” He asks once he enters the warm spray.

“He says I’ll need a full titanium hip and knee replacement if I want to get back to normal.” Niall sighs. “I’m not quite ready for that yet. Don’t want to be a robot before I’m thirty. It’s fine for now.”
“How are you going to ride the horses with your leg all messed up?” Zayn asks.

“I’m not.” Niall shrugs. “I’ve never been big on horses personally. We only decided to switch the farm because Haz was so uncomfortable selling the sheep and cattle to slaughter.”

“That’s Harry alright.” Zayn smiles. The curly haired boy has always been too sweet for his own good. It’s one of the reasons Zayn fell for him all those years ago. It might even be the biggest reason. Those feelings have faded though, in the wake of the intensity of his love for Niall. It feels like it was just a crush, even though it felt so real all that time. Maybe that’s all it ever was.

“What ya thinkin bout?” Niall asks.

“Harry.” Zayn admits. “Do you think he’ll ever forgive me?”

“There’s nothing you need to be forgiven for.” Niall says firmly. “Well maybe showing up out of nowhere and ambushing us at Louis’ place.”

“I’ll apologize when we get out of the shower.” Zayn says. He knows Niall is being kind to him, but he’d rather hear the truth right now. Harry hates him, and he knows it.

“Not unless you want them knowing we took one together. You should take that nap.” Niall tells him. He’s running the soap all over his body and Zayn can’t help but stare.

“I can’t say I’m feeling particularly tired at the moment.” Zayn says quietly.

“Well I can’t blame you for that I suppose.” Niall grins. “Now make yourself useful and wash my back for me.”

“Yes sir.” Zayn laughs. Niall hands him the bar of soap, and turns around. He braces his hands against the wall and bends over just a bit so his bum is sticking out. As if that weren’t enough he wiggles it from side to side in a truly rude display of teasing. Zayn rears back a hand and brings it down in a firm smack. “Don’t be a tease Niall.”

Niall laughs and says “You’re just upset you can’t stick it in me right this second.”

“No, I’m upset that I said I needed time and you’re pushing it.” Zayn grumbles.

“Shit.” Niall groans. He drops his head against the wall and stands up straight. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean for it to come across like that.”

“It’s fine. Just stop tempting me so damn much.” Zayn sighs. “It’s hard enough to stop myself from touching you without all the teasing.”

“I know. I’m sorry.” Niall says softly. “I can do my own back if I use the loofah stick. You don’t have to stay in here with me.”

“I want to though. I want every second I can get with you, no matter how hard it is later on.” Zayn says with a gentle smile. Niall’s cheeks puff up and his hands fly to cover his mouth. He starts laughing into them not a second later. “Oh what the hell Nialler?”

“I’d say it’s pretty hard already.” Niall giggles. Zayn looks down to see his erection has come back with a vengeance. He hadn’t even noticed it had happened. A blush works it’s way across his cheeks as he hangs his head in shame. He squeezes his eyes shut and sighs. “Do you want me to leave you alone instead?”
“No, just give me a second.” Zayn sighs. “Need to get over the sight of your arse like that.”

“Sorry.” Niall says with another muffled laugh. “Didn’t think it would be that bad for you.”

“Well it is.” Zayn grumbles. “You’re fucking gorgeous.”

“It’s not like I have an arse like Tommo or something.” Niall laughs. “I’m too skinny and too small to compare to the four of you.”

“Louis may have quite an arse, but he’s nothing next to you Nialler. Neither are Haz, Liam, or I. You’re radiant in a way we could never hope to be.” Zayn says firmly. He’s never believed anything more than that in his entire life.

“No I’m not, you poetic git.” Niall groans. “You’re just wearing rose-tinted glasses.”

“You could ask anyone Niall.” Zayn says. “You could ask a stranger or one of your fiancés. Anyone in the world would say the same thing. You’re beautiful beyond compare inside and out.”

“Stop!” Niall says with a blush. “Stop saying things like that.”

“Why?” Zayn asks.

“Because it isn’t true.” Niall says, twisting his head away to avert his eyes. “I’m a monster, Zayn. I’ve hurt everyone I’ve ever loved, especially you.”

“You weren’t trying to though.” Zayn says, intertwining his fingers with Niall. “You’ve always tried to do the right thing. You’re too impulsive about it sometimes, but you always do what you believe is right.”

“Then why did I fall in love with you?” Niall asks sharply. “That wasn’t the right thing to do at all. It ruined everything for all of us.”

“Because you couldn’t help it. Neither of us could.” Zayn says softly. “We’re drawn to each other. I was fascinated by you, even back last year when we met the first time. Even with all you were going through you met me with a smile and brought me a coffee. I thought you were spectacular. It’s why I wrote in the employment clause, because I thought you’d be good for Harry.”

“You did that as a setup?” Niall asks. “Did he even ask you to do that?”

“Nope. Harry doesn’t think of things like that.” Zayn shakes his head. “He thought he could come out here and run it by himself from day one.”

“Jesus Christ he’s thick in the head sometimes.” Niall sighs. “It’s shocking how good of a father he is, considering things like that.”

“He’s a natural caretaker. That’s why you need to give him a break on this. He’s built to try and make people happy. That’s all he wants for you.” Zayn tells the Irish lad.

“I know, but what if I shouldn’t get better?” Niall asks. “What if I should just go so I don’t risk hurting them all again? I can’t put me kids through the bad luck bringing train wreck that I am.”

“Harry isn’t the only amazing father Niall. You are too.” Zayn smiles. “You have so much love in your heart. It’s basically your only fault. It gets the better of you sometimes, but you’d never hurt your kids.”

“I don’t know that.” Niall whispers. “I don’t know that I’ll never do anything to hurt them.”
“Stop doubting yourself and turn around.” Zayn says forcefully. Niall does as he’s told as far as turning around and Zayn starts running the soap up and down his back. “Do you know how hard it is to hear you talk about yourself like this?”

“You sound just like Haz.” Niall grumbles.

“Then maybe you should listen to us.” Zayn sighs. “I’m always happy to let you feel however you want to feel, but you have to know how much we all think of you. I can’t let you just walk around hating yourself for no reason.”

“So even you won’t back off then.” Niall says with a small break in his voice. “Even you can’t just let me be as I am.”

“We have very different views on who you are Nialler.” Zayn smiles. “You have so much doubt, because you can’t see how amazing you really are. You can’t even imagine it. Every good thing you’ve ever seen in the people you love, we see them all in you.”

“That can’t be true.” Niall says firmly. “I don’t have your poetic nature, or Liam’s tenacity, or Louis’ humour, or Harry’s nurturing. I don’t have the strength you all seem to have been born with. I’m broken and scared all the time. I yell at everyone for trying to help me. I don’t deserve for you to think of me that way.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever met someone so stubborn.” Zayn huffs. He slides the bar of soap across Niall shoulders and then takes off the shower head to direct the spray down his back. “Is there anything I could do to change your mind, or are you just going to have to get there yourself?”

“Meself I guess.” Niall sighs.

“Well I want you to know that you never have to be scared with me.” Zayn says. “No matter how broken you think you are, I will always think you’re beautiful.”

“Not once you wash me feet.” Niall laughs. “They’re pretty gross.”

“We’ll cross that bridge when we get to it.” Zayn smiles. He honestly hopes that one day Niall will see himself like Zayn sees him. He deserves nothing less than to realize his own perfection. Whatever it takes, Zayn will try and show him his own light.

“Oh, hey.” Niall says softly, pulling Liam’s attention away from his book. He gives a sweet smile and then turns to walk away.

“Where you going?” Liam asks.

“I was looking for Haz actually.” Niall explains. “Gonna tell him he’s off the hook for earlier.”

“I think he’s already baking the cake.” Liam offers. “You’ve been up here quite a while.”

“ Took a shower to wash off the pureed sweet potatoes and cereal, and then joined Zee for a nap.” Niall shrugs.

“No I sleep better with him?” Liam asks, regretting the question as soon as it’s out of his mouth.

“I mean, we’ve only slept in the same bed three times total, and it’s only been a few hours at a time, but I haven’t had any nightmares.” Niall admits quietly. “They’ve been getting less frequent lately
anyways though, so it could just be that.”

“That’s good.” Liam nods. “That they’ve been less frequent that is.”

“I’ll leave you alone now.” Niall says quickly.

“You um- you don’t have to.” Liam tells him. “You can stay if you want.”

“It’s fine. You’re reading, and you don’t want to talk.” Niall shakes his head.

“I’m sorry,” Liam says before Niall can leave. “I’m sorry about how I acted yesterday. I was scared. Zayn had just come back and I didn’t want to think of the inevitable.”

“And what exactly do you think the inevitable is Li?” Niall asks, stepping completely inside the nursery.

“Zayn coming back and changing everything again.” Liam whispers. “I’m glad you feel comfortable and happy with him, but it scares me too. I felt like we were finally getting back to a good place. Now we have another twist to deal with. For god’s sake he’s living here again, and you never even asked us if that was okay. You asked us to watch with you sleeping with him in front of us. He hasn’t been back for twelve hours and you’ve already completely changed the way things are.”

“He’s only here until the snow clears up enough for him to go back home.” Niall says quietly. “Or to a hotel. I don’t know what his plans are.”

“You’ve spent every minute since he got back with him, and you haven’t talked about that?” Liam questions.

“No.” Niall tells him with a blush. “I didn’t want to think about it honestly. I just wanted to pretend for as long as possible that there’s a solution to this. That somehow we can all end up happy.”

“I’m sorry.” Liam sighs. “I’m sorry we don’t feel that way towards him. I’m sorry he’s a monogamist. I’m sorry this couldn’t just work out for you.”

“You don’t have to say that.” Niall whispers. “You don’t have to pretend.”

“I’m not pretending Nialler.” Liam says with a shake of his head. “I wish things could be different. I wish we weren’t all in pain. Harry could have his best friend back and I could have mine. Zayn would have been a good addition to our family. He already loves the kids, and he loves you as much as you deserve. That makes him a perfect candidate in my eyes.”

“You really would have tried, wouldn’t you?” Niall asks curiously. “You aren’t just saying it.”

“I wouldn’t lie about something like that. Who knows, maybe we will expand our family one day. It’s not something I wanted before, but I wouldn’t be opposed to it anymore I think. I do think we should decide as a group though. That didn’t happen here.” Liam explains.

“I know.” Niall nods. “I didn’t even realize what was going on until he was leaving. It’s not like I meant for any of this to happen.”

“I know you didn’t Nialler.” Liam says gently. “And I’m not upset that it did. I told you before, and I’ll tell you again, falling in love is never a bad thing. It may hurt, but that doesn’t make it wrong. I’m glad you found someone who makes you feel so strongly. I wish it was me, but that doesn’t really matter. Not if you’re happy.”
“You know I feel the same strength in my love for you right?” Niall asks. “Everything with Zayn happened so quickly that I just kind of lost my mind, but it’s no more or less intense than the way I feel about you.”

“Can I ask a question?” Liam asks. “I’m not upset or anything, just curious.”

“Sure.” Niall answers, taking the seat next to Liam.

“Why aren’t you comfortable enough with me to go there?” Liam questions. “I always thought I was your safe place, the one you could tell anything and do anything with. We’ve been so close all of our lives, but now it’s just me you have the attacks with. You’ve never flipped out because of Harry or Zayn or Louis, just me.”

“There’s something I never told you about the guy who- who raped me.” Niall says quietly. “About any of them actually. I only hired guys who looked like Harry, Zayn, or you. They weren’t exact clones or anything, but that was my one criteria. They all resembled one of you.”

“Does that mean-” Liam starts the question. He doesn’t want to hear this, doesn’t want to know it.

“The one I hired that night looked like you.” Niall admits. Liam has literally been shot, and it didn’t hurt anywhere near this badly. That he could resemble someone who could do that kind of thing, it’s horrifying beyond all reason. He feels all the blood drain from his face and acid rise in his throat. He’s not sure if he’s going to vomit or pass out, but he runs to the bathroom in case it’s the former.

He gets to the sink just in time as his stomach claws it’s way out of his throat. Tears burn as bad as his throat and he chokes on it. Acid burns through his nose when that happens and he shoots it out. It isn’t pretty, but it helps him breathe. That’s the least of his worries when another wave strikes and he pukes in the sink again. He reaches out blindly and manages to turn on the faucet to help wash the contents of his stomach down the drain.

“I’m sorry, Li. I shouldn’t have told you that.” Niall says from behind him.

“You should have told me a month ago when we tried to hook up for Harry’s birthday.” Liam gasps when he thinks his stomach is finally empty. “You should have told me the night you came back. Why would you come back if I look like him?”

“Because I know you aren’t him.” Niall says desperately. “I know you’re gentle and kind. I know you’d never hurt me, but then his face flashes in front of yours and I panic. I try to press it down, but it doesn’t work. I wish it could be you. There’s nobody I’d rather trust with my body than you, but until I can move past what he did to me I can’t. I think Zayn is the best way through that.”

“What about Haz?” Liam asks.

“I can’t do that, and choose one of you over the other.” Niall shakes his head. “I want to be able to be with you both, knowing I can control myself. I want to make sure I can do this before I try with you two. I couldn’t stand if I hurt you by freaking out like that. I need to be able to be with both of you at the same time, or nothing at all.”

“But how does Zayn fit into that?” Liam asks.

“He gives me a third party who won’t make me feel like a monster if I panic. He’ll help me find out if it’s something I can ever do again, and not be disappointed in me if it isn’t.” Niall explains quietly. “We’ve never been together like that, so it won’t change anything about our relationship if I can’t do it.”
“I see.” Liam says. He grabs the glass he keeps next to the sink and fills it with cold water. He swishes around a mouthful and spits it back out to help rid himself of the taste of bile. “And if I told you it doesn’t matter to me if we never have sex again? That just having you here is enough?”

“That’s not a relationship to me Liam.” Niall says softly. “That’s just some strange friendship. It’s not what you deserve.”

“I hate this!” Liam snaps, pounding his fist through the wall. “I hate what that monster did to you. To all of us. I hate that some stranger wore my face as a mask and hurt you so badly. I hate that you see him when you look at me. Fuck!”

“I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.” Niall cries, shrinking back.

“Niall-” Liam says softly. He reaches a hand towards Niall, but the Irish boy falls backwards, dodging out of Liam’s reach. He scrambles backwards on his hands.

“Please don’t!” Niall screams. “Please don’t hurt me!”

The babies wake up with a howl and Niall cowers from the noise. Harry comes rushing into the room covered in flour and stands between Niall and Liam. “I know this isn’t your fault.” Harry says firmly. “I heard everything on the baby monitor. I’ll take him to calm down.”

Liam nods, blinking back tears. He walks back into the bathroom until he hears the door to the nursery close. Right now it looks like nothing is going to get better. Niall isn’t just afraid of intimacy, he’s afraid of Liam. All because some monster took his face.

“Zayn!” Harry hisses, startling the darker boy awake. Niall is basically catatonic in Harry’s arms, cowering against his chest.

“Vasappenin’?” Zayn asks sleepily.

“I need you to take Niall.” Harry explains. Asking Zayn to do this makes Harry’s stomach curdle. “He’s having a panic attack. I need to be with Liam right now though. Just stay with him until he comes back from wherever he goes.”

“Bring him here.” Zayn nods. Harry steers Niall towards the bed and Zayn peels back the covers.

“Put on some fucking clothes.” Harry growls. Zayn apparently forgot that he’s naked, which means the nap Niall said he took with him was in the nude too. He doesn’t have time to deal with this right now. Liam needs him too much for him to stand here and give a shit about whether Niall and Zayn are already fucking behind their backs.

“I’m wearing underwear Haz.” Zayn points out. There’s a thin pair of light brown briefs stretched across Zayn’s crotch. They blend in so well Harry didn’t even notice that it wasn’t flesh. He blushes and turns his face away.

“Sorry. I thought that was your skin. You shouldn’t wear pants that color.” Harry murmurs.

“It’s not the pants you had a problem with. It’s me.” Zayn says quietly. “You don’t trust me, which means you don’t trust Niall either.”

“I trust Niall fine. It’s just you.” Harry huffs. He directs the Irish boy into the bed and leaves before Zayn can say anything else. Harry isn’t interested in anything he has on his mind. The nursery is on
the opposite side of the foyer and for the first time Harry regrets how massive the damn house is.

Liam is holding the twins, trying to calm them down when Harry walks in. “I can’t- They won’t-” Liam stutters.

“It’s okay Li.” Harry smiles gently. “Hand me Sam. They’re feeding off you and each other.”

“I’m sorry.” Liam whispers. Harry takes Sam from him and sits down in the chair opposite.

“You don’t have to be sorry.” Harry says gently. “It’s not your fault.”

“He looked like me Haz. He looked like me and I yelled at Niall for no reason. I broke a hole in the wall with my fist in front of an abuse victim.” Liam says quietly. “I did something to reinforce that my face belongs with that monster in his mind.”

“Li, it’s okay. He won’t blame you.” Harry says. “He knows you aren’t that man.”

“He begged me not to hurt him.” Liam says desperately. His face is covered in tears and it wrenches at Harry’s heart. “He thought I was going to do to him what that monster did.”

“No, he was reliving the memory Li. He wasn’t seeing you or me or anything except that night.” Harry says quickly.

“And that’s better how?” Liam asks.

“Because when he’s back, he’ll still love you.” Harry says softly. “He’ll always love you.”

“But now he hates my face.” Liam cries.

“No he doesn’t.” Harry shakes his head. “He knows you aren’t the same person. He knows how much you love him. You may have triggered him, but you didn’t do it on purpose and he knows it.”

“I can’t lose control like that again.” Liam mumbles. “I can never let myself get angry around him.”

“Li, he’ll get better. Soon enough you two will be breaking shit while you watch Derby and screaming at the television like you used to.” Harry smiles.

“Stop acting like things will ever be normal!” Liam roars. Gemma, who had finally quieted down, goes off in his arms again and he immediately deflates. “He’ll never look at me the way he used to. Not ever again.”

“He already does Li.” Harry admits. “Whenever you aren’t paying attention he looks at you with so much admiration and love it makes my heart break. He hasn’t looked at me like that once since he got back. I don’t even think he loves me anymore. I’m just a package deal with you and the twins. You’re why he came back.”

“You’re wrong.” Liam says firmly. He hands Gemma her favorite toy, a stuffed lion that Niall bought her when he first came back, and then puts her in the pen. He walks over and crouches in front of Harry. “He loves you. I know he does.”

“He hasn’t said it once since he’s been back.” Harry whispers. “Not once.”

“That can’t be true.” Liam says, his face a mask of confusion.

“I’m telling you Li, I’ve waited for it every second since he showed up at the hospital. He’s said it to you, and the twins, and probably Zayn, but never me.” Harry says, tears welling up in the corners of
his eyes.

“Are you sure?” Liam asks.

“I’ve never been more sure of anything. I’ve been waiting, praying that he would, but he hasn’t.” Harry admits. “I don’t know how much longer I can do this. I don’t know how I can make it if he doesn’t love me anymore.”

“I do.” Niall’s voice says from the door. “I do love you Haz. I didn’t know I hadn’t said it, but I do love you.”

He’s leaning against Zayn, like his legs aren’t working right, but his face is set in stone. “Niall you should go back to bed.” Zayn says quietly.

“You dropped this.” Niall says, tossing the baby monitor to Liam. “I can’t believe I haven’t said it Harry. I’m so sorry. You have to know I still love you. I’ve never stopped. Not for a second. And Li, he’s right. I don’t blame you for what just happened. I couldn’t control my reaction, but that’s not your fault. It’s okay.”

“It’s not okay. I scared you.” Liam says quietly. “I’m-”

“Don’t say you’re sorry.” Niall interrupts. “I’m telling you it’s okay, so it is. Stop all this self-hatred and doubt. It’s not your fault that he looked like you, and it’s not your fault I had a panic attack. Don’t hold back your emotions just because of me. Roma has prescribed some anti-anxiety medication, and I think I’m going to start taking it. This hopefully won’t happen again.”

“Are you sure?” Harry asks. Niall has always been so against that sort of thing. He wouldn’t even take pain medication for his knee after they released him from the hospital. Both he and Liam are incredibly stubborn that way.

“I am.” Niall nods. “I don’t want you guys to keep walking on eggshells around me. Liam’s more fun when he explodes sometimes. And you never used to be afraid to tell me anything. I want that back. If I have to take some medication in order to keep the attacks under control so we can be us again, then so be it. I’d do anything for that.”

Harry wants to scoff, but he doesn’t. Everything Niall is saying is just what he wants to hear, but he still hasn’t retracted his request to sleep with Zayn. Nothing about them is back to normal right now, and Harry isn’t sure it ever will be again. How can it be, when Niall wants to change everything.

“Can we go talk somewhere?” Harry asks Niall quietly.

The Irish boy nods and turns to Zayn. “You can go back to bed love, unless, Liam, do you need any more help with the babies?” He asks.

“I think I should be fine.” Liam says softly. “But if you could go get me some food for them that would be great.”

“Sure.” Zayn nods. He walks Niall over to Harry and sits him down next to the seat before slipping out of the room. Niall sighs and rests his head against Harry’s knee. Harry cards a hand through Niall’s auburn hair and puts Sam next to Gemma. He immediately grabs the stuffed tiger Niall bought with the lion and plays with it happily.

Harry stands up and helps Niall to his feet. The Irish boy still seems unsteady on his feet, so Harry lets him lean against his taller frame. They walk out of the room and Harry directs them down the stairs and to the library. He’s come to accept that the furniture is overstuffed and gaudy, but actually relatively comfortable. He sits down on the large chaise and tucks Niall into his side.
“Am I going to get yelled at now?” Niall asks softly.

“No, just wanted to talk.” Harry says gently, stroking his hand in large circles across the smaller boy’s back.

“Alright.” Niall nods against his chest.

“Why didn’t you tell me about the resemblance?” Harry asks.

“Because I was hoping I’d never have to admit it.” Niall mumbles. “I thought I’d be able to get past it on my own if I tried hard enough. I never wanted to hurt him like that. It’s not his fault.”

“It’s not yours either.” Harry tells him softly. “Maybe we could have found a way together though. We have this in common in a way.”

“It’s not the same Haz.” Niall says, shaking his head. “I made a series of stupid decisions that led to me getting myself in trouble. You got manipulated into abuse because you were in love.”

“It feels the same to me.” Harry says flatly. “Someone took advantage of us, and left us broken. Not in the same ways, but it created problems for me just like it did for you. Even seven years later, I had a panic attack after seeing Nick. I can’t imagine how strong you have to be to be around Liam every day.”

“I get it from him.” Niall says quietly. “He’s always been strong enough for the both of us, even when we were kids. I love him so much and I know it wasn’t him that did it to me. I just flash back sometimes, and I can’t get out of it. That’s why I want to start the meds. I want to be strong enough to deserve the both of you again.”

“And what about Zayn?” Harry asks, unable to keep the question firmly behind his teeth where it belongs.

“I don’t know for sure.” Niall admits. “I feel better when he’s around. I feel more like myself because he doesn’t try and be gentle. He’s always been so blunt and that makes me feel normal.”

“And that’s why you want to shag him in front of us?” Harry asks, trying his very best to keep his tone neutral.

“Liam says it would be better if you two weren’t there for it.” Niall says. “If it was just the two of us. Do you think so too?”

“I think it would be better if he was just gone.” Harry says darkly.

“Then I won’t do it.” Niall says.

“Do you feel like you need it?” Harry asks. “Do you feel like it’s the only thing that can help?”

“It’s all I’ve been able to come up with.” Niall admits in a whisper. “It would help with both of my problems I think.”

“Then I have to get over it.” Harry sighs. “If letting you be with Zayn once is what it takes to get back my Nialler, then it’s a small price to pay.”

“Would we be okay afterwards?” Niall asks, looking up to meet Harry’s eyes.

“Yes.” Harry nods and presses a kiss to Niall’s temple. “I just want you to be happy again. I’m a little jealous that it’s him first, but I can get past it. As long as you pick us, then I can always get past
“I love you.” Niall says with a small smile.

“I never get tired of hearing that.” Harry grins.

“I’m sorry I hadn’t said it.” Niall admits softly, casting his eyes away. “I think it so loudly every time I see you, I just thought I’d been saying it too.”

“You hadn’t, but I’m glad you are now.” Harry says, pulling the blond up so he’s laying on top of him instead of to the side. “That’s all that matters to me.”

Niall giggles and buries his face into Harry’s neck mumbling “I love you”s against the skin until things feel like they used to. All of Harry’s pent up stress and anger ekes out of his bones and wafts out the window, because Niall really does love him. He can do anything with just the strength those three words provide.

“I wasn’t sure which kind they-” Zayn says walking into the room. Liam is in the same chair he was earlier with his palms pressed into his eyes. “Li, mate, are you okay?”

“I’m fine.” Liam says, pulling his hands away to reveal red rimmed eyes.

“You’re not fine. I heard everything that was said over the baby monitor. More than even Nialler did before he snapped out of things.” Zayn admits. It’s not really his place to interfere any more than he already is. He’s not even really welcome in the house. He can’t seem to stop himself though.

“Then you already know I’m not okay, and you know why.” Liam says angrily. “What were you saying when you walked in?”

“I don’t know what foods are for when, so I just brought a bunch of them.” Zayn says quietly.

“There’s a schedule taped to the back of the cabinet door.” Liam sighs. “I don’t know which is for which time either.”

“I can run down and check.” Zayn offers.

“It’s fine. Just pick two. Hazza will have to get over it if the twins don’t eat according to a chart.” Liam says with a groan. Zayn hands over a couple jars and puts the rest on the changing table. “Do you remember what I told you the night you kissed me?”

The question catches Zayn completely off guard and he spills the jar of food all over his chest. He grimaces and uses a baby wipe to clean it off. “You’re going to have to be more specific. We talked about a lot of things on your birthday.” Zayn sighs as he tosses the wipes in the bin.

“I told you I’d kill you if you ever tried anything with Nial.” Liam says flatly. “Now look where we are. All I do is wish that you hadn’t left.”

“You could have loved me?” Zayn asks. He’s taken aback by the admission.
“I think so.” Liam nods. “You’re kind and honest. You’re absolutely gorgeous too. And you’re great with my kids. You would have fit in well with us. We could have made you a part of our lives happily.”

“Not Harry.” Zayn says quietly. “He wanted me to leave, remember? He wouldn’t say it of course, because he’s Harry. He let me leave though and Harry would never have let me do that before. He would have tried to work things out.”

“He was taken by surprise. I’m not sure what would have happened, but I just wish we had tried. Things might have worked out, but now they can’t.” Liam sighs. “Now I’m stuck in this weird position because I don’t hate you, but I sort of do. Not for any of the reasons that I should though.”

“I’m sorry.” is all Zayn can think to say.

“Did you already love him when you moved in with us?” Liam asks bluntly.

“Yes.” Zayn admits in a whisper.

“Then why would you do it?” Liam questions. He doesn’t look mad, not exactly. Just curious. “If you’re a monogamist, why would you move in with us knowing you were in love with Niall? You had to know things wouldn’t end well.”

“I wanted to be close to him for as long as possible.” Zayn says. There’s no point in lying about it. Liam would just see right through it. “I didn’t have the strength to even try and leave him until Harry found out. I’m drawn to him like a moth to a flame and it didn’t, doesn’t, matter to me that I’ll end up burned because he’s worth every second of it.”

“That’s a good answer if there is one.” Liam says softly. “You really do love him, don’t you?”

“More than I’ve ever loved anyone in my entire life.” Zayn says with a nod. “I don’t even think I could find anyone else that comes close if I met everyone on Earth.”

“Definitely not.” Liam smiles. “There’s nobody like Nialler.”

“No arguments here.” Zayn grins.

“I do hope you find someone though.” Liam says gently. “Someone who makes you as happy as Niall does for all of us.”

“I won’t.” Zayn admits softly. “I don’t think I’ll ever get over him. I’m not sure I even want to.”

“You’ll have to eventually.” Liam tells him. “You can’t spend the rest of your life pining for him.”

“Could you move on?” Zayn asks harshly. “Did you move on when he left you for almost a year?”

“We’d been together for three years Zayn, not secretly loving each other for a month.” Liam says flatly. “And we’ve known each other since we were five.”

“So no then?” Zayn responds. “So why should I?”

“Because you left him.” Liam glares. “You didn’t even give him a chance to show you how wonderful our life is. You ran away and broke his heart. Then you turned him down and broke his heart again. You don’t get to do it another time. So move on.”

“That’s not for you to tell me.” Zayn bites out. “I already spend every second telling myself that. Every second of the last three months has been me telling myself to move on.”
“Then listen to yourself, because it’s not healthy for anyone.” Liam says gently, putting a large hand on Zayn’s shoulder. “Until you move on, he can’t either.”

“I’m not leaving until he asks me to.” Zayn says adamantly.

“And I’m not asking you to leave.” Liam tells him. “I’m asking you to make things right. Help him through his recovery, because I honestly believe you’re the only person who can. Fix the mess you left behind when you turned him away in Bradford. Help him be the man we fell in love with again, and then let him go because it’s what’s best.”

“How?” Zayn asks. “How do I just let him go and be friends with him?”

“I don’t know.” Liam sighs. “You’ll have to be stronger than I ever have been, but you owe him that much.”

“Will you help me then?” Zayn asks. He can’t very well count on Harry for this. The curly haired man can hardly look at him and said straight out that he doesn’t trust him. Zayn can’t do it alone though. He needs a friend.

“I’d do anything for Niall.” Liam says with a smile. “So of course I will. Come to me any time if you need someone to talk to. I happen to be a pretty good listener, and ever since I was shot I don’t get mad as much because why bother? Anger is a tiring emotion. I’ll help however I can.”

“Alright then.” Zayn nods. “I’m going back to sleep now, because honestly you’re all exhausting, and I don’t want to be here when Harry gets back.”

Zayn turns to leave without another word. He never says more than is necessary which can be a good or awful trait depending on the timing and audience. No point in using five words when one will do, and there’s no point to sugar coating things for people who resent him. By the time he crawls back into Niall’s bed he’s already almost asleep. He barely even registers when Niall crawls in next to him a little while later, but does manage a smile that stays on his face for the rest of the nap.

Harry finds Liam after he packs Niall off to bed with Zayn. It still gives him a knot in his gut, but if Zayn is the one who can help Niall recover than he has to get past it. Liam is, of course, still in the nursery. “Hey babes.” Harry smiles.

“Hush, she’s on a roll.” Liam says gently. His eyes are locked on Gemma who is scooting along on the floor inch by inch. They had told him that she was crawling last night, but he hasn’t seen it for himself yet. His heart feels like it’s about to explode with joy watching his daughter moving on her own. She’s only five months old, but she’s growing up way too fast for Harry.

Harry takes a seat in the chair next to Liam and Sam’s eyes immediately focus on him. His chubby arms reach out and Harry is only too happy to oblige him. “Oof, you’re getting so big buddy.” Harry grins down at his son.

Sam babbles something unintelligible and takes Harry’s hand to shake it vigorously. Harry’s smile stretches so far he’s afraid his lips will tear. Sam may be slightly behind Gemma developmentally but by all accounts he’s still in the ninetieth percentile for dexterity and cognition. Their pediatrician is amazed with both of them and will be again when they crawl for him, or at least Gemma does.

“They’re so amazing.” Harry whispers.

“I’d say they’re the best things I’ve ever done in my life, but Sophia died.” Liam says sadly.
“That was nobody’s fault.” Harry says, wrapping his hand around Liam’s. “It’s okay to be proud of our amazing children.”

“I know that.” Liam sighs. “I just hate that she’ll never get to see them grow up. She’ll never get to watch how perfect her children are.”

“If she hadn’t died, you might never have even known about them.” Harry says gently. “I hate that it happened too, but I honestly believe everything happens for a reason. Her death was tragic, but she gave us an amazing gift. She gave us a family.”

“And I’ll always be grateful for that. Always.” Liam smiles. “I just don’t want to forget about the sacrifice she made to do it.”

“Then don’t.” Harry whispers. “But don’t say these kids aren’t the best thing that ever happened to you because of it. It’s not fair to them.”

“How are you so perfect?” Liam asks, bringing Harry’s hands up to kiss the pads of his fingers. “You always say the right thing.”

“Not always, but I try.” Harry grins. “You’re just always too hard on yourself. Stop trying to be perfect. You set the bar too high for the rest of us mortals.”

“I think you meet it pretty well.” Liam smiles. “Both of you do.”

“You must have a pretty flawed view of us then.” Harry sighs. “I’m pretty far from that level.”

“Not to me.” Liam says reassuringly. “I think you’re perfect.”

“Well that’s all that matters then.” Harry giggles. “I love you.”

“I love you too.” Liam grins.

“If you keep sleeping all the time like that you’re going to ruin your circadian rhythm.” Niall says with a smile when Zayn finally stirs.

“Never had good sleep patterns anyway.” Zayn mumbles.

“You should work on that.” Niall says affectionately.

“Why?” Zayn asks. “Naps are the only time I get to spend with you without Harry glaring at me.”

“Pretty sure he’s still glaring at you through the walls or floor.” Niall laughs. “But he has given me his permission.”

“And Liam gave me his. I think.” Zayn says. He stretches and his muscles get taught under Niall’s gaze.

“That was much faster than I expected honestly.” Niall admits. “I thought it would take days at least, if they ever agreed at all.”

“We can wait.” Zayn says. “Honestly I’m still not ready.”

“I don’t think I am either.” Niall tells him with a sigh. “We should at least wait until I’m on the meds.”
“I’d be okay with that.” Zayn says softly. “No need to rush anything. I’m fine taking everything slow with you.”

Niall lays down in the crook of his arm and cuddles into his bare chest. His fingers start up their favorite activity, tracing Zayn’s tattoos. He’s gotten a new one, a revolver on his hip that dips below the band of his underwear. “Why the gun?” Niall asks.

“Because the day I fell in love with you, you took me shooting. The six-shooter looks cooler than a shotgun though.” Zayn admits.

“You’re a sop.” Niall chuckles.

“Am not.” Zayn huffs.

“You got Pez tattooed on your bicep.” Niall points out. “You totally are.”

“I’m getting that removed.” Zayn sighs. “As soon as I can find someone to do it, I’m having it lasered off.”

“That’s your choice I suppose.” Niall says.

“You don’t think I should?” Zayn asks.

“I think you loved her for a long time, and even if things ended badly between you two, she’s always going to be a part of your past.” Niall says with a shrug. “But it’s also your body. If you don’t want to see her face all the time then get it removed.”

“Okay.” Zayn says vaguely. Niall isn’t sure what he’s responding to, but he’s made his point. “So what should we do now?”

“What would you like to do?” Niall asks.

“Wouldn’t mind some food actually.” Zayn smiles. “Never finished my breakfast. Either of them”

“Now you’re talking.” Niall says with a wide grin. “You should probably get dressed though. Don’t think Haz likes the view as much as I do.”

“I can do that.” Zayn says. “ Wouldn’t mind a quick snog though.”

Niall’s been hoping Zayn would ask for that. He lifts up and meet’s the darker boy halfway for a kiss. As soon as their lips meet electric sparks fly across his skin. He feels alive again and it’s like a boost of energy he doesn’t want to stop. His hand curls into Zayn’s hair and he’s pulled in closer. Their tongues meet without any hesitation and within seconds Niall is lost in the sensation of things.

He doesn’t know how long they stay like that, but once Zayn’s stomach starts to rumble they break apart. “Let’s go get something in there. You’re already too thin.” Niall smirks.

“You’re one to talk.” Zayn scoffs. “We need to get some meat back on those bones.”

“You’re all rude.” Niall pouts. He’s been trying really hard to get back to a healthy weight again, eating according to Louis’ diet plan until he feels just this side of sick. It’s not his fault his metabolism is so strong.

“No we’re not.” Zayn says, cocking an eyebrow. “We just want you to be healthy again. When you’re that small your body starts eating itself.”
“Then get dressed so we can go eat something else.” Niall says, rolling off the darker boy to allow him up.

“What should we have?” Zayn asks. Niall just shrugs. Harry had to throw out the cake mix he was working on earlier because it had started to go bad after the hour or so they spent cuddled up on the couch. Raw eggs and high powered heating vents aren’t a good combination when left out too long. It’s actually kind of weird considering cakes bake in an oven to do their thing, but Niall doesn’t really feel like questioning it.

“I could make gnocchi, but that takes like almost two hours.” Niall sighs.

“When did you learn to make gnocchi?” Zayn asks. He hasn’t gone anywhere to get dressed. He’s still pressed slightly into Niall’s side.

“En Roma.” Niall says with a small smile.

“Sai molto Italiano?” Zayn asks. Does Niall speak a lot of Italian?

“Un pochino.” Niall shrugs. “I learned enough to get by, but not enough to hold, like, real conversations. I can curse at people in quite a few languages now though.”

“Of course that’s what you would focus on.” Zayn laughs. “What’s your favorite one?”

“Ich liebe dich.” Niall says softly, hoping Zayn doesn’t understand German. It’s no curse. It’s the words that come so easily with Zayn that he feels guilty. It’s an admission that shouldn’t make him feel as good as he does when he says it.

“And what does that mean?” Zayn asks curiously, searching Niall’s eyes.

“It means you’re a lazy arse who needs to get out of bed so we can go eat something before I wither away.” Niall grins. Zayn looks at him for another moment, completely silent and then rolls out of the bed.

“I didn’t bring any joggers or t-shirts.” Zayn says quietly. “I didn’t even think to. Can I borrow some of yours?”

“Of course.” Niall nods.

He goes to Niall’s dresser and pulls out a pair of joggers. They slide on quickly, Zayn not bothering to give Niall a little show like earlier. It’s almost disappointing in a way, but also somewhat of a relief. Niall is hungry, but it’s not imperative they eat, so he could so easily just stay in bed snogging Zayn until their lips are numb.

Niall is so distracted by the thought of it he doesn’t even notice Zayn has also put on one of his shirts and is now standing by the door quietly. Something is off about him, so Niall stays put. “What’s wrong?” he asks.

“Why didn’t you say it to him too?” Zayn asks. “Why have you been back for months and didn’t say it to him, but you can say it to me?”

“Say what?” Niall asks. He already knows what.

“Don’t Niall.” Zayn says sharply. “I speak nine languages, including German. Your pronunciation is terrible, but I know exactly what you were saying.”
“It’s not terrible.” Niall pouts. “I didn’t have an Angelo to teach me in Berlin, but I think I did pretty well.”

“That is-” Zayn starts to say something and then just makes a groan of frustration. “Niall that isn’t the point. Please, just answer my question.”

“I don’t know why.” Niall admits softly. “I never had to say it to him before. I mean, I did say it, probably a thousand million times a day, but I never had to. Haz and I used to connect, so that even if we were in different rooms and I just thought about him, I think he knew it. Things weren’t this hard until- until-”

“Until us.” Zayn finishes.

“That’s not what I mean Zee.” Niall says, shaking his head. “It’s like we lost something, and we’re all three trying so hard to find it. We keep catching little flashes, like reflections on a pond, but it’s not quite there yet. I know it’s my fault, but it just gets me so angry sometimes. I don’t know what to do or say anymore.”

“Then maybe it isn’t me you should be working through everything with. Maybe I should just go.” Zayn tells him.

“If you just up and leave me again Zayn, I don’t know if I’ll ever get any better.” Niall says, a terrible hybrid of fear and anger taking hold of him. “I couldn’t forgive you for doing it a third time. You’re the only person I can tell anything and everything to. I need you.”

“Liam said he thinks I’m the only person who can help you, but I think that’s saying something about all of this Nialler. Nothing about this situation is right. Nothing.” Zayn finishes his sentence by taking a seat next to Niall on the bed.

“Why does that have to matter?” Niall asks. “Why did any of this have to be this way? Why couldn’t Harry and you see how perfect we’d all be together?”

“Because nothing in this world is perfect Nialler.” Zayn says, planting a soft kiss to Niall’s temple and holding him close. “And yeah, maybe this would have all worked out. Maybe just trying would have led to something so amazing I couldn’t imagine it until it happened. But the past is done and we need to figure out how to go forward, because all we’ve been doing is falling back into old patterns.”

“It’s hard not to with you.” Niall admits softly. “You make me feel like I did before I ever left. I feel normal again with you around.”

“With all the shit that’s gone down today, you feel normal?” Zayn asks, looking slightly confused.

“You know what I mean you twat.” Niall says with an exaggerated eye roll. “I don’t feel so angry or sad with you here. I just- I can’t even describe it. I was in such a dark place, but now that you’re here I’m not. And I don’t know if that’s because Liam finally knows and I don’t feel like I’m lying anymore, or because Harry sees that constantly pushing me isn’t the way to go about things, or because I can be my unapologetic self with you. All I know is neither of those other things would have happened if you hadn’t given me the strength just by being here.”

It leaves him breathless admitting all this, but in a good way. Zayn won’t judge him for anything he says or does. He’s Niall’s safe place, the one that holds all the light and dark of him with nothing but love. His hand winds around Niall’s waist, pulling the smaller boy onto his lap and into another kiss. It makes Niall’s head and heart feel like they’re fluttering away, off to chase some crazy dream where all four of them can be happy.
Zayn doesn’t break the kiss, letting Niall choose when and how to end it. It takes a while for Niall to finally build the willpower to do so. It’s strange, how intense everything is between them sometimes. They’ve never had sex, never even properly touched each other, but just kissing Zayn feels as strong and important as kissing Harry or Liam ever has. It’s comforting and passionate and the perfect method of communication, even if it does make Niall’s stomach knot with guilt that gets harder to push down every time.

Eventually they part less than an inch, breathing each other in so heavily it feels almost intoxicating. When Zayn’s tongue darts out to wet his lip Niall can feel the sweep of it too. It’s such a simple thing, but it makes him feel better, makes him feel like he can do anything again, because for one moment he isn’t the boy who came back, he’s the man he used to be.

“Food?” Zayn asks, his eyes locked with Niall’s own.

“Food.” Niall nods. Their noses rub together when he does it and he can suppress the giggle that leaks out because it tickles. It’s so easy to forget that just a few minutes ago things were heavy and Niall felt like his heart was breaking because Zayn was talking like he was going to leave again. It’s easy to forget pain with this amazing man so close to him, and that doesn’t scare Niall nearly as much as he knows it should.

They leave the room after one more quick snog, and the smell filling the foyer is mouthwatering. Even though Harry has only made it once, Niall would know it anywhere. He glances at Zayn, finding the darker man far away but still right next to him. He leads Zayn down the stairs and straight into the kitchen. Liam is sitting in front of the twins, trying desperately not to react when Sam flings a spoonful of what Niall thinks is pureed green beans into his face.

Harry is standing with his back to them, mixing the curry on the stove. Zayn startles him when he says “Is that my mum’s recipe?”

“It’s the only way to make it.” Harry shrugs once he regains his composure. “Everything else is just pathetic in comparison.”

Zayn smiles widely, his eyes crinkling so beautifully it takes Niall’s breath away. Things seem perfect until Harry sets down the spoon and folds his hands in front of him. Niall knows this pose. He’s seen it so many times before one of Harry’s talks and its never a good sign. “We need to have a talk.” Harry says, his eyes set firmly on Zayn.

“Can’t we eat first?” Niall groans. “We’re starving.”

“Not all-of-us us Nialler.” Liam says softly. “Hazza, Zayn, and myself.”

“No.” Niall says firmly. He pushes Zayn back with one arm while simultaneously taking a defensive position. “We’ve had enough of this heavy shite today. I’m not letting you two gang up on him, and I’m not letting you kick me out like I don’t deserve a say in things around here.”

“You’ve had your say Niall.” Harry says in a tone that tells Niall he is dangerously close to losing his calm. Niall doesn’t back down, but he lets Harry continue without protesting. “It’s our turn now.”

“What Haz means, is that you’ve told us what you want and need, Niall, but there are five other living breathing human beings wrapped up in this. What you want isn’t the only thing that matters.” Liam says, crossing the kitchen to take a place next to Harry. “I’m not saying it doesn’t matter, but we have a right to be heard too.”

“Then why kick me out of the conversation?” Niall asks, keeping Zayn behind him when the darker
man tries to step forward.

“Because we don’t want a fight.” Harry says flatly. “I made this to try and function as a peace offering, but you’ve been nothing but combative today. Zayn can keep a level head, and so can we.”

“You lost your shit this morning, and Liam punched a hole in the wall.” Niall glares. “In what way are you two any better than me?”

“Nialler, please, just let’s do this.” Zayn says behind him. “They’re right.”

“Fine.” Niall says angrily. “But only one of you. I don’t care which, but you’re not going to gang up on him.”

“That’s not what we-” Harry starts.

“Fine.” Liam nods, stopping Harry in his tracks. “It’s only fair, and we don’t want this to seem like an attack against either of you. We just want to have a talk and only one of us needs to be there for it.”

“Li.” Harry says. “You can’t be serious.”

“Haz, you can handle this yourself.” Liam tells him softly. “Just stay calm and talk to him about the things we discussed. If it makes Niall feel better about this, then that’s what we need to do.”

“Then it should be you.” Harry huffs. “You’ll keep your cool better than I will.”

“No, it should be you.” Liam says back. “You’re the one who was friends with him for five years. This is just as much about eventually getting your best mate back as it is helping Niall.”

“If it makes any difference, I think Liam is right about that.” Zayn pipes up.

“Well I don’t really give a sh-” Harry starts to snap.

“Harry!” Niall yells. “Just feckin do it! You wanted a talk, and now you’re going to get it. It’s not too much to ask that you keep calm and have a rational discussion with him.”

Niall isn’t sure what it is that makes Harry pause. It could be the sudden outburst, or what Niall said, or that Niall never calls Harry by his real name unless he’s royally pissed off. It doesn’t matter which part it is, because it gets the job done. Harry nods stiffly and then plates up dinner, handing two to Liam who walks to the dining hall. Niall gives Zayn’s hand one last squeeze and then follows, grabbing the twins on the way.

“Do you actually plan on having a discussion, or am I going to have to lie and tell Niall that you weren’t yelling at me through your clenched teeth the whole time?” Zayn says harshly once he’s sure Niall is out of earshot.

“It’s not your job to coddle him.” Harry hisses.

“No.” Zayn glares. “It’s my job to get him back on track so he can live happily ever after with you while I get nothing.”

“You get him!” Harry says so sharply it feels like a dagger. “You get to keep that part of him he won’t share with us. You get to be his confidant and his safe place, while Liam and I watch whether you make or break him. We’ve spent weeks trying to build him back up from the broken thing he
was when he came back. The thing you left him to become. Now you’re back, and it’s thrown
everything off. Everything was getting better until you showed up.”

“You kicked him out!” Zayn snaps. “I sent him back here from the airport damaged, yes, but you’re
the one who broke him Harry. You couldn’t just try and help him. You had to take all that rage and
smash him to pieces so you could rebuild him into whatever you wanted him to be. I tried to do the
right thing, but you didn’t, and that’s why you’re so pissed off at me. You fucked him up and you
want to blame me, or the guy that attacked him, but you know it was you who did this to him. Not
Liam, not Me, and not that man. You.

“And as for things getting better, Niall obviously didn’t think so. Until I came around he’d been
lying to you both because he was so afraid you’d both reject him if you knew what he was really
talking or feeling. He was completely torn up because of the physical similarities between Liam and
that man, but you didn’t notice because you were too busy focusing on the words he’d forgotten to
say. Which only happened because he feels so wrong trying to fix himself at warp speed just so
you’ll forgive him, instead of tearing him a new arse hole on the daily.

“So fuck off with your holier-than-thou you-don’t-know-how-hard-it-is bullshit. I’m not absolving
you of your guilt, and I’m not going to be your punching bag just because you can’t face reality.
You’ve pushed him to the breaking point twice, and there will not be a third time. He deserves better
than the shit you’ve done to him. I won’t let you keep hurting him, even if it means having him stay
with Louis until you can get yourself together. He loves you so much, and he wants this to work
more than anything, so I’m here to help put things back together for you. I’m here to make sure you
all get your happy ending.”

By the time Zayn gets it all out his cheeks are covered in tears and his breathing is ragged. Harry
looks stunned. Water is pooling in the corners of his eyes and Zayn just wants to comfort him. He’s
never stopped caring for Harry, not for one second. He wants to help his best friend work through
everything. He wants them to be happy together, even if it takes away his own best chance at a
happy life.

“Are you done?” Harry asks. “Or can we sit and talk now?”

“That depends.” Zayn says quietly. “Did you listen to a thing I just said?”

“Every word.” Harry says, wiping his eyes on his sleeve. “You’re right. I fucking hate it, but you
are.”

“Then yes.” Zayn nods. Harry takes over two plates and sits at the table. Zayn follows and sits across
from Harry, greedily spooning in a mouthful of his mother’s recipe before they get started.

“We wanted to set some ground rules.” Harry says quietly, picking at the roll he’s holding. “For all
of us.”

“That’s fine.” Zayn agrees.

“First, you don’t initiate anything.” Harry says, pulling out a sheet of paper to read off of. “Sex,
cuddling, showers, sleeping in the same bed, any of it. Niall has to ask you first.”

“Am I allowed to agree to any of it?” Zayn asks.

“As long as he starts things off.” Harry nods. Zayn agrees and Harry continues. “Second, you can’t
have sex until both Liam and I agree on it. Liam told me what he said to you earlier, but we don’t
want you two taking that as our go ahead. It’s going to take time for us, and that has to be okay.”
“Okay.” Zayn says. “He wanted to wait until he starts the medication anyways, and I think it’s best to give him time to adjust to it anyways.”

“That was third.” Harry sighs. “As long as it stops snowing then we can pick up the prescriptions tomorrow, but he’ll need time to adjust.”

“Okay. I have a question.” Zayn tells him.

“That’s fine.” Harry says, folding down the list.

“How many of these are there? I’m fine with it and all. I’m just curious.” Zayn says softly.

“Seven.” Harry tells him. “Fourth, whenever he has a fight with us you do your best to send him back to talk with us unless he’s having a panic attack. We need to try and work through things together before going to a fourth party.”

“That’s good.” Zayn smiles. “I’ve been telling him the same thing.”

“Zayn, please.” Harry says softly, obviously trying not to sound too angry or desperate. “Questions are fine, and if there’s anything that’s too much we can talk about it, but just let me get through the rest of the list.”

Zayn nods in agreement. Honestly it feels like Harry is trying, so Zayn wants to as well. “Fifth, we want to know how he’s doing. We don’t need to know all of his secrets, but anything you think we should know, we want you to tell us. Sixth, you help out around the house while you’re here. Feedings, cleaning, the whole lot. We aren’t your maids and you aren’t really a guest. There’s not really a proper term for it I guess because this is the most fucked up situation in history. And seventh, you have to be one hundred percent honest with us if we ask you something.” Harry finishes, folding back up the paper and putting it in his pocket.

“About numbers five and seven, I’m not going to betray his trust.” Zayn says adamantly. “He needs someone to talk to about the things he doesn’t know how to bring up with you. I’ll do everything I can to help him bring it to you, but I can’t just tell you everything he tells me in confidence.”

“I figured that’s what you’d say.” Harry sighs. “Li and I agreed not to ask anything too specific, and to leave what you think we should know, from you, up to your discretion. All we want is for Niall to come to us with anything he has to say, even if you have to help him see that’s what he should do first. Honestly I was afraid you’d flat out reject six.”

“I can clean dishes and stuff Haz.” Zayn smiles. “That’s no big deal. I don’t like doing it, but it’s more than fair.”

“Well you’ll be starting with the dishes from dinner.” Harry grins wickedly.

“Of course I will.” Zayn sighs. He had already figured that was the case. It’s worth it to help Niall though. Anything would be.

“Did you mean everything you yelled at me?” Harry asks quietly, his voice turning strained.

“Maybe not to the extent you’re thinking, but yes.” Zayn says honestly. “You messed up a lot of things Harry, and you’re too proud to see it. You aren’t the only one who messed up. I know that. You are, however, the only one who never really tried to make things better according to the way he wanted. You push so hard, and sometimes that’s a good thing. It isn’t with Nialler though. He needs to do things in his own time.”
“That’s what I keep hearing.” Harry sighs.

“Listen, Haz, I know you’re trying. He knows you’re trying. We all know you only want what’s best for him. Nobody could hold that against you.” Zayn says, trying to make Harry see. “Maybe just don’t try so hard. It makes him feel like he can’t live up to what you see in him, even though we all know that he does.”

“I just don’t know what I’m supposed to do anymore.” Harry says in a whisper. “I hate that you’re the only one who can get through to him. You make him feel normal again.”

“Because I don’t set any goals for him. I don’t need him to get better as much as I need him to see that no matter what happens he’s still perfect to me.” Zayn admits.

“You should have taken him back.” Harry tells him softly. “You two are perfect together.”

“That isn’t what any of us really wanted.” Zayn sighs. “Do I wish that I could be with him? That I could wake up every morning next to him? That we could start a family and live the rest of our lives together? Of course I do, but I want him to be happy. He’d never be as happy with me as he is with you two and the twins. He wants me, but he needs all of you. He has everything he ever found in me already, with you two, you just need to show him it’s still there.”

“What if it isn’t though?” Harry asks. “What if we can’t find what we had? What if we never get back to the way things were?”

“Things won’t go back to the way they were Haz.” Zayn says firmly. “Your relationship was a mess from start to finish. The way it started, the way you and Niall snuck around, building a house together after only a few weeks, the babies coming along, me, the fighting. All of it was some sort of horrible soap opera. Things need to be better than before, not the same.”

“You do realize that you’re to blame for like half of it though.” Harry says flatly. “You kept him on with the contract as some sort of weird set up, you tried to sleep with Liam as one of your stupid tests, you and Niall fell in love, and then you ran away.”

“And in which of those scenarios was I not trying to the right thing?” Zayn asks. “I couldn’t help falling in love with him any more than you could. I did the only thing I could. I tried to save your relationship. I know I kept fucking things up, but I took the best options available to me.”

“That’s all I’ve been doing.” Harry says back. “You could have stayed and tried to make things work the first time.”

“In what world would that have happened? The one where you suddenly noticed that I was into you for five years? The one where Liam had already told you both that he was willing to try dating? Or the one where I was able to enter into this relationship without being afraid that it could work out?” Zayn says harshly. “I’ve always been a monogamist Harry. I can’t pretend that would have been something I’d have been comfortable with just jumping in to. I could have tried, yeah, but when you all broke things off with me, that wouldn’t have helped anything.”

“It would have helped him.” Harry hisses. “If he’d ever had a real chance with you he could have moved on. Now he’s just floating around Limbo, looking for closure that it’s going to take him cheating, with our permission, to get.”

“Why do you all act like I don’t understand this?” Zayn questions. “I know that what happened was bad, but I’ve apologized to him. Have you? Have you told him how sorry you are for pushing him away because you were scared he’d leave on his own? Have you begged his forgiveness for making
him feel like he doesn’t deserve to live, let alone have you and Liam? Have you apologized for being a chastising parent instead of an understanding lover?”

“No, alright?” Harry spits, slamming his fist down on the table. “I can’t find the words that he deserves. I can’t figure out how to say I’m sorry in a way that tells him how awful I really feel about everything.”

“Well figure it out fast.” Zayn says, standing up without having eaten almost any of his meal. “Because if he wants to leave again, I won’t let him slip away from me this time. I’m done giving you chances to do the right thing. Find the fucking words, because he deserves them.”

He walks away without giving Harry a chance to say anything else. It’s clear the boy he met five years ago isn’t the same one in front of him. He’s stubborn and angry, not at all like he was before and it hurts Zayn more than anyone could imagine. All of this does. No part of him wants to play the matchmaker for the love of his life and his ex-best friend. He wants Niall to himself, because maybe they could be really happy. He owes it to them to try though.

“This was a terrible idea.” Niall sighs, once again, next to Liam. Once Harry had started yelling, Liam had insisted on moving the four of them down to the theatre room for the sound proofing. They hadn’t even sat down yet, so that was a plus.

“They need to do this Nialler.” Liam says firmly. It’s the hundredth time he’s had to say it, but his resolve isn’t waver ing.

“I get that, but the kitchen has so many knives in it.” Niall groans.

“Zayn wouldn’t stab Hazza.” Liam laughs.

“That’s true. Haz is the one who would be doing the stabbing.” Niall grumbles.

“Nialler, I know you think Zayn hung the moon and the stars and everything in between, but please stop acting like Haz is a monster.” Liam says, trying his best to remain calm.

“It’s not- Li, I know Zayn isn’t some perfect demi-god sent down to make you and Harry feel bad. I don’t worship the ground he walks on, or think he’s without flaws.” Niall says softly. “I see him for what he is, and he returns the favor. But you have to admit that Harry has been way more irrational than usual around Zayn.”

“Well I wonder why the fuck that would be.” Liam spits. He didn’t mean to, and he regrets it the second the words are out of his mouth. Niall makes to move, his face painted with anger, and Liam grabs him by the elbow as softly as possible. “Nialler, please sit down. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it.”

“Well I wonder why the fuck that would be.” Liam spits. He didn’t mean to, and he regrets it the second the words are out of his mouth. Niall makes to move, his face painted with anger, and Liam grabs him by the elbow as softly as possible. “Nialler, please sit down. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it.”

“Then what did you mean Liam?” Niall asks angrily. He wrenches his arm out of Liam’s grip and walks over to the corner. “I’m so fucking tired of this. How many times do I have to apologize? How many fucking times do I have to take all the rage and hatred from both of you? Because It feels like between that, and putting on a happy face constantly, I can’t even slip a little bit. I’m walking a tightrope, and you and Harry are taking every potshot you can. I never meant for any of this to happen. I didn’t mean to fall in love with him, or to tell Harry he wasn’t the twins’ father, or to get raped, or to come groveling back broken beyond repair. This isn’t the life I had planned out.”

“And you think it is for me or Haz?” Liam asks. “In my whole life I never thought I’d be with a guy, let alone two. Haz probably thought he’d be a musician until he died. Shit happens. My parents disowned me, Gemma died, so did your family. And I know it hurts so much sometimes you can
barely breathe, but we’re here with you. We want you to be happy. I’m sorry I snapped, so can we please just sit down and eat this dinner Haz made for us?”

“You mean the dinner for the peace talk that didn’t last twenty seconds before they started yelling at each other?” Niall asks angrily.

“They need to get it out Niall!” Liam says forcefully. “They both need to get rid of all the resentment they have for each other, because if they can’t work things out, then Zayn isn’t staying. I won’t put him above Haz. I won’t.”

“Oh, so one minute it’s ‘Zayn, please, you’re our only hope.’ and now it’s ‘If Harry is uncomfortable for even one second, then you’re going the way of the death star Malik.’ What is it you want Liam?” Niall snaps. “Because you were right. He’s the only one who can fix this. Haz is so angry and pushy I can’t stand it, and you? I don’t even think I need to say why that won’t work.”

“I know alright?” Liam says as quietly as he can. “I know you get scared when you look at me, when you see my face. And I know Haz and I have pushed you to the breaking point, but it’s not like you shared any of this with us. We thought you were getting better. We thought you were starting to feel normal again, because that’s what you made us believe.”

“Because I needed to feel like you loved me!” Niall shouts so loudly he sets Sam off from his spot on the floor. “I needed, if just for a little while, to feel like you don’t hate me. If pretending everything was fine is what that took, then I was willing to do it. But now, Zayn helped me realize that wasn’t the right thing to do, and I’m sorry.”

“I’ve never hated you Niall.” Liam says, scooping Sam up off the floor. “Not for one second of my entire life. Not when you left me two years ago, not when you used me and then kicked me out after Bobby’s funeral, not when you told me you’d been cheating with Haz, and certainly not now. I have always, and will always love you, no matter what you do. Haz too, and you have to know that. He’s been trying his hardest to help you.”

“It’s too much though.” Niall says desperately. “I can’t meet the standards you two keep setting for me. I’m not sure if I can ever do it.”

“That’s okay. I know you feel like we’ve been bullying you, forcing you to live up to an ideal, but that’s not what we intended Nialler. All we’ve ever wanted is for you to be happy, with us if at all possible.” Liam tells him. Sam has stopped crying in favor of chewing on Liam’s shirt, so he hands the boy a teething ring instead. It’s not cold, but at least it helps a little bit with the pain and distracts him.

“I am happy with you two. I just need something you two can’t give me.” Niall groans. “I need a safe place to go to when I feel like everything is collapsing in on me. I need someone to talk to about the things I’m not ready to tell you, or just can’t tell you. I need a friend, someone who makes me feel at home in my own skin again.”

“Which is why Haz is up there right now, telling Zayn about the rules we decided upon to make things work for all of us.” Liam tells him. “Because we want that for you too. It would have been better if it was Louis you could talk to and there wasn’t the sex, but we understand.”

“What rules?” Niall asks, looking indignant.

“Haz has the list, but Zayn can tell you about them.” Liam says.

“No, Liam, you can tell me about them.” Niall says sharply.
“No. I’m tired of being yelled at today.” Liam says. “And I don’t want to lose my calm and scare you again.”

“I’ll be fine. I won’t yell any more. I promise.” Niall says, picking Gemma up and then sitting cross legged on the floor with her in his lap.

“They’re just basic things. We want you two to wait a little while longer for the sex. Until you’ve adjusted to the meds and we’re actually ready to handle the thought of it. Zayn has to help out around the house. When we fight, he has to try and get you to talk to us instead of hiding away. Things like that.”

“Anything else?” Niall asks, looking contemplative, but not as angry as Liam expected.

“You have to be the one to initiate anything that happens between you two. We’re fine with whatever you want to do, or at least we’re trying to be, but it has to be you who decides what happens with him. And you both have to be honest with us when we ask you something. Completely honest.” Liam finishes. He doesn’t tell Niall about Zayn giving them progress reports on his condition. It would definitely set him off.

“So in order to keep him around, I have to spill all my dark little secrets?” Niall asks, looking like he’s about to burst again.

“No.” Liam shakes his head. “We just want you to stop lying to us all the time. You never used to lie, even if it was something difficult to talk about. You’ve been so bluntly honest from the day we met, and that’s what scares me most about the way you are now. I can’t tell anymore what you mean, and what you don’t.”

“Oh.” Niall says, looking defeated. “I’m sorry. I didn’t realize you felt that way.”

“Of course we feel that way Niall.” Liam groans. “How could we not? We promised not to keep secrets from each other any more, but you’ve been doing it the whole time. And we get that there are things you don’t want to say, and that we’ve been pushing you too hard and that’s forced you into a corner. We feel terrible about it, but from now on we’d appreciate some honesty. From all four of us, because we’re holding ourselves to that rule too.”

“Oh.” Niall says, placing Gemma back on the ground and giving her the stuffed toy she’d been trying to grab. “I um- I’m not hungry anymore. I’m just going to go to bed. Um- good night.”

He doesn’t give Liam the chance to say anything, running up the stairs as fast as he can. Liam prays this works out for the best, that Niall really hears what he’s saying. He’s putting all of his faith in Niall. Doing that has never let him down before, but this time it just might.

Niall finds Zayn in his room, angrily punching a pillow that’s spewing feathers everywhere. It should scare him, send him running, instead he just bursts into laughter. His loud barks shock Zayn out of whatever rage induced trance he was in, and he topples off the bed backwards with a yelp, sending a cloud of feathers exploding throughout the room. Niall laughs so hard he falls back on his arse and rolls around, clutching his sides because he can’t breathe.

Tears are pouring down his cheeks. They’re not the angry ones that had been stinging at his eyes as he booked it upstairs, but ones of unadulterated amusement. Zayn sticks his head around the bed frame and his face and obsidian hair are covered in soft white down. That sends Niall into another fit of giggles while he struggles to pull his phone out and take a picture.
Zayn’s face is one of pure confusion when the flash goes off, and it may just be the greatest thing Niall has ever seen. He makes sure to save it before he finally slows his laughing down. It’s hard to rein it all in, but he manages. A few giggles slip through his lips, but he does his best to be stoic when he asks “You uh- you alright there?”

“You startled me.” Zayn pouts.

“I guessed that when you screamed.” Niall grins.

“I take it your talk with Liam went much better than mine did with Harry.” Zayn sighs.

“Actually it went horribly. We fought again, because that’s what we do now.” Niall shrugs.

“Well then you need to go back down there and talk it out.” Zayn huffs. He then grumbles something that vaguely sounds like “Rule number four.”

“Not until we get this place cleaned up.” Niall says with a smile. “You made quite a mess.”

“I was upset. It wasn’t supposed to, like, explode and everything.” Zayn says with a blush.

“There’s a hand vacuum in the closet.” Niall tells him. “I’ll go find a new pillow, and you get started on that.”

“Why do I have to do the vacuuming?” Zayn grumbles.

“Because you broke the eighty euro pillow, and punctured the linens with the down shafts.” Niall says pointedly. “Besides, I’ll take over when it comes time to clean you off.”

“You just want to say you sucked me all over.” Zayn laughs.

“You know me far too well.” Niall grins. He stands up and opens the door, finding Harry on the other side.

“I um- I wasn’t eavesdropping. I promise. There was a girly scream and then a loud noise, so I came to see what happened once I put the dishes in the sink.” Harry says quickly. “Why are there feathers everywhere? Did you shoot a bird or something?”

“Nothing that fun.” Niall chuckles, suppressing the urge to cackle when Harry’s face looks horrified. “I scared Zayn, and he fell of the bed with a pillow. It kind of exploded.”

It’s not the whole truth. Zayn had already done plenty of damage to the pillow when Niall walked in. It isn’t however a lie. “I- see...” Harry says with a curious look.

“Which closet are the extra pillows and linens in?” Niall asks.

“My bedroom. Needed to justify the armoire.” Harry says. “It’s thin, but it’s enough for me.”

“It’s your money Harry. You can spend it on whatever you want.” Niall laughs.

“Obviously you’ve never tried explaining an extraneous eight thousand pound wardrobe to my mother.” Harry grins.

“And that worked?” Niall asks.

“Not at all. She gave me that look for at least a minute straight. That one that says ‘You’re such a child still.’” Harry sighs.
“You’re misreading that look.” Niall tells him. “It’s actually more ‘You’re an idiot, but you’re my idiot and I love you’ than what you said. If it lasted that long its probably just because your mother is all modern, where you’re traditional. Strange role reversal there.”

“I like fancy things. Why does everyone think that’s so weird?” Harry groans.

“Because your hipster phase lasted like four years, and you bought a futon, at a rummage sale, for a two million dollar flat.” Zayn pipes up.

“That futon was practical.” Harry protests.

“That futon gave you fleas!” Zayn laughs.

“Minor details.” Harry grins. Niall likes them like this. They occasionally remember they were best mates, and it’s a beautiful thing. Niall knows how much Zayn wants to have Harry back in his life.

“You got fleas?” Niall asks. “I’ve slept with a guy who had fleas?”

“Many many times.” Harry says with a proud smile.

“That is so disturbing.” Niall says, faking a shiver. He steps past Harry and heads to the far end of the foyer where Harry’s room is. He hasn’t been in here since they first moved in, and it doesn’t look like anyone else has been since Anne and Robin came for Christmas.

“It’s so dusty.” Harry sighs behind him. He hadn’t even realized Harry had followed him.

“It looks like an antique store in here.” Niall laughs. “Listen, Harry, I’m sorry today has been so rough. I’m sorry about everything over the last five months actually. I know you’re trying, and I’m going to give everything I have to get better again for you.”

“Don’t do it for me, Nialler, or for Liam, or Zayn, or the twins. Do it for yourself.” Harry says gently. “Do it because you want to, not for any other reason.”

“That’s not how I’m built Harry.” Niall tells him. “I want to be better because you don’t deserve to have to deal with the train wreck that is me.”

Harry surprises him, ducking in to plant a quick peck on his lips and stroking his cheek softly. “Stop being so stubborn Nialler.”

“You first.” Niall grins.

“We’re screwed.” Harry says with a giggle.

“Probably.” Niall laughs. “I have to take care of this now, because I’m a little afraid Zee will break the vacuum. Can you tell Li I’ll be back down when we’ve finished cleaning up? Zayn’s holding to his rules. Number four, I think he said.”

“Sure.” Harry nods. Niall gives him a peck on the cheek, and a swat on the bum when he walks away. At least this time nobody had a fight. That’s really the best they can hope for right now.

“You should have told him the truth.” Zayn says when Niall comes back into the room with an armful of sheets, a duvet, and a pillow. “I mean, I’m kind of glad you didn’t because I was acting like a bloody lunatic, but you should have.”

“Nothing I said was a lie. I didn’t mention you beating the pillow to death first because it’s not important. And because yes, you were acting like a bloody lunatic.” Niall shrugs. “Why aren’t you
“Because I can’t figure out how to run the damn thing. I flipped the switch, but nothing is happening.” Zayn grumbles, throwing a pointed glare at the little red contraption in his hand.

“It has a child safety lock, so Gems doesn’t suck her hair into it and hurt herself when she’s older.” Niall says. He walks over and flips it in Zayn’s hands to reveal a twisting knob on the other side. It immediately roars to life and starts sucking feathers off the bed with vigor. Zayn holds it above the bed and goes about collecting them. Niall watches carefully, making sure it doesn’t spontaneously combust.

“Why are you watching like you’re afraid I’m going to blow somebody up?” Zayn asks.

“Because death by vacuum induced fireball isn’t the way I want to go out.” Niall grins. “You’ve had a maid since you met Harry, I’m sure you barely even remember how to do any of this.”

“Pez insisted on the maid. I never wanted one.” Zayn says with a frown. “And I was helping out my mum with housework for years before I moved out. I’m not a total lost cause you know.”

“I know Zee.” Niall says affectionately.

“Then stop worrying about me, and start changing the pillowcases.” Zayn huffs.

“Did Harry really get fleas?” Niall asks once he’s completed his task.

“Um, like three different times.” Zayn laughs. “There was the futon, and then once at this charity dog show thing, and then again when he met Tara Reid and Russell Brand. We aren’t sure who it actually was, but they’re our top two choices out of the group he met that night.”

“Celebrities have weird lives.” Niall says with a small smile. Zayn finishes vacuuming the bed and empties the container into the bin before starting on the floor. Niall just leans against the wall, strangely turned on by how domestic Zayn looks in sweat pants and a t-shirt, cleaning house with sleep ruffled hair. It’s a side most people wouldn’t expect of him, only seeing the gorgeous model-like man dressed to the nines and completely reserved. Niall gets to see a different part, and that makes him feel incredibly special.

“You gonna come suck me off or what?” Zayn asks with a cocky grin, snapping Niall out of his thoughts.

Niall sputters a little, and then bursts into a fit of giggles. “What- what-” Niall says, unable to get the words out until he takes a deep breath. “What if Harry was outside eavesdropping again? What would they think?”

“That I’m breaking rules one through three.” Zayn shrugs. “Even though I’m not, and don’t plan on it. In fact I kind of like rule number one.”

“And which one is that?” Niall asks, sauntering over to Zayn and taking the vacuum from his hand.

“That any time we do something, you have to start it, but you also have to ask for it.” Zayn says with a wolfish grin.

“Gonna have me beg for it?” Niall asks cheekily. “Want me to get down on me knees, plead for you to snog me? Want me to ask your permission to ride you until you go cross-eyed?”

“Fuck Nialler.” Zayn pants his name like a prayer. Niall can feel Zayn’s erection pressed against him.
when he pushes in closer to the darker man.

“I’m not above begging.” Niall whispers in his ear. “Especially for you.”

Zayn lets out some strangled sort of moan when Niall slips his hand under the back of his shirt, ghosting his fingers over the skin of the darker man’s lower back. He’s pushing the limits of what he can do without asking, especially since they can’t do anything until he’s gotten on the proper medication regiment and the other two have given them their blessing. He doesn’t give a fuck, not when Zayn Malik is unraveling in his hand. “Can I please touch you? Kiss you?” Niall asks in a hushed moan.

It doesn’t take any more than that before Zayn is on him. Their lips lock so fervently Niall doesn’t even have time to breathe first. It doesn’t take long though, because Zayn gasps into Niall’s mouth and runs into the bathroom before the Irish lad can even process what happened. His lips are on fire with the intensity of what just took place, and it isn’t until a patch on his hip grows cold he even begins to understand why.

Zayn has no end game. He didn’t grab any other pants or trousers on his way in. He also thinks he may have gotten some on Niall before he had this fine idea. As soon as he closed the door he ripped off his joggers and briefs, drenched in cum. Like an absurdly large and gross amount of cum. He has no plans on where to go from here.

“Zee?” Niall asks, walking in after him. Fuck, why didn’t he lock the door? “Oh, well that’s- that’s like a lot of jizz.”

Zayn can feel himself growing hot, blushing under Niall’s stare. The Irish lad takes a step forward, closing the gap between them, and then drops to his knees. Zayn doesn’t have time to protest before Niall is sucking on him. It’s completely against the rules, but Zayn can’t focus on anything except how amazing it feels. His brain feels like it’s short circuited by the time Niall pulls back. “All clean.” he says with a grin.

“I don’t even know where to start.” Zayn groans.

“Then how about explaining why you ran off.” Niall says, standing up so he’s more level with Zayn now.

“I panicked.” Zayn admits quietly.

“Because?” Niall asks.

“That’s never happened before,” Zayn tells him. It hasn’t. Zayn has an endless supply of self control in these situations. Even the first time he had sex, at sixteen, he lasted far longer than the boy he was with. Niall didn’t even do that much, but he had Zayn climaxing from a couple whispered words and a snog.

“Really?” Niall asks. “You don’t have, like, a hair trigger or something? That was because of me?”

“Do I look like a guy that ejaculates prematurely?” Zayn groans. “Yes, it was you.”

“I have never been more proud of myself than in this moment.” Niall says with a wide grin. Zayn almost hates it. “Just don’t go off like that when we finally shag, yeah? I’m kind of needy, and that won’t be nearly enough, even if your cum does taste better than most.”
“You’re a bloody monster.” Zayn growls, ducking in to taste himself on Niall’s tongue. “Thanks for not making me feel bad about it though.”

“It happens.” Niall giggles. “It happened to me once.”

“Yeah?” Zayn asks.

“I was sixteen, and Li and I went swimming at Connemara late at night when me da took us camping. He was wearing these tight briefs and he got hard while we were being idiots. I felt it rub against me and- yeah.” Niall admits sheepishly. “Never told anyone that before.”

“Well I’d appreciate it if you didn’t tell anyone about this either.” Zayn says.

“Not even Tommo?” Niall asks.

“Especially not him!” Zayn groans. “That’s the worst thing you could possibly do.”

“Worse than telling Harry or Li?” Niall questions. He’s obviously just being belligerent because he thinks it’s funny.

“You’re going to tell everyone, aren’t you?” Zayn asks with a sharp glare.

“Nah.” Niall laughs. “I’d rather keep it to meself and tease you with it later. Like when you’re fucking me over the foot board. Or up against the window. Or in the shower.”

“Once Niall. We agreed on once.” Zayn says firmly. “This isn’t an affair, it’s to help you get over your fears of physical intimacy.”

“As long as we don’t cum, I think it can still all be counted as one time. Sex doesn’t have to be one position for five minutes and then it’s over.” Niall huffs.

“Of course not.” Zayn smiles. “Plan on getting the most out of you that I possibly can. Hours long if possible. Need something to keep me warm at night once this is all over. I just don’t want to think this is going to keep happening beyond the one time. I can’t get into this that deep. I can’t hope for things like that.”

“I’m sorry.” Niall sighs. “I keep forgetting that this is going to be over eventually. I don’t- I don’t want that to happen.”

“It’s not going to yet, so let’s put that aside for now and get everything cleaned up. You still have to go talk to Li, and I have to take yet another shower.” Zayn says with a smile.


“With a quick wank and then some real sleep. Not a nap, but like an Ambien induced coma for the next twelve hours.” Zayn says with a shrug. “Shit, I still have to go clean the dishes.”

“I’ll do that. You just go to sleep. You’ve had a rougher day than any of us.” Niall says softly, pecking him on the cheek. “You mind if I sleep in here with you tonight?”

“Not at all, but you should ask Haz and Li if they’d like you to sleep in there with them. They should get to see you for more than just arguments today. Watch a movie with them or something at least. Spend some time with them.” Zayn tells him, hoping Niall doesn’t see it as being pushed away. That’s not what he wants to do at all. He wants to spend the night cuddled against Niall’s warm body, tangled up in each other. That’s not why he’s here though. “Spend some time with your kids...
“I can do that.” Niall nods. “As long as you don’t mind waking up next to me, because I’m not wasting what little time we may have together.”

“It’s not wasting time to sleep in the same bed as your boyfriends Nialler.” Zayn says. He can actually feel they giddiness seeping into his voice regardless of what he’s saying, and he prays Niall can’t hear it.

“That’s not what I mean.” Niall says with an eye roll. “I just don’t want to miss a minute of our time together, not even if it’s just sleeping in the same bed. Especially sleeping in the same bed actually, since you’re the perfect person to sleep with. You cuddle, unlike Harry, and you aren’t a furnace, unlike Liam.”

“I like it too.” Zayn tells him softly.

“Can I kiss you one more time?” Niall asks suddenly.

Zayn nods, and Niall presses a chaste kiss to his lips. It’s short and sweet like honey. Zayn only wishes it would have lasted longer, enjoying the warmth that spreads through his body at the light peck. Before he knows it Niall is gone, and Zayn is left alone, naked from the waist down and still covered in feathers.

Harry is surprised when Niall sneaks up behind him in the kitchen while he’s cleaning the dishes. “I believe that’s my job.” Niall says quietly.

“It was supposed to be Zayn’s actually.” Harry huffs.

“I told him I’d take care of it. He needs some real sleep, without a hangover or being woken up to take care of my stupid arse.” Niall says, gently taking the scrubbing brush out of Harry’s hand before he can protest.

“It wasn’t stupid Nialler.” Harry tells him adamantly. “You shouldn’t be ashamed of your panic attacks.”

“Yes I should Harry.” Niall says harshly. It’s a total change from a few minutes ago in the hallway, and completely startling. “I hate that I can’t get my own body and mind under control. I hate that I feel like a child who can’t remember the monster under the bed isn’t real. It’s weak and pathetic. I have to start dosing myself now, because sometimes I can’t tell the difference between my soul-mate and the bloody Bogey-Man! He shouldn’t have had to know about that, because I should be able to control myself.

“Now look at me. I can’t drive, because I was almost in a car crash. I can’t fuck, because I was attacked. I can’t exercise, because I’m basically a skeleton with skin on it and I get wiped out so fast. I can’t hold both of the twins at once, I’m seeing two separate therapists, and my mood changes so quickly it’s bordering on a disorder. I’m pathetic! I’m more pathetic than I’ve ever been, which has always been pretty bad.”

Harry is shocked at the outburst. Niall slams the brush down in the sink and the noise echoes throughout the kitchen like a church bell. It takes minutes for the clanging to settle down, and then the only noise is Niall crying softly. “And the only person that makes me feel okay, like I’m not a different kind of monster, has to leave when this is all over. And I get so angry when he isn’t right beside me. I should be you two, and I know that. I should be able to find comfort in the two of you.
But I just feel terrible around you all the time. I hurt you both so badly. You shouldn’t forgive me. You should make me leave before I do it again. You should just throw me away like the rubbish I am, but you won’t, and for the life of me, I can’t figure out why not.”

“Because we need you Nialler.” Harry says. He folds Niall up into his chest, letting the Irish lad cry as much as he needs to. “We love you more than you can imagine. We’ve all hurt each other at different points, but we want to try and make this work. I don’t feel whole when you aren’t around. You aren’t rubbish, or a monster. You’re the light in our lives, with so much love and warmth inside you we can’t possibly live without it.”

“Sop.” Niall says in some weird combination of a sob and a laugh.

“Niall, listen to me.” Harry says, taking the boys wet cheeks in his large hands. “I may be a sop, but that doesn’t mean I don’t believe every word of what I’m saying. You two mean more to me than anyone else ever has, or ever could. I love you, and I know you love me too. We can get through this together.”

“You really should just make me leave.” Niall mutters, his eyes darting away.

“Not for anything in the world. Not again.” Harry says firmly, shaking his head. “I felt like I died when you left, and you almost did. We’re meant to be together, not apart.”

“What if we aren’t?” Niall asks. “What if I’m supposed to be alone, so that nobody else around me gets hurt anymore?”

“The universe wouldn’t make someone with so much love inside him if he was supposed to be alone.” Harry says with a small smile. “And I can’t believe it would be so cruel as to make me live without you again.”

“But it would be cruel enough to separate Zayn and I?” Niall asks, suddenly angry. He rips Harry’s hands off his cheeks and takes several strides across the kitchen. “Why don’t you get that? Why do you still seem to think this is just a crush that will fade away, Harry?”

“I don’t.” Harry whispers. “I know how intense it is for you two, and I’m sorry things can’t work out that way. I don’t love him though. I can’t even look at him anymore without being angry.”

“He was your best friend!” Niall shouts. “How can you hate him?”

“Because he tried to take you away from me.” Harry glares.

“No, Harry, he didn’t.” Niall says harshly. “He left when he realized he’d cause problems for us, and then tried to send me back. Twice. He has always tried to make things better between us, and that’s what he’s doing now. I don’t know what the fuck is wrong with you that you can’t see that, but it makes me so mad I can’t see straight.”

“On one level, I know that Nialler, but on the other all I can see is how much you two fall into each other. How perfect you are together. It fucking scares me, all right? I don’t want to lose you again, but if I ever did, it will be because of him. My best friend and the love of my life are the perfect pair, and you can’t possibly imagine how that feels. You can’t even see what you two do to me.” Harry snarls.

“Harry, I wanted to bring him into our relationship, not run away with him. You were the one who forced me to choose. Not Zee or Li. You.” Niall hisses. He stalks over to Harry and they’re inches apart. Harry doesn’t know whether they’re about to start throwing punches or what, but the air is crackling with anger.
Niall grabs him by the collar, his eyes burning, and then pulls him down. Their lips meet and Harry immediately gives in to it. Niall is kissing him so harshly it makes his lips sting, but he doesn’t even try to stop it. It tastes like salt, and curry, and every ounce of anger Niall has ever felt all rolled into one. Harry is pressed backwards into the counter, and then somehow they wind up on the floor, never breaking apart. Niall is dominating him, forcing Harry to see everything that he feels all at once. There’s fear and rage, love and self-hatred, passion and love, all battling inside of this one moment.

He feels like he’ll never breathe again by the time Niall pulls away, a small red smear staining his lip from where Harry bit a little too hard. “You’re a stupid fucking sod, and sometimes I want to tear your throat out with my teeth, but I love you.” Niall growls.

“I love you too.” Harry says, smiling until his lip hurts. Apparently Harry wasn’t the only one who bit too hard.

“I made my choice, and I chose you two and the twins. Don’t expect me to be happy about being forced to decide though. Give me some time to forgive you before you start shoving it in my face again. Like a decade.” Niall says, lifting himself off Harry without bothering to help the taller man up. “Now go away so I can do the dishes instead of snogging you like an animal.”

“There’s not much left to do actually.” Harry admits, grabbing onto the counter to stand back up. “Dishwasher is already full.”


“I scored an advance copy of the new Avengers Film. Joss Whedon is a friend of a friend.” Harry grins. “Don’t know how much blood there is, but it does have the word War in the title.”

“That works fine.” Niall nods. “Get it queued up while I go talk to Li.”

“Are we um- Are we okay?” Harry asks.

“We will be.” Niall says quietly. “We need some time though. Just give me some time, and don’t expect any miracles out of me.”

Liam is overjoyed when Niall finds him in the library. Zayn must be following the rules. “Let’s have at it yeah?” Niall asks.

“I don’t want to fight Nialler.” Liam sighs.

“That’s not what I meant, though I guess it was a bit standoffish.” Niall says, crossing the room quickly and then dropping down to straddle Liam’s legs.

“What are you?” Liam’s words are cut short when Niall crashes their mouths together. Niall tugs at his hair a bit, and then Liam is giving everything to him. Their tongues slide against each other and Liam can taste a little bit of blood. He doesn’t want to question it though. Not when Niall is finally giving him something other than angry words.

“I’m sorry, yeah?” Niall asks, breaking away from Liam. “I’ve been a prat about this, and I promise I’ll try my best to tell you everything. Now put down your bloody book, and lets go watch a movie with Haz.”
“I can’t figure you out today.” Liam says, touching his lips to feel how they tingle.

“Don’t bother trying.” Niall shrugs. “I could be a completely different person in five minutes. Just go with it yeah?”

“Are you bleeding?” Liam asks, his finger is sticky with it.

“It’s Haz’s fault.” Niall grins. “He got a bit too into a snog and tore me a nice little souvenir.”

“Is that why you kissed me?” Liam asks.

“No. I kissed you because I’ve been awful to you, and I wanted you to know that I love you, even if I can’t show it right.” Niall admits. “I’m not as good with words as you three, and I didn’t want to say the wrong thing.”

“Well then it was perfect.” Liam says, leaning up to capture Niall’s lips with his own. He makes sure not to press too hard, not to do anything that could cause Niall to panic. Niall rewards him with a soft moan and Liam gladly takes it. Their fingers catch and curl into each other and Liam feels like he’s home again.

“Alright.” Niall laughs against Liam’s lips. “That’s enough snogging. We have an unreleased Marvel movie to watch.”

“Haz got it?” Liam asks giddily, standing up so that Niall falls back with a small grunt.

“He did.” Niall nods. “I see your Black Widow fetish hasn’t faded any.”

“Can you blame me?” Liam asks with a wink.

“As long as you don’t judge me while I drool over Thor.” Niall shrugs.

“Never have before.” Liam says, offering Niall a hand to help him up. “I know how much you like his big hammer.”

“Mjolnir is more than just a hammer Li, it- you were talking about his penis, weren’t you?” Niall laughs.

“I knew you’d get there eventually.” Liam grins.

Zayn isn’t surprised when he finally wakes up and Niall is curled into his side. The Irish boy is shaking, muttering something Zayn can’t hear until he gets closer.

“No. Please no. Don’t.” Niall whimpers. There are tears on his cheeks and Zayn realizes what’s going on. He puts a hand on Niall’s shoulder and gently nudges him awake.

“Nialler, it’s okay.” he says softly. “It’s only a nightmare. You’re safe.”

“Zayn?” Niall asks, looking around fearfully.

“I’m right here Nialler.” Zayn says, pecking him on the cheek and wrapping him up in a tight embrace.

“I thought you’d left me.” Niall whispers. “I dreamed you’d left again.”
“Oh.” Zayn says. “I thought it was about him.”

“You’d know if it was him. I wake up screaming from those.” Niall mumbles, pressing himself closer into Zayn’s flesh. It’s like he’s trying to make sure this isn’t the dream. “This was worse. You’d just vanished like smoke right in front of me. I was so scared it was real, that you had gone.”

“Nialler, I have to leave eventually.” Zayn says quietly. “But I promise, I won’t leave until you’re ready, and I won’t just disappear.”

“Say it again.” Niall begs.

“I promise I won’t disappear.” Zayn says, pressing a quick kiss to his forehead.

“T’anks.” Niall mutters, his sleepiness thickening his accent. “Now less go eat, cause neither of us really did yesterday and I feel like I’m dead.”

“You didn’t eat after I went to bed?” Zayn asks.

“Nope. Had some popcorn, but nothing filling.” Niall shrugs. “Honestly I couldn’t even focus on the movie. I just wanted to get up here and go to sleep.”

“What’s wrong with your lip?” Zayn asks, noticing the red gash.

“Haz got carried away during a snog.” Niall says. “Actually I got carried away and he just kind of reacted.”

Zayn tingles with jealousy and hates himself for it. Niall isn’t his, and never will be, but that rational thought doesn’t suppress the envy he feels. He wants to kiss Niall without guilt wrapping around his heart. He wants so much that’s different than what things are, so he takes something all his own. He wraps his fingers around the back of Niall’s neck and pulls him to his mouth. Niall is plaint, quickly opening himself up for Zayn.

“You don’t initiate anything.” Harry’s voice echoes in his head. He ignores it, twisting his leg up and over until he’s straddling the Irish man moaning into his mouth. Zayn’s hands wander over Niall’s shirtless torso, touching anything he can. Niall twitches and moans when Zayn runs a finger over his nipple, a nail scratching just a little bit. Zayn tweaks it gently, causing Niall’s hips to buck underneath the darker man.

“You can’t have sex until both Liam and I agree on it.” Harry told him. Fuck Harry. Fuck Liam. All that matters in this moment is how Niall and Zayn feel together. Fuck the stupid rules. Fuck Zayn always being the guy pushing the love of his life into the arms of someone who doesn’t deserve him. His hand wanders down until he feels Niall’s morning wood in his fingers. The briefs he’s wearing are stretched tight and smear Zayn’s hands with precum. Good.

“Gonna repay the favor from yesterday.” Zayn growls against Niall’s mouth.

“We can’t.” Niall mumbles halfheartedly.

“Then ask me to stop.” Zayn says, pulling Niall out of his underwear.

“I can’t.” Niall whispers, thrusting up into Zayn’s touch. Zayn strokes him quickly, soaking up the pants and moans coming from the Irish boy. Zayn can feel him pulsing all the way in his veins and he’s flooded with lust. Niall is unraveling beneath him, whimpering with every tug.

Zayn’s heart bursts with pride when Niall cums, moaning his name like it’s the only word he knows.
Zayn bites down on his shoulder, something the Irish lad had divulged a love for while they were up drinking one night. He marks him, taking one small piece of Niall’s heart for himself. He strokes until Niall shudders with the pleasurable pain of hypersensitivity. It’s the last part that really makes Zayn happy though, the dark look in his eyes when he watches Zayn lick his cum off his hand.

It’s bitter, like cum almost always is, but Zayn enjoys it nonetheless. There’s a part of Niall in him, and he’ll never forget that. “Do you want me to-” Niall starts to ask.

“No. I told you, I was just repaying the favor.” Zayn grins.

“That’s definitely not all that was, but alright.” Niall says, darting his eyes away. “What if they ask about it?”

“I don’t know.” Zayn admits. “I just know I had to do that.”

“It was a bad idea Zee, and we both know it.” Niall sighs. “I loved it, but it was a bad idea.”

“I’m sorry.” Zayn says, moving backwards off Niall to give him some space.

“Don’t!” Niall cries. “Don’t freak out and leave me, please.”

“I’m not.” Zayn says, shaking his head. “I just thought you’d want some space.”

“I never want space from you.” Niall whispers. “Not even when I feel guilty as hell. I want you as close as possible all the time.”

“Well you’re going to have to put that on the back burner, because I need to go wee.” Zayn says with a soft smile. “I’ll be back in just a minute, but how about you get us some clothes.”

“Yeah.” Niall says softly, nodding in agreement. Zayn climbs off the bed and pads over to the bathroom. He closes the door behind himself and then walks straight to the mirror.

“What the fuck are you doing?” he asks, hissing at his own reflection. “You stupid fucking prick.”

Niall makes them all breakfast, greeting each of them with a kiss when they finally find their way to the kitchen. Frittatas are a pain in the arse to make, but Niall really loves them so it was worth it. Harry and Liam get goat cheese and sausage, Zayn gets chives and Swiss, and Niall makes himself one with bacon and spinach.

He stuffs down his guilt, hoping it doesn’t show on his face as he eats with them. Zayn mostly steers the conversation, asking about the movie, how the twins are doing developmentally, anything to keep the conversation away from him and Niall. The Irish boy is extremely grateful for it.

“What’s wrong?” Harry asks, pulling him aside after they’ve finished eating.

“Didn’t sleep great. I had another nightmare.” Niall tells him. It’s not a lie. It’s not the truth, but it’s not a lie. That’s the only thing Niall has to cling to.

“Li can run into town and pick up your prescriptions. If you want me to call them in for you, I will.” Harry says, stroking his cheek gently. It’s not the same as when Zayn does it, not as warm, but it’s just as loving and doesn’t send pangs of guilt down Niall’s spine.

“Better sooner than later I guess.” Niall sighs. “I’ll run up to my room and grab the papers.”
Harry lets him go without another word, but Niall knows he’s watching him as he climbs the stairs. He doesn’t have to look to know Harry’s eyes are locked on him, trying to suss out if he’s lying. Self-hatred bubbles up inside Niall, filling him with every negative thought about himself he’s tried so desperately to push away.

You’re not good enough. They don’t really love you. You deserved what you got. Everything he said was true. You’re a filthy little rat, and nobody could ever love you. Just die already. Everyone would be better off if you killed yourself.

By the time he gets back the whispering voices are too much to bear and he can’t breathe anymore. He tugs his shirt off, trying to stop the relentless squeezing in his chest. Strong hands wrap around his shoulders from behind and he hears someone say “You’re okay Nialler.”

“I can’t breathe.” Niall gasps, grabbing on to Harry’s hands for dear life. He’s steered towards the bed. Harry sits him down and then just holds his hands to Niall’s face, gently stroking his cheek and murmuring comforting things Niall can’t really hear well over the pounding of his heartbeat. It takes several minutes, maybe as much as a half an hour, but Niall can feel his breathing return to normal. The band inside his chest stops squeezing, the voices recede because, yes, Harry does love him. “I need to tell you something, and I need you not to get mad.”

“I promise Nialler.” Harry says soothingly, taking a sitting position next to Niall.

“Zayn tugged me off this morning.” Niall admits. It’s like a weight as soon as he does.

“He wh-” Harry starts.

“It’s not his fault Haz.” Niall says, stopping anything Harry has to say in its tracks by throwing a pleading glance. “My nightmare wasn’t about that man last night, it was about Zayn just disappearing. He wanted me to know he was still there. I promise, we weren’t doing it to hurt you, or to break your rules. I just needed him to take my mind as far away from that place as possible. I’ve felt so guilty about it though, that’s what caused this episode. I wanted to tell you, but I don’t want you to send Zayn away. Please just be mad at me.”

“I’m not mad Nialler.” Harry sighs, wrapping Niall up in a tight hug around the shoulders. “I can understand that. The need to distance yourself from something bad, even if what you do to get that distance isn’t good either. I won’t kick him out, and I’ll handle telling Li for you. Just don’t do it again until we’re ready, okay?”

“You’re really not mad?” Niall asks, nuzzling into Harry’s shoulder for closeness in case he decides that he is, indeed, angry.

“No.” Harry says gently. “I love you too much to be mad over that. I’m not happy about it, but I get why it happened, why it needed to happen. Honestly, I’m so relieved you told me about it, I’d have probably forgiven anything short of buggery.”

“Who even uses that term anymore?” Niall giggles.

“Well I used ‘Impaling him on another man’s dick’ yesterday, so I thought I’d keep audiences guessing.” Harry laughs.

“I don’t want to know.” Niall says, shaking his head.

“See, the analogy was you were a baby bird.” Harry smiles.

“Ugh.” Niall groans.
“And we’re pushing you out of the nest, except instead of flying, you’re being sodomized.” Harry explains slowly, like he’s afraid Niall won’t understand the very graphic picture he’s created.

“Your brain goes to the strangest places.” Niall laughs.

“I know.” Harry says with a shrug. “But if it helps take you out of the dark ones, then I’ll take it.”

He starts to stand up, but Niall tucks in closer to him. “Don’t go yet.”

“Alright Nialler, I’m not going anywhere.” Harry says softly, stroking Niall’s hair.

“What’s going on?” Liam asks Zayn once Harry has gone out to the hall to talk to Niall. Liam is sure he noticed something off about him too. That can’t be a coincidence.

“We’re cleaning dishes?” Zayn says like a question. “Oh, you mean those two? I wouldn’t know, as I don’t have Superman’s hearing.”

“Did you and Niall do anything this morning before we came down?” Liam asks.

“We did, yeah.” Zayn admits. “I wanked him off.”

Anger boils inside Liam until he sees how sad Zayn looks. He obviously feels bad about it, so Liam stuffs that down. He’s promised to help the darker man and Niall. Kicking him out on the spot isn’t going to do that. “Haz told me you agreed to the rules, especially one through three.” Liam settles on saying.

“I know.” Zayn sighs. “I just lost my mind for a minute. He was so upset from his nightmare. I wanted him to feel better. I wanted to take a piece away from him, even if it was just that pain. It was a stupid idea, but I felt like I had to do it.”

“Zayn, we set the rules for a reason. They’re for his protection.” Liam says firmly, but not angrily. “He seemed really upset.”

“I know. I think he feels guilty about it.” Zayn says. “I know I do. So what happens now?”

“Now we finish the dishes.” Liam sighs. “After that I’ll talk to Haz, and we’ll decide what to do about it. If Niall tells him too, then there probably won’t be any consequences this one time. You won’t get another chance from me though.”

“I know.” Zayn nods. He goes back to scrubbing the plate he’s holding while Liam empties the dishwasher. It takes a while before Liam finally goes looking for Harry, leaving Zayn to watch the twins in their highchair.

He finds him slowly closing the door to Niall’s room, shutting off the light as he does so. Once he spots Liam his face goes from soft to serious. “We need to talk.”

“Zayn told me. I was coming to find you to figure out what we do about it.” Liam tells him, nodding his head towards their bedroom.

“I know this is weird coming from me, but I think we should just leave it. They told us about it. They’re trying, even if they aren’t succeeding.” Harry sighs. “I mean, I’m not actually that upset about a tug off, you know? I don’t think it’s worth the risk of sending Niall spiraling. He’s promised nothing else will happen until we give the okay, and I really think he means it. He felt so guilty he
started to have a panic attack.”

“So then we agree to give them a one time pass?” Liam asks.

“Yeah, but lets give them a huge lecture about it. A really boring one where we explain the same points over and over for like two hours. I can make charts and everything.” Harry grins wickedly. “Ooh, or a slide show.”

“You’re an evil genius Haz.” Liam laughs. “Think you can get it done while I go get Niall’s prescriptions.”

“Definitely.” Harry nods. “I called them in before he fell asleep, so they should be ready by the time you get there. Be safe yeah?”

“Of course.” Liam says with a nod. Harry leans in and plants a firm kiss on Liam’s lips.

“Actually, first.” Harry says, slipping his hand down the waistband of Liam’s trousers. “How long has it been since someone just gave you a hand job?”

“First couple months of me dating Niall.” Liam says after thinking about it for a second. “So like, five years or something?”

“Let’s bring that counter down to Zero, yeah?” Harry asks, pushing Liam back onto the bed.

“That was not just a handjob.” Liam grins at Harry under the spray. He’s incredibly smug and it’s equal parts arousing and annoying. Harry had ended up riding Liam with lube Niall had informed them was in the cabinet, whimpering and begging for more like a common whore until Liam had flipped them over and pounded into Harry’s ass like a jackhammer. It was great. He’d cum like a fountain all over his stomach, but that’s what showers are for. Sneaking to Liam’s room to take it had been rough, but doable. Zayn hadn’t seen them, So Harry took it as a win.

“So the counter doesn’t roll back yet. We’ll do that eventually.” Harry shrugs.

“Doubt it.” Liam laughs. “You’re too needy to just sit there and wank me off.”

“I could totally do it.” Harry scoffs.

“Maybe if you got off first, like too recently to have gotten your second wind.” Liam tells him. “Not that it’s a bad thing. I like how much you can’t resist once we get started.”

“It’s just such a pretty cock Li.” Harry sighs. “How do you expect me not to want it in my arse?”

Liam blushes at that, looking every bit the embarrassed teenager Harry has seen pictures of. He decides to make it happen again, and flattery will get him everywhere with Liam. “Besides, you’re the best top I’ve ever met.” Harry tells him, feigning a level of innocence that isn’t appropriate for the conversation. “Well-”

“Well what Haz?” Liam asks with agrowl.

“Maybe second best actually.” Harry says. Knowing Liam has taken the bait gets Harry going again.

“And who would be first?” Liam asks petulantly, folding his arms over his chest and pouting exaggeratedly.
“Zac Efron.” Harry says simply, trying to suppress a grin that’s threatening to unravel his whole thing.

“What did he do to you that I don’t?” Liam asks, pressing against Harry tightly until he’s pinned to the shower wall.

“Well he ate me out like it was a competitive sport.” Harry tells him. “And he was a world champion for sure. Then he fucked me so hard I couldn’t sit properly for a week.”

“I can do that.” Liam says, nipping at Harry’s throat with his teeth. “Let me do that.”

“If you really think you can.” Harry says teasingly. Liam growls at that and the vibrations run from Harry’s neck, straight to his cock. Liam slips a hand behind Harry’s back, sliding a finger down the crack of his arse to tease at the hole. It makes chills tingle across Harry’s spine and he moans loudly, knowing how that gets Liam going.

“Bed. Now.” Liam says forcefully. Harry obeys, knowing he’s about to get the fuck of his life. He doesn’t even manage to get into the bed before he’s bent over it with strong hands and Liam is eating him out. The sensation is indescribable. It stings just a bit from where he’s still loose from earlier, but Liam knows eating ass like he knows farming. He’s spectacular at it, his tongue doing exactly what Harry wants without any provoking. Liam tugs on him slowly, dragging the palm of his hand underneath Harry’s sensitive head.

“Fuck.” Harry moans. “Just like that Li. Oh fuck.”

Liam continues eating him out with vigor, but slips a finger in to nudge against Harry’s prostate. It’s quickly too much, giving Harry trouble holding back his orgasm, and he groans “If you keep doing that I’ll cum and you won’t get to prove anything.”

“What if I do this?” Liam asks, taking his hand away from Harry’s aching erection. “Think you can last while I keep going?”

“For a little bi- aah fuck!” Harry moans, dropping his head against the duvet when Liam adds a second finger, still swirling his tongue around the bottom of Harry’s rim. His fingers rub circles inside Harry, slowly so as not to bring him to orgasm too fast. “Fuck me.”

“Not yet.” Liam tells him. Harry can hear the slick sound of skin against lubed skin and he knows Liam is getting ready. “Not until you’re begging for it.”

“Please.” Harry moans. He can actually feel Liam smirk against the cheeks of his arse. Liam doesn’t give in though, not hesitating in the slightest with his fingers or tongue. He doesn’t say anything else as Harry continues to plead for it. Harry clenches around his fingers when he feels like he’s getting close, so Liam pulls them out and goes back to just licking at him without even having to be told. “Oh god, Liam please fuck me? Please?”

“Alright.” Liam says, taking one last long lick at Harry before standing up. Harry can’t help the long filthy moan that comes out of him when he feels Liam slide into him. He’s still for just a second, and then one of his hands presses down on Harry’s back while the other curls around his hip. He snaps back and forth, pummeling Harry into the bed so hard it feels like he’ll burst from it. Harry moans and pants, not even bothering to touch himself because he’ll cum without it.

Liam knows exactly how to do this, the angles, the speed. It’s an intensity Harry has never seen from him, but he loves it. It’s almost painful how hard Liam’s hips meet Harry’s arse, but completely worth it. He can hear Liam’s balls slapping against him, feel the way Liam is pulsing inside him, and
it combines in a beautiful effect that has Harry moaning like a bitch.

“Say it.” Liam grunts.

“You’re the best!” Harry moans. “Oh fuck Li, you’re the best. Don’t stop! Fuck me! Oh, fuck!”

Liam obliges him, thrusting harsh and fast until it has Harry cumming so hard his eyes cross and his breathing stops. Liam doesn’t stop though, pounding into Harry in a way that seems to keep his orgasm going forever, milking him for every drop he has in him. Harry knows the second Liam lets go of his own orgasm, at least five minutes after Harry has, but his hips don’t stutter like usual. He keeps going until he’s finished, and then rips himself out and flips Harry over.

Their mouths meet hungrily, devouring each other like it’s the last chance they’ll ever have. “You’re the best.” Harry mumbles against Liam’s lips.

“Better than Efron?” Liam asks.

“Efron never fucked me.” Harry laughs. “He’s a total bottom.”

“Wait, he’s what?” Liam asks. “You realize you just ruined about four different fantasies for me?”

“Really? You wank to Zac Efron of all people?” Harry asks.

“I mean, he’s not the only one.” Liam admits with a blush. “My go to is Megan Fox.”

“I totally forget you like girls sometimes.” Harry laughs. “Anyone else I know?”

“Um, Beckham, Taylor swift once or twice, Ri-” Liam starts.

“Taylor is awful in bed.” Harry says with a shudder. It’s definitely not one of his prouder moments. “Lovely girl, terrible in bed.”

“Yeah, but like, you don’t like girls. I might have a totally different experience with her.” Liam shrugs.

“Doubt it. She gives head with so much teeth it feels like a cheese grater.” Harry tells him. He can’t help the spike of jealousy he feels when Liam talks about his ex like that. She’s a completely wrong fit for him. Harry thinks she’s perfectly sweet, but she’d chew Liam up and spit him out.

“Now that’s another fantasy gone.” Liam huffs. “Anything else you’d like to ruin?”

“Victoria says Beckham in hung like a toddler.” Harry admits.

“Son of a bitch.” Liam groans. “That’s just- that’s not right at all.”

“And Channing Tatum, don’t know if he’s in your spank bank or not, but he has a really weird cock. It’s like purple when it’s hard. Looks like an eggplant” Harry laughs.

“You’ve fucked Channing Tatum?” Liam asks curiously.

“Sucked him off at a movie premiere once.” Harry shrugs. “It was hard to keep from gagging. He also sweats really badly.”

“We should get back to the babies before you ruin every celebrity I’ve ever had any fantasies about.” Liam groans.
“Did you um- did you ever think about me before we met?” Harry asks.

“I couldn’t not.” Liam smiles. “Niall had a poster of you over his bed for years. You were actually the first guy I ever let myself think about that way besides Niall, I think. When we started dating I thought it was just him I was interested in, because we’d always been so close to each other. It took a long time to realize I like all different kinds of guys. You had such a pretty mouth though, and everything just kind of went from there.”

“You would not believe how many times I’ve heard that line.” Harry giggles. “It’s how Channing Tatum got me.”

“Of course it is.” Liam says with a roll of his eyes. “You love to be flattered.”

“Oi, you calling me a diva?” Harry glares.

“No, I’m just saying you totally fall for lines like that.” Liam says smugly. “It’s not that hard to imagine.”

“See if I fall for any of your lines anymore.” Harry says grumpily.

“I don’t use lines on you. When I tell you you’re beautiful, that you look like an angel or a fallen star, when I tell you how you take my breath away, it’s all true.” Liam says, moving in closer. “I don’t need to use lines or flattery with you, because you give me inspiration just by being around.”

“Fuck Li.” Harry says, lifting himself up to meet Liam’s lips. “You don’t play fair.”

“Don’t have to play. Not with you.” Liam says, gently carding his fingers through Harry’s locks. “Besides, you’re not an opponent. You’re a grand prize.”

Zayn doesn’t know how long he’s been alone with the babies by the time Niall joins him, but he does know that Harry and Liam really need to close the door when they shag. He could hear it bouncing off the walls in the foyer the first time. Now Harry is up there shouting something Zayn can’t quite understand and he really doesn’t want to. At least the twins are young enough that they won’t remember this. Zayn isn’t so lucky.

“They been doin that long?” Niall asks sleepily.

“This is the second time.” Zayn groans. “They choose the weirdest times, I swear to god. They’re supposed to be getting your prescriptions. Instead Liam is making Harry his bitch.”

“You have to forgive them.” Niall mumbles. “They deal with stress this way. Actually, it seems to just be stress starting with you. There was Liam’s birthday sex, and yesterday, and now this after I told Haz what happened. I think it helps them clear their heads.”

“I told Liam.” Zayn admits, taking Niall into his lap when the Irish boy shuffles around on his feet, picking at his fingers. “I’m sorry it made you feel so guilty.”

“I just- I don’t want to feel like I’m betraying them by being with you.” Niall whispers. “I hate that I can’t have everything. Have one life with them and the twins, and then another with you. I need there to be two of me.”

“Two Niallers would solve pretty much everything.” Zayn agrees. “But there’s only one of you, and you belong with them.”
“I belong with you too.” Niall says firmly, but quietly. He laces his fingers through Zayn’s, causing warmth to tingle through the darker man. “If there was ever anyone in this world that was meant for me, then it was you. I feel it every time you touch me or kiss me. Every time you smile. The way you take all my pain away without even having to say a word.”

“Nialler, stop, please.” Zayn begs. “We’ve done this so many times. You chose them.”

“And you told me to do it.” Niall says. “You aren’t my only soul mate Zee, but I’ve never felt anything this intense in my life. Never. I chose them because they hold four parts of who I am, and I wouldn’t be able to give myself to you completely. Don’t ever think for a second that I wouldn’t love to have you for the rest of my life. It’s almost all I think about most days.”

“Please don’t say that Nialll.” Zayn whispers. “It’s already hard enough not to ask you to run away with me. Don’t let me think that you ever could. Just don’t.”

“Then what should I do? What should I say Zayn? Because we’ve never lied to each other.” Niall says quietly.

“Tell me we wouldn’t work. Tell me that you couldn’t be happy with just me, because that’s the only thread I have left to hold on to.” Zayn mumbles. “Tell me you can live without me.”

“We wouldn’t work.” Niall says, pulling Zayn in for a short kiss. “I can live without you.”

It hurts like a bullet to the chest, but it also feels like a weight being lifted off of him. He knows Niall is lying to him, but he needs to hang on to these things in order to help the Irish lad. He can’t walk away after it’s over unless Niall gives him this last vestige of strength. He doesn’t have it in him anymore. They sit in silence, wrapped so tightly around each other it feels like cracks are racing across his skin, but Niall is healing them with every small peck he peppers slowly across Zayn’s cheeks and neck.

“No.” Nialls, climbing off of Zayn’s lap. “We need some time apart. Can you stay here, while Haz runs me into town to pick up my meds? I don’t want them fighting.”

“Sure Nialler.” Liam says quietly. Zayn watches as Niall gives him a grateful smile and then disappears. It feels like a piece of him is slipping away, like he’s breaking apart, but it’s what he needs to let happen. Liam turns back to him and asks “Are you going to be alright?”

“No.” Zayn admits in little more than a whisper.

Liam doesn’t know how to respond when Zayn tells him that. There’s no proper reaction for this sort of thing. Are you supposed to comfort your fiancé’s kind-of-boyfriend? Do you leave him alone? Do you beat him into a bloody pulp and hide the body in a snow bank? Nobody knows.

Liam decides to ask, since he can’t seem to decide. “Do you want to talk about it?”

“No.” Zayn says quietly. “But can you just, like, stay with me for a bit? I don’t want to be alone.”

“Sure.” Liam nods. He takes a seat next to Zayn and says “Haz and I decided not to do anything this time. Nialler told him what happened, so we’re letting it settle.”

“Was that before or after you two started shagging loud enough they could hear you in London?”
Zayn asks.

“Before.” Liam answers. “Sorry it was so loud. Got caught up in the moment. Didn’t notice the door was open either time until afterwards.”

“Don’t apologize Leeum.” Zayn sighs. “I’m the one who should be sorry. It’s your house. I’m just a guest, and not even really that. That’s been made pretty clear.”

“Zayn, you’re more than a guest. You’re a friend.” Liam tells him. “You’re doing the hardest thing I could imagine. I know we’ve been really harsh on you, but I want to thank you for what you’re doing for Nialler. He needs you, and neither of us can help him right now.”

“Do you think it’ll work?” Zayn asks. “Do you think I can actually help him? Because I’m not so sure anymore.”

“I told you yesterday, I think you’re the only one who can.” Liam admits. It hurts to say, but he knows that Niall needs this. He needs Zayn. “You two need real closure, and that will take time. I think it will help you too.”

“Alright.” Zayn nods. “Can we um- can we talk about something else? Like literally anything is fine. I just need to clear my head of this for a minute.”

“Yeah, of course.” Liam nods.

“Oh, how about the horses? You’re like a week away from the barn building right?” Zayn asks.

“Yeah. The snow and ice are a problem, but it has to be up by the end of the month. There’s no other option.” Liam sighs. Doing this transfer has run him ragged. He hasn’t leaned on Harry or Niall at all for it, but he’s starting to wish he had. Nothing is going right with it. “We have to get the Draughts settled in time for them to foal in May. I don’t think we’ll bother bringing in thoroughbreds for a couple years to start breeding the Hunters. I don’t know enough about the whole thing for that. I’ve worked with Bobby’s sheep pretty much my entire life, but I’m no expert on horses.”

“El can help with that part, yeah?” Zayn asks him.

“She’s a vet, not a breeder. She can help deliver them and everything, but I’d prefer someone with more experience once it comes time for that part. Plus the Thoroughbreds are expensive as all hell. I’ve got a lead on some good bloodlines, but they’ll cost even more. Thank god Haz is so fucking rich he doesn’t know what to do with it, because this adventure is going to cost more money than I could have ever imagined.” Liam groans.

“I know.” Zayn nods. “I handle all his finances, remember? I’ve seen all the reports you’ve sent. He’s going to dip well into the one hundred and ten million range when this is all said and done.”

“No.” Liam shakes his head. “That can’t be right. He was worth over a hundred and forty million when he got here.”

“This house cost him six to build, and another million to completely outfit. Hell your engagement rings cost almost a million because he got them so custom made. The barn, stables, heated indoor running area, courses, horses, staff salaries, all that stuff builds up. I’ve done my research as well Leeum. It’s my job. Seattle Dancer was bought for over thirteen million dollars. His line here in Ireland still carries a lot of weight, even though he was a bust. If you plan on going that route, his blood is going to cost you. Then again he did produce over thirty stakes race winners by himself. His line is fantastic and your best bet at auctioning them off for enough money to make it all back.”
“Holy shit, you have done your research.” Liam says in surprise.

“Like I said, its my job.” Zayn tells him. “You shouldn’t wait on the thoroughbreds though. Get them here at the same time so you can breed them in June. You’ll lose money by the armload if you wait. A bunch of Draughts won’t do you much good. The Irish Hunters are where the money is at. Event horses are coming back in a big way in the states.

“Once you’re secure in that, then you can focus on the thoroughbreds more and make champions, but you need to secure a line and a name for yourself now. That may take a lot of money buying a horse at auction, but it will let people know you’re serious. Two thousand and six is the last time somebody bought a horse for over nine million dollars, but there’s an auction coming up next month, and one of the yearling is expected to go for that much at least. You should consider buying him, even if he can’t breed yet. Nobody will think to fuck with you if you do that.” Zayn explains carefully.

“Nine million dollars?” Liam gasps. “On one horse? One?”

“It’s just a suggestion Leeyum, but it’s something to consider. He’ll be one of the top ten most expensive thoroughbreds ever purchased at auction. You’ll have a name set up right out of the gates. This is an old game, and you need to be able to compete. Get him a jockey, race him and take every competition you can, and then breed him until his dick falls off. Even at the average of ninety thousand dollars a piece, which is actually probably outdated, he could sire enough to make back his cost in about a decade with some big wins under his belt. Stud fees are insane.” Zayn tells him.

“Holy fuck.” Liam groans. He hadn’t realized things would be this intense. He’s not even sure if they’re doing this for the money. They don’t have the space to open a world class stable. They’d have to buy up the farms around them for that. It’s too much. He feels like his head is going to explode. “I don’t- I don’t know what to do. We can’t compete with Godolphin or anything. We don’t have the space or the experience for that. I just wanted to keep the sheep.”

“But Haz didn’t want to slaughter them, so you agreed to this. You’ll have to decide between you what to do. If you’re in this to make money, then you’ll have a long and hard road cut out for you. There’s travel and competitions, and of course every major stable in the world will be out for your blood as soon as you step onto the scene. Or you could just breed to make the Hunters with average thoroughbreds, and have it much easier.” Zayn says.

“I have to talk to Haz and Nialler.” Liam says. “When they get back I have to ask them what to do.”

“Finally!” Zayn groans.

“Finally what?” Liam asks.

“Niall told me you had kept them completely out of the loop on this, but you can’t Leeyum. This is bigger than just you. It affects your entire future, whether you want it to or not. All of you. This farm is Nialler’s family’s legacy, and Haz’s fresh start, as well as your chance to be a success. They should have been involved from the beginning so I didn’t have to shock you into realizing how big this is for all of you.” Zayn sighs. “I know there’s no way this place could ever become world class, but you needed to understand what you’re in for if you tried to do that. Haz would have to buy at least four more farms to give you the space for that, and Nialler would never agree to it.”

“So you don’t really think I should go to that auction?” Liam asks. He’s dumbstruck by how well Zayn played that whole conversation.
“God no.” Zayn laughs. “They’d have you killed before you could raise your paddle. You’re in no place to compete with the middle-eastern breeders, or the ones in the states. You’d fall flat on your arse, and take them both with you. You’re too sweet to compete in that world. I’ve seen some monsters in my day, but nothing compared to the horse world. Did you know that in two thousand seven, thoroughbreds garnered over one point two billion dollars in prize money? It would be too much, too soon for you to try and dive into that. Maybe in about eight years, once you know the business inside and out, but not now.”

“How long have you been waiting to have this conversation?” Liam asks.

“Since yesterday morning. I asked about it, and Niall said you hadn’t told him anything about it. He doesn’t even know what breeds you’re looking at. It’s really upset him.” Zayn explains.

“I didn’t want to stress them out.” Liam sighs. “They were so worried about the house, and this is so much bigger.”

“Well maybe they should be helping you deal with it. They’re stronger than you’re giving them credit for.” Zayn says with a soft smile.

“I kind of hate you for how well you just played me.” Liam groans.

“Manipulation is a tactic I know all too well. Why do you think Haz is worth so much?” Zayn asks. “I’m a monster for him, because he’s too kind to do it himself. When I started working for him he was worth about fifteen million. I cut every throat necessary, and branched into everything possible. He gets paid three times the normal rate for his music, and makes almost have of his merchandise sales.”

“Remind me never to piss you off.” Liam laughs. “You’re proper terrifying.”

“I wanted to be an artist you know.” Zayn mutters. “Never wanted to do this kind of thing. I hate it.”

“Then why don’t you become one?” Liam asks. “You have enough money to fall back on if you don’t succeed, but judging by what I’ve seen of your work, I don’t think that would be a problem.”

“Because if I don’t look out for Haz, nobody will. You two can do it here, but I’m the only one who can deal with the rest of it. One day the press will track you all down, and you’ll need me there to keep the flood at bay. The market could collapse, and I have to make sure he’s taken care of. I owe him everything, and I won’t let him down in this one way. I can’t fail him.” Zayn answers. The last part is whispered, but Liam catches it anyways.

“You’ve done so much for him Zee.” Liam says, taking the darker man’s hand in his own. “Thank you for always taking care of him. Of both of them. I’ll talk to Haz about this, because he should know how much you still do for him.”

“He doesn’t need that, he needs to hate me.” Zayn mumbles. “I can give him that.”

“Well I can’t keep watching this go on.” Liam says firmly. “You’re a good man, and an even better friend than any of us realized. Well maybe Nialler did, but I didn’t, and I know Haz doesn’t either. It’s okay to let him know how much you care.”

“It won’t change anything Li.” Zayn says, taking his hand away. “He’s never going to forgive me.”

He leaves before Liam can say anything else.
The drive to the pharmacy is hellish and Niall finds himself cowering against the door and sending up every prayer he knows. It isn’t Harry’s fault, but the roads aren’t properly salted so there’s ice everywhere. He manages not to hit anything or anyone, but he can’t do much to help the panic gripping at Niall’s throat.

“I’m so sorry Nialler.” Harry says softly once they park the Range Rover. “Are you okay?”

“I’ll be fine.” Niall answers. “Maybe we should wait to go back until the meds take effect though?”

“That’s fine with me.” Harry says, wrapping his gloved hand up with Niall’s. They walk into the store and make a beeline for the counter. The pharmacist is a sweet old woman Niall has known since he was an infant, Rita. He doesn’t get a chance to greet her before Harry says “We have an order for Horan.”

“Niall dear, lovely to see you.” Rita beams. “When I saw your name on the packet I picked out a lolly just for you. Cherry, just like you always liked.”

“Thanks Riri.” Niall beams. He can’t believe after twenty years she still remembers what flavor candy he likes. She has so many customers in and out, but she always remembers Niall. It makes him remember how much of a fixture he used to be in this town. Ever since Harry came along he’s withdrawn away from his community, not that he regrets spending all that time together. He just misses his people.

“Got you prescriptions right here, dear.” Rita says, sliding four envelopes that rattle with their contents over the counter, along with the bright red lolly. Harry hands her his card and she swipes it with a smile. “You have a good day now.”

“You two Riri.” Niall says with a smile.

“Oh, I almost forgot. If you go see your parents some time soon, take some flowers from my stand for me, free of charge. I miss them terribly. They were such kind people.” Rita tells him.

“Actually, that’s a great idea.” Niall says thoughtfully. “Do you mind if I do it now?”

“Not at all.” Rita says with a sweet grin. “There are some lovely daffodils. I know they were your mother’s favorite.”

“Thanks.” Niall says, leaning over the counter to give her a kiss on the cheek. He walks over and picks up a beautiful display, minding not to grab one of the more expensive one and take advantage of her kindness. “If you don’t want to go Haz, I can call for a cab.”

“I’d love to go if you don’t mind it.” Harry tells him softly.

“Thank you.” Niall says, nuzzling into his neck.

“Can we get some for Sophia too?” Harry asks. “I’ll go pay for them of course.”

“Yeah. I’m sure she’d love to hear how the twins are.” Niall nods. Harry picks out a bouquet of lilies and pays for them, even though Rita tries to wave him off.

The drive to the cemetery is easier, even if the pills Niall took once they got in the car haven’t kicked in quite yet. He hasn’t gone to see his parents in ages, but he feels like it’ll help. Bobby and Greg would make fun of him for it, but he places one of the flowers over each of their graves when he finally completes the trek through the snow to their final resting places. He leaves the rest on his mother’s grave between them. It’s strange seeing his family all laid together like this, knowing there
isn’t a spot there for him.

“Can I uh- Can I have a minute Haz?” Niall asks. Harry gives him a peck on the cheek and wanders away without a word.

“Hi guys, I um- I miss you. I miss you so feckin much. Sorry mum, me mouth hasn’t gotten any better since you’ve been gone. I’m the same brat I always was. The one who stole your cookies even though they were too hot to eat, and always yelled too loud with da during Derby matches. Things are different now though. I don’t have you guys here to help show me what to do, and I need that.

“I’m so lost right now, and I’ve been trying to find my way back. I have two amazing guys, and I know you’d all find that hard to deal with, but I hope you’d understand. One of them is Liam, which i know you guys always wanted, and the other is Harry. He’s famous, but he’s also just amazing and he treats me so well. But there’s this other guy, and I love him too. I had to choose between him and my family, because I have a family now. You guys have grandchildren, or in your case Greg, a niece and nephew. Samuel Gregory, for you, you sod, and Gemma Elizabeth for Harry’s sister.

“Anyways, I had to make a choice, and I chose my family. I don’t know if it was right though. I’ve hurt them so much. I don’t think I really deserve to have them anymore, if I ever did at all. I don’t deserve Zayn either. Zayn is the other guy by the way. I just don’t know what to do anymore. I want it all, but that’s not an option. Just, if you’re listening, let me know I’m doing the right thing with Haz and Li. Let me know that letting Zayn go is the right thing for all of us.”

There’s no response of course, and Niall wasn’t expecting one. He’s got a lot of problems, but he doesn’t, like, talk to dead people or anything. He doesn’t imagine it though when wind brushes lightly across his cheek, blowing some of the daffodil petals away. He follows them with his eyes and they swirl around Harry, standing over by the trees for just a second before blowing away. He feels the wind whisper across his skin one more time, and then it goes still.

Harry smiles at him and cocks an eyebrow, silently asking if Niall is ready to be around him yet. Niall nods, blinking away the tears that are threatening to fall. He breaks into a run, sprinting as well as he can through the snowdrifts piled up like landmines. Harry opens his arms just in time to catch Niall when he leaps into the taller man. The go sprawling back into the snow, Niall laughing and crying at the same time.

“I love you so feckin much you stupid sod.” Niall chokes out, pressing his lips to Harry’s. They stay locked like that, losing themselves in each other in a way they haven’t in months. Niall can feel a part of him sliding back into place. He can reach out and touch the reflection in the water, only now it’s solid and real. It’s right here in his arms, smiling up at him once they break apart. “Thank you. Thank you for everything Hazza. Thank you for not giving up on me.”

“I’ll never give up on you Nialler.” Harry grins underneath him. “Are you okay?”

“I am now.” Niall nods. Everything isn’t perfect, but he knows now he made the right choice, no how badly it hurts. He’ll still need to work through some things, especially with Zayn, but now he can see that there’s still a light at the end of the tunnel, and that’s more than enough for him.

Harry drives home in complete silence, his hand knitted together tightly with Niall’s. He’s not sure what happened back at the cemetery, but it’s like someone flipped a switch for them. Niall somehow seems lighter, letting his old self show through the cracks. He hasn’t stopped smiling for even a minute and neither has Harry. It probably wasn’t the most appropriate thing, considering they still went to talk to Sophia afterwards, but he can’t help it.
Their cheeks are tinted a bright pink and he isn’t sure if it’s a blush or the fact that they laid in the snow for so long. He’s soaked to the bone and feels like he’s freezing, even with the heater going full bore. His hand is warm though, and that helps. When he finally pulls back up in the garage Liam is standing at the door with a worried expression.

“What happened?” Niall asks, getting out of the Range Rover.

“You’ve been gone for ages, the pharmacy is twenty minutes away max, even with the ice.” Liam says. “Did you two have another fight?”

“We went to go see my parents and Sophia.” Niall mumbles. “Rita suggested it and I guess I forgot to call. Sorry Li.”

“Oh.” Liam says with a bit of shock. “That’s totally fine Nialler. I just thought something had happened between you two again. Zayn’s upstairs, you should go talk to him. I think I upset him by accident.”

“That’s okay, we need to talk anyways.” Niall nods and then disappears inside, leaving Liam and Harry alone.

“Is something up with him?” Liam asks. “He seems different.”

“I’m not sure what happened, but he changed while we were there. I haven’t seen him genuinely happy since he’s been back, but I didn’t realize it until I saw him smile at me when he tackled me into the snow.” Harry explains. “It’s like something just- changed.”

“Haz, you’re shivering.” Liam says. “Let’s get you into some dry clothes.”

“Yeah, that sounds good.” Harry agrees. He can feel his smile stretching his cheeks now that his cheeks aren’t so numb, but Liam looks a little crestfallen. “Hey, what’s wrong?”

“Nothing Haz. I’m glad you two are reconnecting.” Liam says with a smile, but the lie is transparent.

“Don’t make me stand here and get a cold, because I’m not moving until you tell me what’s wrong Li.” Harry says stubbornly.

“I um- I talked to Zayn.” Liam sighs. “You need to try and make things better with him.”

“What the hell Liam?” Harry groans. He was feeling so good until Liam said that.

“Do you know how much he cares about you?” Liam asks. “He did months worth of research, pressing every avenue he can find, just to talk to me about the horses. Actually it was so I’d talk to you two about them too. He knows more about it than I do now, because he wants to take care of you even if you hate his guts.”

“It’s his job to watch my finances Liam. That’s all he’s doing.” Harry huffs.

“No it isn’t Haz. He loves you, and he’s afraid to fail you. He says it doesn’t bother him, that he’ll take it if you need to hate him, but he’s going to be a part of our lives for a long time. I know it’s hard, but I really think you should try forgiving him.” Liam tells him quietly.

“I’ll try, but no promises. He’ll have to help Nialler before I can even give him a chance.” Harry sighs. “I do miss him though.”
“Hey.” Niall says, leaning in the doorway. “Li said you were upset. Did you two have a fight?”

“Not really.” Zayn sighs. He’s been sitting in the dark, doing nothing like a pathetic teenager for the last half hour or so. It’s morbid as hell and Zayn hates himself for it a little bit. “I freaked out on him and then left.”

“Take a walk with me.” Niall says suddenly. He drops on the bed in front of Zayn with a big smile and plays with the darker man’s hair. It feels good and Zayn finds himself nuzzling into it.

“Or we could just do this.” Zayn mumbles. “Lay here together and you keep doing that.”

“You’ll fall asleep if I do.” Niall laughs. He doesn’t stop running his fingers through Zayn’s hair though. “Can we talk about it?”

“Sure, whenever we go on that walk. For now just tell me why you guys were gone so long.” Zayn says, curling up into Niall’s touch.

“We stopped by he cemetery so I could talk to me mum and me da and Greg” Niall tells him. “I hadn’t been to see them since I got back. It helped a lot.”

“It did?” Zayn asks. He can feel his eyes growing heavy, lulled into complacency by Niall’s fingers.

“It did.” Niall says happily. “Now put on some warm clothes, I’ll go downstairs and grab something to eat real fast, because the pills require my stomach be full and a frittata just wasn’t enough. Then we’ll take that walk.”

“Just a little longer please?” Zayn begs. “Don’t want to lose this feeling.”

“Alright Zee, anything you want.” Niall says, pressing a kiss to Zayn’s temple.

“I want to live in this moment.” Zayn admits. “I just want this not to end.”

“My fingers are going to get tired eventually.” Niall giggles.

“That’s not what I mean Nialler.” Zayn sighs. He shifts himself into a sitting position. “I love it so much when it’s just the two of us, sitting here and just breathing each other in. There’s no fighting or anger. I don’t have to pretend about anything with you. I don’t have to be the uptight monster I’ve been playing for the last five years.”

“You haven’t needed to be him in a long time Zee.” Niall tells him softly, grabbing his hands. “You can let down your defenses. You can show your heart of gold. You don’t have to keep being intense.”

“God, I love you so fucking much.” Zayn whispers. He leans forward and Niall meets him for a kiss. It’s short and sweet, but he could stay paused in it forever and be happy.

“I love you too Zayn.” Niall says softly.

“Oh, I wanted to show you something.” Zayn says excitedly, climbing off the bed. “I was smoking after my talk with Liam, and this blew in the window. Daffodils were your mum’s favorite yeah? There’s all those pictures of her with them.”

Niall look terrified and scrambles back off the bed. “That blew in the window?” he asks.

“Right into my hand, yeah. Crazy right?” Zayn asks, holding up the petal that danced into the room.
“Fuck!” Niall shouts. “Fuck, fuck, fuck!”

He’s out the door before Zayn can say anything. He’s left confused and sad. He’d thought it was pretty cool.

“You, me, walk, now.” Niall grunts when he finally finds Liam.

“I’m in the middle of feeding the twins Nialler. Can it wait?” Liam asks, blocking a piece of cereal Sam throws at his face.

“No.” Niall shakes his head. “Ask Haz to take care of it. Please Li, I need you and only you.”

“Alright. Go put on a proper coat.” Liam sighs.

“Meet me out back in five minutes?” Niall asks. He hears how desperate he sounds, but he doesn’t care. Everything that was so clear has become so clouded in just one moment.

“Yeah.” Liam nods, planting a peck on Niall’s cheek. Niall grabs a coat while Liam shuffles upstairs with the twins. He shrugs it on and grabs an extra pair of gloves and a hat for Liam, because he always forgets them.

Zayn finds him just before he gets out the door and says “Nialler, wait, where are you going?”

“I need to talk to Liam. Just- just give me a little bit Zayn. I don’t know what to do right now, and he can help me figure it out. You can’t.” Niall says, slipping out the door before Zayn can stop him. The wind hits him hard, but he’s too freaked out to feel the sting of it.

“What did you say to Zayn?” Liam asks when he walks out. “He’s crying.”

“I don’t- Liam I can’t deal with that right now.” Niall groans. “The only thing keeping me from having a panic attack right now is four different kinds of anti-anxiety medication.”

“What happened?” Liam asks.

“He caught a daffodil petal!” Niall shouts. “It blew right into his hand!”

“I don’t know what that means.” Liam says calmly.

“I brought daffodils to mum, and then I asked for a sign that I was doing the right thing when I picked you and Haz, because I don’t want to ruin your lives by staying. I’ve hurt you guys so much, and I just wanted to know everything was going to be alright.” Niall explains.

“And Zayn found a daffodil petal?” Liam asks.

“Yes, but you don’t get it. They blew all around Hazza. That was the sign. They made this little whirlwind and he looked so beautiful. Something felt so right about it. I finally understood that this is where I belong, with you two. Everything can be good between us again. I don’t have to keep being afraid you two will reject me.” Niall sighs.

“So why are you freaking out?” Liam asks, moving forward to wrap his arms around Niall. “It sounds like you’ve finally heard what we’ve been saying for weeks.”

“Because why did Zayn get one? Why didn’t you?” Niall asks. “Was it even a sign if it doesn’t answer the question? Am I just imagining things?”
“I don’t think so Nialler. I think maybe it’s telling us something else. Maybe we should all try again.” Liam says.

“How could that even work?” Niall asks.

“There’s this thing called dating.” Liam says with a smile.

“Haz wouldn’t agree to it. I don’t know if Zayn would either.” Niall sighs.

“We can talk to Haz. I think if you explain things, he might open up to the possibility. It’ll be difficult, but we should consider it.” Liam says, pecking Niall on the cheek. “I’m still willing to try. He’s a good fit here.”

“Could we ask Haz to try though, after everything between them?” Niall asks. “That feels cruel.”

“I think it’s the only thing left to do.” Liam admits. “You two clearly need each other, and like I told him, I think I could love him eventually.”

“You what?” Niall asks.

“I think I could love him eventually. I know things haven’t been great between us most of the time, but I can’t deny that we’ve had chemistry. He’s smart and funny and yeah, incredibly gorgeous. He’s great with the twins, and just as importantly, he’s great with you.” Liam smiles. “I love you and Haz and the twins so much, but I think there’s enough space in my heart for Zayn too.”

“Are we really going to do this?” Niall questions, feeling excited and scared at the same time.

“We’re going to try.” Liam nods.

“Let me get this straight.” Harry hisses. “You two both want to try dating Zayn, because of a flower petal? Have you lost your fucking minds?”

“Haz!” Liam says harshly. “You told us you’d listen to what we had to say.”

“I did listen Liam, and it doesn’t make any sense.” Harry groans. “I told you earlier, I’m not ready to forgive him yet. Why would you think this is a good idea?”

“Because the universe is telling us something Harry!” Liam shouts. “It has been for a long long time. Things could work between the four of us if we just give it a chance. There’s something there, and I know you aren’t blind to it.”

“And what if it doesn’t work? Could you handle that Nialler?” Harry asks.

“I think so, yeah.” Niall nods. “Haz I know you felt what I did today. The same thing that changed things for us, is saying Zayn belongs here too.”

“What if it was just the wind Niall?” Harry asks. He can’t believe this is happening. Even more though, he can’t believe he doesn’t really want to say no.

“You told me you believe everything happens for a reason Haz.” Liam interjects. “Why does that go out the window here?”

“Because I don’t know what to do here.” Harry admits. “I’ve never felt that way towards him, but I’ve also never really let myself think about him like that. I can’t say I couldn’t love him for sure. I’m
scared that if this doesn’t work then you’ll blame me for it.”

“We won’t. I promise.” Niall says earnestly. He reaches out to grab Harry’s hand, but the taller man is pacing the bedroom relentlessly. “Haz, we’re only asking you to consider it. We understand if you don’t agree right away or even at all.”

“Have you talked to him about this?” Harry asks.

“Not yet.” Niall shakes his head. “You have to be on board first.”

“So now it’s down to me?” Harry questions.

“Haz we all have to agree on this.” Liam says. “We’re not sure if there’s a protocol for this. Niall was drugged and I wasn’t even there when you two had this talk the first time around. We’re trying to do this the right way this time.”

“We want you to be comfortable with it.” Niall agrees.

“Just dating to start with?” Harry asks with a sigh.

“Yes, with all four of us.” Liam says quietly.

“And you won’t blame me if it all goes tits up?” Harry asks.

“Not as long as you don’t blow it up on purpose.” Niall laughs. “But you’ll try?”

“I’ll try.” Harry nods. “Let’s wait a few days though, give things time to settle down between all of us. Nialler, you need to adjust to your meds. I need to start smoothing things over with him. Liam, well you just keep doing what you’re doing because your head is so level I could put a glass on it without fear it would spill.”

“Are you three coming back some time tonight?” Zayn’s voice crackles over the baby monitor. He’s been cooing over the twins for the entire duration of the conversation, so Harry is pretty sure he hasn’t heard anything. He isn’t sure though, because the damn monitors seem to work against them half the time. There’s no little light on though, so that’s a good sign.

Harry grabs it and holds down the button before he says “Just give us another few minutes Zee. We have a lot to talk about.”

“Got a time frame for me?” Zayn asks. “Because Gems won’t stop crying unless I let her crawl all over the place, but Sam keeps getting jealous and throwing things.”

“Ten minutes.” Harry laughs. “And if you hit the play button on the cd player it’ll start the Downton Abbey theme. He’ll calm right down.”

Harry hears mumbled cursing and then the familiar chords start up. Sam squeals and it makes Harry smile. His boy loves that song, so he made a three hour long cd of it on loop. It’s getting worn out because he plays it so much. “I’m holding you to ten minutes. My stomach is eating me alive.”

“Where were we?” Harry laughs when he sets down the monitor.

“You agreed to try dating Zayn.” Niall says with a huge grin.

“You do realize how difficult this is going to be?” Harry asks. “You and he are already way ahead of Li and I in terms of a relationship. Are you okay slowing that down?”
“I’ll do my best.” Niall nods. “I don’t think I can pull back completely, but I can slow down yeah.”

“You realize Louis is going to have a fit.” Liam giggles.

“And Roma is going to have a total conniption.” Harry laughs.

“We might have to find another therapist.” Niall groans.

“There’s something else we need to discuss actually.” Liam chimes in. “The farm.”

“What about it?” Niall asks.

“I’m sorry for cutting you guys out of it. I could really use your help. Zayn made everything clear on that, but also kind of gave me a heart attack. He brought up so much stuff I hadn’t thought about yet, but this is our future. You two deserve to be a part of it. I was stupid for keeping it away from you.”

“Not stupid exactly.” Harry says with a grin. “Thick, yeah, but not stupid.”

“So what are we supposed to talk about?” Niall asks. “Because we have eight minutes left before Zee goes on a rampage and eats a package of crisps like a savage.”

“What are we going to do with this place?” Liam asks. “I know we’re getting horses, but what do you want to focus on? Event horses? Racers? Breeding stock? Should we start right off the bat with thoroughbreds so we can start breeding Irish Hunters, or do you want to skip Event horses all together, because that would save us the trouble of building a jumping course.”

“Li, relax. How about we go over all the information together, and then we decide what to do.” Niall says, rubbing Liam’s shoulder.

“There are different kinds of horses?” Harry asks. It’s kind of a joke, but not really. Harry didn’t know how much actually went into this. Thank god these two have their shit together. Harry would be screwed without them.

“Look Sam!” Zayn laughs. “All three of your daddies are back to save me from the madness.”

Sam gurgles in his lap, smiling so that Zayn can see the little caps of his teeth poking up. He waves around the teething ring that Zayn gave him before tossing it about a foot out of the chair. “Good throw boyo.” Niall says with a giggle. “Gonna be a little Rugby sta-

“No. No sports.” Harry huffs. “They will be well educated and civilized. They can ride horses for their sports.”

“Hey now, they can be what they want to be. If Sam or Gems want to be footy stars, or artists, or dancers, or comedians, or lawyers, we will support them.” Niall says.

“It’s going to be hard enough on them having more than two parents, especially when they’re all men.” Harry sighs. “They need a proper education to stand a chance in this world. They need to focus on their studies.”

“They’re five months old Haz.” Liam says with a laugh. “How about we leave that discussion alone for a few years. Let them be infants before you start plotting out their University plans.”

“Oxford is a good choice.” Zayn giggles. It’s hilarious watching them all bicker over something so silly. When Liam had asked him to watch the babies after Niall’s freak out, he’d been too upset to
say no. These two totally turned his mood around though. Sam and Gemma are amazingly cathartic for him. He loves the twins.

“Don’t encourage him Zee.” Niall grins. “He won’t stop until he has them a dorm set and a class schedule.”

“I have some pull there.” Zayn tells him. “I’m sure that could be arranged.”

“They aren’t living on campus.” Harry says with a horrified look. “I’ll get them a flat or something. My kids aren’t sharing showers with a bunch of hoodlums.”

“I forgot Oxford’s student body was mostly hoodlums. I thought it was a clean split between ruffians and hooligans.” Niall says with an eye roll. “What if they want to go to school at like Harvard or something?”

“They are not going to the United Sta- You’re teasing me.” Harry says, narrowing his eyes.

“Ding ding ding!” Liam giggles. “Thirty seconds. That’s much faster than usual.”

“Is the brain spasm over now?” Zayn asks. “Can we eat?”

“Well we’ll have to cook something first, but I can let this conversation drop for now.” Harry sighs. “Any requests?”

“Ooh tacos!” Niall says, hopping up and down.

“I was asking Zayn, Nialler.” Harry says with an eye roll.

“Did he have an aneurysm for real?” Zayn asks Liam in a whisper. Harry hasn’t been this nice to the darker man since the day before he found out about Zayn’s feelings for Niall.

“Not that I’m aware of.” Liam shrugs. “Maybe not the best joke though, considering Nialler went to go see his father today.”

Luckily the Irish lad is too busy making stupid faces with Harry as some sort of weird silent fight to pay Zayn any attention. “Yeah, sorry about that.” Zayn sighs. “Seriously though, did you guys slip him a couple Prozacs or something?”

“No, we just had an important conversation.” Liam says with a smile. He leaves it at that, vague as usual. “You should probably make a dinner decision though. This can go on for ages.”

“Tacos sounds good to me.” Zayn tells them. Niall whoops, running in a small circle and then shaking his arse in a victory dance. Harry just cackles at him and smacks it with one of his huge hands. If things keep going like this, then Zayn won’t be around much longer. He doesn’t know whether that’s a good thing, or a bad one.

“You’re just playing favorites.” Harry smiles. “Steak, fish, pork, shrimp, chicken, tofu, or beef?”

“Pork!” Niall laughs at the same time Zayn says “Chicken.” and Liam says “Steak.”

“I’ll help make the different meats, that way we can each have what we want.” Niall offers. “Zayn can stick to his halal thing, and I can completely ignore my no meat on Fridays thing, because it’s stupid, and eat pork until I explode. You can have your gross tofu stuff, because I know that’s what you were hoping we’d say. And Liam can get his steak, because he loves it.”

“Tofu isn’t gross.” Harry pouts.
“It is. It really really is.” Zayn laughs. Harry fixes him with a glare and an even bigger pout than he gave Niall.

“I’m over-salting your chicken.” Harry hisses.

“You wouldn’t compromise your reputation like that.” Liam giggles. “We all know it will be perfect.”

“Let me plot my treason without squashing my dreams Liam.” Harry glares.

Zayn isn’t really sure what happened in that room, or between Liam and Niall outside. It’s good though. They all seem really happy now, and Harry is going easy on him. Things should settle down soon. This is going to go faster than Zayn thought, and it scares him. He doesn’t want to leave Niall, not ever, but especially not soon. And now him and Harry seem to be back on the same wavelength. It feels familiar and happy. Liam’s hand is on his shoulder, squeezing gently as he laughs. It feels like family in a way, and Zayn wishes he had a place in it.

It takes two weeks before Niall feels himself starting to stabilize on the medications. His moods fluctuate wildly and he relies heavily on all three men to help keep him calm. Harry sits with him and rubs his hair when he starts to panic, Liam takes him on walks when he gets sad, if he’s not too busy with the barn, and Zayn helps him when he gets angry, drawing tattoo ideas all over his arms and back.

He alternates between sleeping in his bed with Zayn most nights, and Liam and Harry others. He’s slowed things down with Zayn, making sure not to let things get too heavy when they kiss. They don’t shower together anymore either. He can tell Zayn is upset by the way he’s pulled back, but he makes sure to show him plenty of affection still. He makes breakfast everyday before the other boys get up, because his pills don’t let him sleep for more than five hours at a time.

He manages with a lot of short naps, cuddled up with whichever warm body is closest to him. Zayn is completely gone for the twins, spending almost as much time with them as Liam does. It makes Niall smile uncontrollably until Harry throws bits off food in his hair to distract him. He’s been steadily fixing things with Zayn. They haven’t fought in days and it’s a blessed relief.

“How you feeling?” Harry asks, handing Niall a cup of tea. He’s almost stopped drinking completely, only having the occasional beer with dinner. Instead he drinks copious amounts of overly sugary tea and groans a lot about it.

“Better today. Haven’t burst into tears or had the sudden urge to decapitate anyone.” Niall shrugs.

“That is better.” Harry says with a smile. “My cheek still hurts from when you threw the remote at me yesterday.”

“I didn’t do that on purpose.” Niall huffs. “It slipped.”

“Sure it did.” Zayn laughs, walking into the kitchen with freshly changed twins. “You just happened to be yelling about getting the wrong kind of crisps at the time. Total coincidence.”

“Ha!” Harry laughs, pointing at Niall from across the table. “Zee agrees with me. You totally meant it.”

“I’ve told my story and I’m sticking to it.” Niall grumbles. It really was an accident. His hands got to sweaty while he was ranting and it flew across the room right into Harry’s face. It took every ounce
of self control he possessed not to laugh his arse off. It only worked for like ten seconds. He’d given Harry a dozen sloppy kisses afterwards as an apology. Apparently it didn’t work.

Liam steps through the back door, looking quite happy with the warmer weather. Mid-March has decided to be kind and is blessing them with a few days of sun. It’s only about seven degrees out, but Liam is thrilled anyways. Niall can feel the excitement for spring emanating off of him from all the way at the table. “The remote thing again?” he asks.

“What else?” Niall sighs. “These two apparently lead such boring lives that someone getting hit in the face is a multiple day affair.”

“In Ireland we call that a Tuesday morning and leave it at that.” Liam laughs.


Liam is obviously more than happy to oblige and plants one straight on Niall’s lips. They stay connected until Harry and Zayn start booing at them and throwing bits of biscuits. “Can you feel your lips again?” Niall asks.

“Almost.” Liam smiles, dropping onto Niall’s lap. “Wanna finish warming them up?”

Before Niall can duck in for another kiss Liam steals his tea and runs away, giggling like a moron. Niall just laughs, shaking his head while Harry gets up to make him another cup. Zayn reaches across, intertwining his fingers with Niall’s. “You feeling okay today?” he asks.

“Yeah, if you two would stop teasing me, and Liam would make his own tea, I’d be great.” Niall sighs. “How about you? Pez still sending those angry e-mails?”

“I’ve put a filter on her now.” Zayn laughs. “Her shit doesn’t even show up for me anymore. Anything that has the words dipshit, fucker, or cunt just gets deleted.”

“Aw, I can’t do dramatic readings anymore.” Harry pouts. He sets Niall’s new mug down and takes Gemma up in his arms. “The twins love it when I do that, don’t you baby girl.”

“Those are not appropriate for the twins Haz.” Liam scold from where he’s sitting on the counter.

“I replace all the curse words with the word puppy.” Harry grins. “It makes them ten times funnier.”

“So now its ‘I’m going to cut off your puppies and feed them to the Irish puppy you’ve been puppying you mother-puppying puppy licking puppy puppy puppy?’” Zayn asks. “That’s certainly not as much of a blow to the ego.”

“I was going to start doing them with accents.” Harry laughs. “Today was going to be French.”

“Sorry for ruining your fun Haz.” Zayn smiles. “I’ll write and have her cc you in.”

“We want to date you!” Niall blurts out. Everything moves in slow motion after that. Harry turns with a stunned look on his face, almost dropping Gemma in his surprise. Liam does a spit-take like a nineties sitcom, spraying tea out like a fountain. Niall can actually feel his heart stop. He hadn’t meant to say it. They’d agreed to wait on it until Niall had completely adjusted and they could talk about it a bit more. Everything just felt so natural in the moment. He couldn’t hold it back anymore.

“Nialler!” Harry and Liam groan in a terrifying level or synchronicity.

“You what?” Zayn asks, his voice slow and calculating.
“Fuck!” Niall hisses, dropping his head onto the table repeatedly.

“Well I guess it’s out there now.” Liam sighs.

“It’s not great timing, but I guess it’s not terrible either.” Harry says, sliding his hand under Niall’s forehead so he can’t slam it into the table anymore. It’s aggravating, but also kind of a relief because it was really starting hurt.

“Niall’s meds aren’t stabilized.” Liam says.

“They’re most of the way there.” Niall chimes up.

“Are they?” Harry asks. “Because that seemed pretty erratic to me.”

“Hello!” Zayn shouts, waving one of his arms while the other one cradles Sam. “What the hell are you three Gilmore girls babbling about?”

“We want to date you.” Harry says, using his hand to lift Niall’s head off the table.

“To see about adding you into our relationship.” Liam adds.

“There were only two Gilmore girls.” Niall says in a startling display of conversational competence. Really he should host a talk show. It would bomb harder than the London Blitz. That sounds preferable to having said what he’s just said.

“I count Harry as Emily.” Zayn glares. “And that is very much not the point Lorelei.”

“I’m taking away your Netflix access.” Harry grumbles.

“Haz, Nialler, focus.” Zayn says. “What the hell are you talking about?”

“I don’t know how much clearer we can make it Zee.” Harry says, taking a seat across from Zayn at the same time Liam completes the circle across from Niall. “But here goes. We want to start dating you, like as a group. We want to give things a trial, because we all feel like you belong here. You fit into this life with us perfectly. I know I was against it, but Nialler, Li, and I talked it over and I realized how good you’d be with us.”

“Zee, love, you’re kind of rambling.” Niall says gently, placing his hand on Zayn’s elbow. “We know you’ll need some time to-”

“Yes.” Zayn interrupts. “I’ll do it. I’ll do anything, because it appears my it skipped off with all of yours. I’ve been wanting to say something ever since you three took off for that talk the day you started your meds. I um- I really want to try this. I’ve always been a one person kind of man, but- I don’t know. I feel at home here with you guys. Not just Nialler, but all of you. I didn’t think you guys would go for it though, especially Haz.”

“None of us did.” Harry admits. “I wasn’t extremely receptive, even when I agreed to try I had my hesitations. The last two weeks have been great though. I think I can see a future here, now that I’ve calmed down and just seen things as they are. We could all work together, and we owe it to all of ourselves to try.”
He said yes. Niall has vaguely heard everything since then, but his heart is in his throat. Zayn said yes and that’s all that matters. Zayn is finally giving him a chance. He’s not leaving, he’s not turning him away, he’s saying yes. He can feel tears of happiness well up in his eyes, and wipes them away before anyone can notice. Except of course Zayn does anyway, silently slipping his hand into Niall’s while he listens to Harry talk.

“And Liam, you’re on board with this too?” Zayn asks.

“He’s the one who decided we should try.” Niall tells him. “Or at least he’s the one who said it a out loud first.”

“You are?” Zayn questions.

“I am.” Liam nods. “I think it’s a good idea, even if it hasn’t always seemed that way.”

“So you’re all serious about this?” Zayn asks. “It’s not just something you’re doing so you can say you tried before you kick me out? Or like a sympathy date or something?”

“I promise Zayn. It isn’t.” Liam smiles.

“We’re all in.” Harry agrees.

“We want you to be a part of our family.” Niall tells him. “As long as you’re sure you want to try.”

“I am. I really am.” Zayn smiles. His hand squeezes Niall’s and everything feels like it’s falling into place seamlessly. They have a chance now, a real chance.

“So... Like, how does this work?” Zayn asks. His stomach is all knotted up, but in a good way.

“Well there are these things called dates.” Niall laughs. “You go out to a restaurant and order food. Then you make small talk, pretending it’s because you want to get to know each other, but it’s really because otherwise you’ll start fondling each other under the table. Of course that’s while you drink too much wine because the waiter pours more when you aren’t looking so they can charge more and get a bigger tip. I hear it’s very enjoyable.”

“You’re such a shit Nialler.” Harry laughs.

“What I mean is, we already all know each other pretty well.” Zayn says seriously, but unable to keep his smile from showing up. “Not to mention, it kind of feels like an audition for me. Normally when you date someone you’re on equal ground. With this it’s you three, and then me.”

“No, It’s you and me, you and Nialler, and you and Haz.” Liam explains. “We’re separate entities, each of whom are pursuing a relationship with you while also maintaining one with each other.”

“That is no less intimidating.” Zayn sighs. “I feel like I have to impress a panel of judges, and unless all three say yes i don’t pass onto the next round.”

“Well, call me Paula Abdul, because you’ve already got a yes.” Niall giggles. “It’s the dreamey eyes and pouty lips. America loves it darling.”

“You’re Paula Abdul because you mix prescription pills and alcohol just to see new colors.” Harry laughs.

“There’s one I call bleen.” Niall says before he cackles. “Its-”
“Blue and green.” Liam smiles. “You told us. Harry pointed out that’s called teal, but you just burped at him and called him an amadán.”

“Liam wouldn’t tell me what it means.” Harry pouts.

“It means idiot.” Zayn smiles. “He calls me that all the time. I had to look it up.”

“Anyways.” Liam says with an eye roll. “You aren’t auditioning for us Zayn. You’re right, we do all know each other, but Haz and I haven’t spent any time with you romantically. We can’t just jump straight into a full on relationship with you, because it’s not the same as last time, and that didn’t work out particularly well the first time around. We want this to work for all four of us. We need to do it properly.”

“So when do we start?” Zayn asks.

“Well this wasn’t exactly planned for today, thank you Nialler, but how does tomorrow sound?” Harry asks.

“I can’t tomorrow.” Niall says quietly. “I have to visit my father. It’s the anniversary of his funeral.”

“Which means the day after that is special for you three.” Zayn sighs.

“Then what about tonight?” Liam asks.

“Could we get Mary on such short notice?” Harry asks. “She was pretty upset when we let her go.”

“I could call Louis.” Niall offers.

“Oh yes, lets add two more babies on top of parents dealing with newborns. That won’t end in a sextuple murder and Louis in prison because he hasn’t slept in weeks.” Liam groans.

“I’ll take care of it.” Zayn says suddenly. “Let me cook dinner. We won’t need anyone to watch the twins, we can watch a movie afterwards without worrying about our suits getting dirty, and nobody has to be a designated driver because all four of us can’t fit in a cab. I know it’s not an ideal first date, but we don’t exactly have the luxury of planning it out ahead of time. And honestly I’d feel a little weird waiting for three days minimum to start now that we’ve talked about it, but we’re still spending all this time together.”

“You’ll cook?” Niall asks. “You’re literally the only adult in this house I’ve never even seen touch an oven.”

“Ooh!” Harry giggles. “How about we all do it together?”

“I can’t impress you all if you guys help.” Zayn says. “I can cook. I’m not at Haz’s level, or Nialler’s when he does Italian, but I can make some things. Please, let me try?” Zayn begs.

“I’m good with that.” Liam nods.

“Me too.” Harry agrees.

“Then its settled. Zee, you can cook us dinner.” Niall giggles. “Just don’t make anything too spicy. Li wouldn’t admit it, but he’s a total wuss when it comes to spice.”

“Well there go the curry powdered chilies.” Zayn says with a shit eating grin. He’s actually not sure what he’s going to make, but he’ll figure something out. He’s actually getting a chance now, and he won’t let that slip through his fingers. There’s no reason to feel guilty anymore, and even if he’s a bit
scared trying this type of relationship, he has a chance to get everything he’s ever wanted and more, and he’s done running away from the things he wants.

Chapter End Notes

I can't help it. I swear, this story originally started as a Narry fic, but then I fell in love with Niall and Liam together, so I changed it to Narriam. Then Zayn came along and kicked my teeth in, because I have no control over my own stories. None. So now this is endgame... Zarriallam? Whatever the ship name is for Zayn, Harry, Niall, and Liam. They'll be together and happy and yeah. Get with it, because it's beautiful and I love it. The next chapter will be the last part, except for maybe an epilogue if enough people want one.
Chapter Six

Chapter Notes

I am so incredibly sorry that this took five weeks instead of three. My personal life got a bit hellish for a bit, which in turn slowed down my writing. On top of that there’s going to be even more waiting because I’m completely incapable of doing anything properly. I couldn’t find a way to end everything the way I planned on within the character limit, so there’s one more chapter to come (And maybe an Epilogue somewhere down the line.) Happy reading.

“Mm, smells brilliant Zee.” Niall says, sneaking up behind Zayn on ninja-quiet feet. He wraps his arms around the darker man’s waist, probably trying to keep him from jumping too much in surprise.

“You’re not supposed to be in here until I’m done.” Zayn scolds. There’s no bite to it though. In fact, he turns and presses a kiss to Niall’s temple before going back to cooking.

“Figured you’d need someone to relieve you while you go get ready.” Niall says, pressing his cheek into Zayn’s shoulder. “Unless you plan on wearing my ratty joggers on our first date. Also I’m pretty sure Sam got some spit up on your other shoulder.”

“I was going to ask Haz to do that, so you could help me get ready.” Zayn smiles. “I need to look amazing tonight if I want to stand any chance at this. I’d appreciate a second set of eyes.”

“Even in old clothes and covered in baby barf, you look amazing Zee.” Niall giggles. “But yeah, I can do that. Wouldn’t mind getting you all to myself one last time before we do this either.”

“Nialler, even if this all works out, and the four of us are together for the rest of our lives, you’ll always hold a special place in my heart. You know that right?” Zayn asks, turning around in Niall’s arms. “I want to try this, to give everything I have to it. I want to be in love with all three of you and be a family with you. I was stupid for not trying this before, just because it was scary and different.”

“I’m not sure it would have worked out before.” Niall tells him softly. “Everything was too raw, too recent. It was too intense, but now we’ve all let things calm down, gotten out all the resentment and anger. I think it can really work now. I think we have an actual shot.”

“I do too.” Zayn whispers, leaning forward to press a kiss to Niall’s forehead. His fringe tickles at Zayn’s lips, and fills his nose with the scent of the shampoo he swears he doesn’t steal from the darker man. It’s beautiful in a way Zayn couldn’t capture if he had a thousand years to paint it. That doesn’t mean he won’t try though. He’ll spend the rest of his life trying to show them all how he feels.

“I’ll go get Haz and have him finish up for you.” Niall grins. “You meet me up in the room and we’ll make you look dazzling.”

“Yeah.” Zayn says and nods. Niall flits off, his enthusiasm palpable. It feeds into Zayn’s, making his heart flutter faster than he even knew it could. He’s never been this nervous or this excited in his entire life. He checks on the steaks for the hundredth time, making sure the bleu-cheese crust is completely done before pulling them out.
“Nialler said you want me to finish up for you?” Harry asks, startling Zayn so bad he nearly drops the baking sheet. He lets himself calm down from his near heart attack before turning around to have his breath taken away. He’s seen Harry dressed up so many times before it had mostly lost it’s effect. Not this time though. He’s wearing a tight black suit, hugging all his curves like a second skin. His hair is done up in a quiff that’s so precise it looks like he took hours. He looks insanely perfect, and it’s all for Zayn.

“I- um- yeah I-” Zayn says, losing all sense of eloquence. “You look amazing.”

Harry blushes, turning his eyes down and smiling like he’s never heard that before. “What do you need me to do?”

The real answer to that would be indecent and completely wrong to say on a first date. It still almost pushes it’s way out of Zayn’s throat. Luckily, instead he says “I’m basically finished, but the sauce needs a few more minutes to deglaze and heat the alcohol out of the cognac, and then you add the stuff in the measuring cup. Bring it to a boil and reduce the liquid down to about half.”

“Anything else?” Harry asks. He takes a step into the kitchen and Zayn feels his heart stutter. That in itself would be fine, but he also feels his cock jump, and he knows Harry saw it by the smirk that lights up his face.

“Nope.” Zayn says with a gulp. “That’s it.”

Harry leans forward until his lips graze the shell of Zayn’s ear, sending sparks flying everywhere across his skin and whispers “Then you should go get prepared for us, yeah?”


He walks out of the room as quickly as possible. Harry chuckles behind him and Zayn can tell the taller man is still watching by the chill that runs up his spine. He almost runs straight into Liam when he turns the corner onto the staircase, and of course he looks as good as Harry does. He’s gone a lighter route, a soft gray suit that shows off his broad shoulders, paired with a scarlet shirt and tie that brings out the color in his cheeks. His stubble has been trimmed down to perfection, and his hair is so neat Emily Post herself couldn’t find anything wrong with it. “Fucking hell.” Zayn mutters.

“Is it bad?” Liam asks nervously, looking down and smoothing out nonexistent wrinkles.

“It’s bloody gorgeous Leeyum.” Zayn tells him. “I mean, you are. The suit is great, but you look- just- holy fuck.”

“You like it then?” Liam asks, his tone hopeful.

“I do, yeah.” Zayn nods. “I’m just glad I get to see you all individually first, because if you three walked into the dining room like that, I think I’d pass out.”

“Good thing then, yeah?” Liam grins. He gives Zayn a wink and then politely turns to let the darker man pass by. Zayn smiles gratefully and then finishes the climb up to the second floor. When he turns to the door he takes a glance, and Liam is definitely still looking.

“I’m screwed.” Zayn groans when he walks into the bedroom. “They look like fucking movie stars. I can’t compete with that.”

“So I guess I just look homeless then?” Niall asks, walking out of the closet with two armfuls of Zayn’s suit bags. He looks anything but that, in an amazing navy blue suit that makes his eyes
sparkle. He’s paired it with a teal striped tie that shouldn’t work as well as it does, and probably wouldn’t on literally anyone else. His hair is styled up, looking effortless and a little messy, but gorgeous nonetheless.

“No.” Zayn says, shaking his head. “You look every bit as good as they do. I have no idea how you did that in the last few minutes, but it’s amazing.”

“Eh.” Niall shrugs, placing the suits on the bed. “I never dress for anything important until ten minutes before I have to leave. Drove me mum mad. Went to a wedding once, and did all this in three minutes flat. Doesn’t give me time to get nervous and sweat through it though, so that’s a plus.”

“That’s about the only benefit for me right now.” Zayn laughs. “Normally I’d spend hours getting ready for a first date, but now I have ten minutes or so.”

“Then strip down.” Niall grins wickedly. “I’m thinking the Armani all black, but you should decide on what feels right to you.”

“Not that one then.” Zayn says. “I know it looks good, but it’s also the suit I wore when I proposed to Perrie. Bad luck in that suit.”

“Not the Armani then.” Niall agrees, setting a bag off to the side.

“What about the Hugo Boss?” Zayn asks, peeling his shirt off over his head.

“Narrow it down.” Niall giggles. “You have four Hugo Boss suits. Two black, one light gray, and one gunmetal.”

“Which do you think?” Zayn asks, trying not to trip as he tears off the joggers.

“I’d still go with the all-black.” Niall offers. “You look amazing in all black. Like a fucking model slash James Bond slash incubus.”

“Well I’m not planning on sucking out any souls, but all black it is.” Zayn laughs.

“Change your pants first.” Niall says when Zayn takes the bag he’s handed. “Something more sexy than Hanes briefs.”

“Nobody will be seeing my underwear tonight Nialler.” Zayn scoffs. “This is going to be slow. What kind of slut do you take me for?”

“The kind that gave me a handjob in that bed, tried to ride Liam on the front porch, and offered to blow Haz so he wouldn’t quit his career.” Niall laughs. “Also I’ve seen you check out both Tommo and El on several different occasions.”

“Nialler.” Zayn groans. “Don’t call me a slut right before our date. I’m nervous enough as is.”

“Don’t be nervous Zee.” Nial says, slipping in close and pressing a chaste kiss to Zayn’s lips. “You aren’t being graded or judged. This is as much for you as it is for Haz and Li. Personally, I’ve already been won over, but they’re going to work just as hard at impressing you, as you are for them. It can’t just be about them accepting you, because you need to choose to be with them as well. You and I aren’t the only ones who want this to work. They do as well.”

“I can’t believe this is really happening.” Zayn admits, feeling more than a little light headed.

“Is that bad, or good?” Niall asks, unable to hide the anxiety in his voice.
“Good. Definitely good.” Zayn smiles. “I promise Nialler, I really do want this. I know what I’ve said in the past about just being with one person. And I know how it might seem, like I’m only doing this to be with you, but I’m not. I do love you, and I do want to be with you, but now I can see a future with all three of you. Like someone just smacked me in the back of the head and it fixed my eyes so I could see how good we could all be together. How happy we could all make each other.”

“You’re so slow.” Niall giggles. “I’m glad though, because now we can do this without feeling guilty.”

Zayn lets himself be led down by Niall’s hand cupped around his jaw. Their lips connect, and it’s brief, but powerful and intoxicating. Yeah, he’s standing around in his underwear kissing his kind-of-boyfriend while the other two are downstairs watching his food, and it probably isn’t the wisest use of his allotted time. It’s his favorite though.

“Now go get dressed so we can do your hair, yeah?” Niall mumbles against Zayn’s lips. The darker man nods, regretfully breaking contact, and shuffles into the bathroom. Niall made a good choice with the suit. It hugs Zayn tight, but still manages to make him look masculine and darkly mysterious. He forgoes the tie, deciding he looks better with the top button undone.

“Niall!” he calls half a second before the Irish lad sweeps in. “I need-”

“Already picked out the cuff links.” Niall grins, handing him a box. “Silver with obsidian inlays.”

“Perfect.” Zayn smiles in relief. He quickly puts them in, his hands expert at the task after the thousands of times he’s done it for himself and Harry over the years. Niall hangs the jacket on the back of the door, and then steers Zayn into a chair while he finishes up.

“What do you want to do with it?” Niall asks, fingers running through Zayn’s hair.

“I was Haz’s plus-one to the American Music Awards in-” Zayn starts to explain.

“Twenty Fourteen, I know. I’ve seen pictures from both times you had that do.” Niall laughs. “You want that then? The pompadour slash quiff? The Johnny Depp?”

“Will it-” Zayn starts again.

“It’ll look great.” Niall nods, preemptively answering Zayn’s question while he rummages through the army of hair products arranged on the counter. “I’m no Lou Teasdale, but I think I can get it right.”

He undoes his jacket, sliding it off and onto the back of the chair, and then rolls up his sleeves. He squirts something into his hands and then starts massaging it into Zayn’s hair, his fingers quickly working the foam all around. Zayn holds a comb at the ready over his shoulder, which Niall grabs after he’s finished rubbing it all in. He swoops Zayn’s hair up and teases it to the side creating perfect waves and then gets to work on the fringe sweeping it off of Zayn’s forehead and putting a perfect curl on the right side that ends in a wave, just like Lou did all those years ago. “I assume you want the one loose strand, just like then?” Niall asks, his brow furrowed in concentration and his tongue poking out through his teeth.

“If it will look okay, then yeah.” Zayn says, careful not to move his head. “It kept moving all over the place that night though, so not entirely loose.”

“So like an underline, but diagonal.” Niall nods, moving it into place. “Like this?”

He moves out of the way and lets Zayn see in the mirror. It’s exactly the look he was going for.
“How did you get so good at this?” he asks.

“Spent a lot of time doing Liam’s hair before he’d go out on dates with birds.” Niall explains, trying to tease at Zayn’s hair just a little more on top. “Plus Tommo used to let me play with his when he lived here. Lou also taught me some stuff when she came out back in September, so I could do Haz’s hair if he needed help.”

“You’re bloody brilliant at it.” Zayn grins, turning from side to side and checking out the whole thing.

“Nah, I’m just alright.” Niall says waving him off and trying to turn on the faucet with his elbow. “I couldn’t get it quite right on top like she did, but we have to get down there, like, five minutes ago.”

“They’ll understand once they’ve seen what you did. It took Lou forty minutes to get this done.” Zayn smiles. He reaches over and turns the knob, and Niall rewards him with a grateful smile and a blush. “And it looks perfect. Thanks Nialler.”

“Thank me by putting on your jacket so we can go down and eat.” Niall laughs. He sticks his hands under the spray, cleaning off the excess foam, and then towels them off. Zayn is fully dressed by the time Niall pulls back on his suit jacket and turns around with a grin. “Alright, Zayn Javadd Malik, are you ready to go on a date with us?”

“Nah, I’d rather just wank in the mirror to how good I look.” Zayn smirks.

“Don’t be an arse.” Niall glares. “Let them see the you that I get to, not the cocky bastard mask you put on so that you don’t get hurt by human interaction.”

“Nialler, I was just making a joke because you made me look so bloody good.” Zayn pouts. He knows it’s true though. He has to let down his defenses or tonight won’t go anywhere.

“Oh.” Niall says, blushing at his own outburst. “I’m sorry, I just want everything to go right. I want them to like you as much as I do.”

“So now you just like me?” Zayn asks with a pout.

“I like you and I love you.” Niall says, rolling his eyes. “I like you as a person, when we hold hands and talk about nothing, and the way we laugh at horror movies that only you could get me to watch, and how you always compliment my cooking, even though I get it wrong sometimes. I love you because you make me feel safe and happy. You always encourage me, but never push. You’re a part of me, like an extension of my heart. It’s different, at least for me.”

“I understand what you mean.” Zayn nods. “I like and love you too.”

“Good, now that that’s settled can we please go eat?” Niall begs. “I really want to start this as soon as possible.”

“Yeah.” Zayn nods. He holds his hand out, which Niall takes without hesitation, and they walk back down to the kitchen in giddy silence. Zayn’s heart is racing and he absentmindedly wonders if Niall can feel it through his hand. Probably not because he’s obviously just as nervous.

“I hope you don’t mind, but we plated everything up.” Harry says before they can even cross the threshold into the kitchen. “Didn’t know what else to do after everything was done.”

“That’s fine with me.” Zayn smiles. “Presentation isn’t really my thing.”
“Says you.” Liam chuckles before letting out a wolf-whistle.

“Holy shit Zee.” Harry gasps when he turns around. “You did all that in ten minutes?”

“Niall did it actually. You know I’m hopeless when it comes to my hair.” Zayn explains.

“You let me walk around with an afro-perm for six months, but you could do this all along?” Liam asks Niall with a pout.

“I tried to get you to cut that thing every day of those six months Li. You got mad at me, remember?” Niall laughs. “We didn’t talk for weeks.”

“Only cause you said I looked stupid.” Liam sighs. Zayn is relieved at how easy things are in the room. First dates for him have always been so tense. He always nitpicks every little thing, trying to find a reason to run. This doesn’t feel like that though. He’s nervous, yeah, but that’s because of the newness of this.

He already knows these men inside and out, all their little eccentricities that make them tick. He knows how Niall chews his nails when he’s nervous, and how Harry reflexively pushes back his fringe, even if his hair is already pulled back in a bun, and how Liam pouts when jokes go over his head. He knows that Harry will tap his fork against the plate if he’s annoyed, or that Liam’s eyes glaze over when he’s bored, and how Niall’s mood can still change terrifyingly fast. He knows them, and none of that makes him want to back out. The only thing that does scare him, is that none of it actually scares him at all.

“You did something to my steaks, didn’t you?” Zayn asks once he’s tried it. He had planned to do this in the formal dining room, but Niall suggested the kitchen table since it was round and made everything feel more equal. Liam has set out candles, and the whole thing is just beautiful.

“Not a thing, I promise.” Harry laughs.

“I can vouch for that.” Liam smiles.

“There’s no way something I made tastes this good.” Zayn scoffs, eyeing his bleu-cheese crusted filet-mignon as if it will give up the answer. “There’s no way. I always wanted it to, but it never has.”

“Well it’s all you, Zee.” Harry grins. “I’ve never been able to get the crust right on this without making the steaks well done, which I hate. And the sauce, holy fudge. Ho-ly fudge. Amazing.”

“Stop.” Zayn groans. He can feel his cheeks heating up at the compliment, which in all honesty he isn’t sure he deserves. He’s almost positive Harry actually did do something to the meal to make it taste this good. He’s more shocked than anyone at how well it turned out. The shrimp mac and cheese is amazing, and the vinaigrette he made for the salad is light enough to float away. It’s more like something he’d pay an arseload for in a restaurant than anything Zayn has ever made before.

“I have a question actually.” Liam pipes up. Zayn nods and he continues. “I thought you couldn’t eat shellfish.”

“Actually, while most shellfish are haraam, shrimp and prawns are permitted.” Niall says before Zayn can answer.

“How did you know that?” Zayn asks curiously.
“I’ve been studying up on it.” Niall admits with a blush. “I didn’t want to make something that you couldn’t eat by mistake, like the rabbit stew I learned from Angelo. There’s a lot more than I thought there was to it. Like soy sauce. You should have told me about that.”

“That’s really nice Nialler.” Zayn smiles. “I’d forgive you though. It’s hard to adjust to halal right away. Pez hated it, so she always ate whatever she wanted anyways. I try not to be too strict with it for other people’s sake. Like the soy sauce thing. You didn’t know, and it’s just generally frowned upon. Not forbidden per se.”

“Well I’ve been buying halal meat since you moved back in, and trying to keep it stored separately from the other things like lobster and pork.” Harry says. “It’s harder to find in Ireland, but there’s a halal butcher a couple towns over so I go there now.”

“You don’t have to do that.” Zayn sighs. “I can be the one to drive out there for that.”

“Nonsense. They also have a farmers market that I love to visit.” Harry laughs. “Got this spinach there, and the onions.”

“Oh god.” Niall groans. “I’m going to have to drop in on Patty and say hi then.”

“She’s gonna be maaad.” Liam giggles.

“Who is Patty?” Harry and Zayn ask in tandem, grinning at each other when they hear it.

“She runs the market my family has been shopping from for forty years.” Niall explains. “She was also one of me mum’s best friends.”

“And a louder woman has never drawn breath.” Liam laughs. “The whole town is going to hear it when Niall tells her.”

“Maybe I can, like, still buy from her, and then just donate it.” Niall says pensively. “No, that won’t work. She’s too involved in the church. One of the fathers might mention something. I could take a bus over to Athlone though. That could work.”

“Her sister runs the soup kitchen in Athlone, remember?” Liam says. “How about instead-”

They’re off in their own little world, so Zayn turns to Harry instead. “They do this a lot on dates?” he asks.

“Actually, this is only really our second date all together, unless you count the diner in Connemorehouse.” Harry explains.

“Connemara.” Liam and Niall correct before going back to their plotting.

“Whatever it’s bloody called.” Harry says. “The other one was for Liam’s birthday, and that was half so we could get him out of the house for the surprise party. This is all pretty new for us too.”

“Well I’m glad I’m not the only one.” Zayn sighs in relief.

“Don’t be nervous. I think it’s going great.” Harry smiles, taking Zayn’s hand for a brief squeeze. “The food is great, the babies are sleeping, and at least everyone feels comfortable enough to talk like normal. I’m not half as nervous as I was when you came down here looking like a bloody demi-god.”

“You’re one to talk.” Zayn smirks, letting his eyes run over Harry in his suit. “You three look
brilliant. I couldn’t even get ready by myself.”

“Not even a demi-god could have pulled the transformation you did in just ten minutes by himself.” Harry says, biting a little at his lip. “It’s like a Lady GaGa costume change, but you didn’t come down in drag or with a mermaid tail.”

“Not quite the impression I’m trying to make.” Zayn laughs. “Maybe next time.”

He almost groans when he hears the overeager words slip out of his mouth. “I uh- I mean if there is a next time.” he stutters.

“We’ll have to discuss it of course, but I think it’s fairly safe to say that’ll happen.” Harry ducks in and whispers. “As long as you still want it, that is.”

“If you keep whispering in my ear like that, I’m going to start babbling like a complete loon.” Zayn hisses quietly. “Let me make a good first impression before you make me go all weak in the knees and tongue tied.”

“Is it really a first impression though?” Harry asks softly. “We’ve know each other for five years, and when we met, you came up to me pissed out of your mind giving me a sales pitch which I mostly listened to because you were cuter than my other agent. You met Niall just over a year ago, and you bought out his farm and then secretly trapped him with a contract, not that I’m complaining. And when you met Liam properly you flirted with him all night and then tried to molest him.”

“First romantic impression then.” Zayn sighs. He really does not have a great track record with these boys. “Wait, that’s why you hired me?”

“Not really. I hired you because you didn’t think I was an idiot.” Harry says with a shrug. “I knew what Chris was doing long before I ever met you, but I was too timid to do anything about it. Then you came up to me in that club, completely smashed, and talked to me like a person instead of a brain dead kid. By the time he was on the cover of every London paper I knew I had done the right thing choosing you.”

“I’m really glad you did.” Zayn admits.

“So am I.” Harry tells him with a sweet smile. “That decision changed my entire life. Without it I’d have never had you as a friend, never met these two, and never had this amazing steak because I’m having a lovely date with all of you.”

“Alright, so we’ll buy from Patty, give half to Tommo and El, and then get a car service to deliver the food anonymously to Christ the King.” Niall says, snapping Zayn out of the Harry-induced cloud of fog he’s in right now.

“They’re insane.” Harry giggles. “You’re sure you want in on this? I can vouch that it rubs off on you.”

“That’s a risk I’m more than happy to take.” Zayn grins.

After dinner they move into the TV room to watch a film to round out the evening. If this were a proper date then Zayn would have insisted on seeing the movie first so at least the dinner would have an easy conversation topic. This is better though, giving them all a chance to wind down and cuddle up. Niall insisted on letting Liam and Harry take the spots on either side of Zayn, and moves the coffee table/ottoman up against the couch so he can lay back against the darker man’s legs.
He almost feels overcrowded with all three men wrapped around him, vying for his attention so much he can barely focus on the movie. Luckily it’s the Avengers film that they’ve all already watched a hundred times because it’s so good. It’s nice having them all like this, Niall silently mouthing every line because he loves it, Harry moaning contentedly while Zayn plays with his hair, and Liam gasping and squealing at the same parts he always does.

“Did you see that?” Liam laughs excitedly when the Hulk does something particularly funny. Zayn just nods and smiles happily at the huge grin that breaks out on the muscular man’s face.

By the time the credits roll he can tell all of them are getting sleepy, and the date is just about over. They watch until the end of course, Liam and Zayn trying to find little Easter eggs for the comic book fans. They always spot something new, and usually in tandem. This time it’s a reference to Captain Marvel’s old outfit, a black one-piece bathing suit with a lightning bolt down the center hanging off a rack somewhere in the background.

Zayn doesn’t really want it to end, but he knows that it has to eventually. The movie is done, the food is put away, and the twins are tucked in for the night. There’s nothing left to do but say good night, and then toss and turn alone in Niall’s bed until morning, when he finds out if they want to do this again like he does. Nobody says anything for a bit, and Zayn is more than content to just sit here and cuddle until they do.

It’s Harry who finally breaks the silence with a sleepy yawn. “How am I this tired at only ten?” he asks, his voice showing just how tired he really is.

“Cause yer a retired old fart.” Niall laughs.

“I am the youngest one here.” Harry pouts, rolling over onto his side so he can direct it at the Irish lad.

“And yet, none of us have retired.” Liam giggles.

“It was the hair rub Haz.” Zayn smiles. “It always makes you sleepy.”

“Ah, so it’s your fault then. Damn those magic fingers.” Harry says in faux-outrage.

“Gonna getcha one o those wire spider tings to rub on yer head fer when ya can’t sleep.” Niall cackles. He’s obviously much more awake than the other two.

“We should get him to bed.” Liam says softly.

“Yeah.” Zayn nods. “That sounds about right. You keep him up any later and he’ll ask you to carry him upstairs.”

“There’s a solid seventy percent chance that’ll happen anyways.” Harry says, even though he sits up right afterwards and stretches. Niall crawls backwards off the ottoman while Liam stand up on his own. He reaches a hand out to Zayn, helping the darker man up too. Liam grins sheepishly, rubbing the back of his neck while a flush makes it’s way across his cheeks, and then steps over to help Harry stop from falling backwards onto the couch.

Niall grins happily as he moves the ottoman back into it’s usual position, never taking his eyes off of Zayn. He makes a motion with his head, signaling them all to get a move on. Liam and Harry do it obediently and Zayn marvels at how in sync they all are. They’re pretty much back to where they had been before the twins, and Zayn wonders if he can fall into that rhythm as well. He feels like he could, like he’s found his place, but now it’s a waiting game. Harry, Liam, and Niall have to make a decision to keep seeing him, but Zayn’s mind is already made up. He wants this so badly he can taste
They walk up the stairs quietly, stopping at the landing that leads directly into the bedroom the other three boys share. Zayn idly wonders if he’ll ever get to think ‘we’ share instead. “I um- I had a really good time tonight.” he says bashfully.

“So did I.” all three of the others say at the same time, followed by a scarily synchronous laugh.

“We did too Zee.” Niall smiles happily. He leans up, kissing Zayn on the mouth with a giggle that doesn’t affect it too badly. There’s a warmth and familiarity to it that never gets old. He could kiss Niall forever and it would always be exciting, yet comfortable. It’s perfect, but Zayn feels awkward with the other two staring at them even after they break apart.

“Me next.” Harry says, a wolfish grin splitting his face. He darts forward, making sure Zayn can see him lick his lips before he pushes them against the darker man’s. It’s everything Zayn ever imagined it would be and more. They’ve snogged a few times on dares or while Harry was pissed, but never like this. Harry’s mouth is like fire, setting Zayn’s lips tingling from the instant they connect. He manages to make it both chaste and filthy at the same time, licking into Zayn’s mouth just a bit before he pulls away.

“Last, but hopefully not least.” Liam says, stepping forward and cupping Zayn’s cheeks. Liam is an amazing kisser. A World Champion level snog-master. His lips are soft and pliant, and taste like cinnamon and vanilla, even though there wasn’t any in their meal. He’s not dominant exactly, but he’s definitely trying to leave an impression. It’s extremely successful. Much better than on the bench.

Zayn is lightheaded by the time it ends, trying desperately to remember each sensation in case it never happens again. He really really really hopes it does. “We’ll see you in the morning.” Niall says.

Zayn nods, afraid to say anything while he’s this blissed out. He can’t ruin this by talking and accidentally shoving his foot in his mouth like he is wont to do. He waves a small goodbye as they shuffle into their room, and then Zayn heads off to Niall’s. He probably won’t get much sleep tonight, but at least he has something amazing to think about.

“Well we all know what my vote is.” Niall says the second he hears Zayn’s door close. “I say we ask him for a second date.”

“You’ll hear no arguments from me.” Liam says, a dopey smile painting his face.

“Me either.” Harry grins. “I was afraid going into this, but tonight was great.”

“Next time though, we plan ahead.” Liam says. “I loved everything about tonight. It’s probably the best first date I’ve ever had actually, aside from ours Nialler. I would like to go out though, like, on a real date.”

“We can do that.” Harry nods.

“Can I go ask him now, or do you want to wait until morning?” Niall asks.

“He’ll be up all night worrying if you don’t.” Harry laughs.

“Go ahead, but come back in here afterwards.” Liam says softly. “If we’re going to start dating
properly, then you two are going to have to hold off on sleeping in the same bed until we’re all to that level. If you start having nightmares again, then we can talk about it, but otherwise I’d prefer if you slept with us for now.”

“I actually kind of figured you’d say that.” Niall admits. “That’s fine. We can hold off for a while.”

He heads off through the door, buzzing with energy when a thought hits him. He ducks his head back into the room and starts to say “Wait, do-

“No, Nialler, kips don’t count. As long as they’re not in the bed.” Harry laughs. They know him so well. He nods and literally skips over to the door to the room Zayn is in.

He’s barely knocked when Zayn answers the door, already somehow dressed in Niall’s joggers again and his hair all mussed up. “Yeah?” he asks hopefully.

“No mobile in here earlier.” Niall says, smothering a smile that would give away his joke.

“Oh.” Zayn sighs, his face falling just a fraction of an inch. “It’s probably in the bathroom, yeah?”

“Don’t know, don’t care.” Niall laughs. “Sorry Zee, that was mean. It was supposed to be an obvious joke, but now you made me feel guilty for it. I came over to ask if you, Zayn Malik, would like to go on a second date with us.”

“Yes.” Zayn blurts. “Yes yes yes.”

“Are you sure?” Niall teases. “You don’t sound sure.”

“Niall James Horan.” Zayn growls. “Stop making fun of me. I was a nervous wreck.”

“I can tell.” Niall says softly. “The way you’ve messed up all my work is a dead give away. So give me another quick snog, because I have to sleep with them until we’re all at the level where we can sleep in the same bed.”

“He didn’t count for naps as long as we don’t do it in the bed.” Zayn starts.

“Don’t worry.” Niall interrupts. “It doesn’t count for naps as long as we don’t do it in the bed.”

“I can live with it then.” Zayn smiles. He ducks in, connecting their eager mouths and kissing Niall with everything he has. Niall can feel his enthusiasm running high, and it makes the Irish lad’s do the same. He stops it before things get too intense, but the huge grin on Zayn’s face tells him that’s alright. “Okay, now I need you to do something for me, not as a guy I’m kind of dating, but as the friend I had before all this.”

“Okay.” Niall answers, curious as to what he means.

“Just- Don’t judge me when I close the door and you hear a really loud squeal or yell or something, alright? I kind of thought I’d have to wait until morning to find out if you guys wanted anything else to do with me.” Zayn admits, his cheeks tinting as much as they can with his darker skin tone.

“No judgments.” Niall laughs. “I won’t even tell Haz and Li.”

“My dignity and I thank you.” Zayn smiles. “Good night Nialler.”

“G’night Zee.” Niall says. He can’t help the smile plastered on his face. It’s been stretching his mouth to the limit ever since Zayn agreed to go on a date with them. The whoop that happens as soon as Zayn shuts the door is heartwarming. Harry and Zayn were wild cards going into this, and
knowing they both want it to this level makes Niall happier than he could have imagined.

By the time he gets back into the bedroom, Harry is already naked and snoring on Liam’s chest. The muscular man is petting his hair and smiling softly at Niall across the room. He’d prefer if Zayn was there too, tangled up in the sheets right alongside his other boys, but it’s still a really nice sight. He regrets not actually getting his phone, because that wasn’t actually a lie. This would make a cute picture.

“Did he say yes?” Liam asks quietly once Niall removes his suit and crawls into the bed to join them.

“Four times.” Niall chuckles, keeping it quiet so as not to wake up Harry. “You um- you are actually okay with this, right? You’re not just doing it for my benefit?”

“While I actually think the timing isn’t great in terms of your recovery, I wouldn’t be doing this though if I didn’t want it. I like him, and I still think I could love him eventually.” Liam says softly, moving his other hand to cup Niall’s, because even dead asleep, Harry would whine if he stopped playing with his hair.

“You two should spend some time together.” Niall says suddenly. “Like, I’ve had all this time with him, and I mean, five years for him and Haz, but you’ve never really been alone together for any real amount of time.”

“Do you think that’s a good idea this early?” Liam asks, worrying at his lip. “We’ve just barely started seeing him.”

Niall can tell what he really means. “Will he like me? Will he even want to spend time with me? What if I ruin things, and you two aren’t there to save it?” Liam has so many insecurities that eat away at him. It’s always been a bit strange for Niall, even though he’s been helping Liam with them for literally decades, from the first time Liam started crying because he couldn’t stay inside the lines in a coloring book.

“Li, I promise it will go well. You two have a lot of things in common. Just- just don’t ask him to do any working out yeah? He hates exercise.” Niall says cautiously, remembering his second date with the muscular man. Liam had taken him on a ten kilometer hike. It ended up leading to a picnic, but Liam had forgotten to tie it up in a tree, so animals had gotten to all of it. The stuff that hadn’t spoiled from being left out for six hours that is.

“Actually, I think I have the perfect thing in mind.” Liam says thoughtfully. “Do you think he’ll want to go tomorrow?”

“I think he’ll be glad not to be around me while I have a small breakdown, yeah.” Niall nods. “I don’t think he’s ready for grieving-Niall yet.”

“He met you the day after Bobby passed.” Liam sighs. “He’s seen grieving-Niall, and even if he hasn’t, I don’t think it would be something he couldn’t handle.”

“Actually he hasn’t seen it.” Niall admits. “I was trying to press everything down, and then I met him after eleven months of celibacy. Kind of turned me into a babbling idiot. It helped a bit though, because I could just put the hard things out of my mind for a minute, and focus on covering the one in my pants instead.”

“You- you can’t be serious.” Liam groans.

“Little bit, yeah.” Niall laughs. “That was a really intensely erotic week for me. First seeing Zayn, then you and me in the kitchen, then falling over naked in front of Haz because he broke into my
house. Me da would have laughed his arse off at me being such a slag.”

“You’re like an alien or something.” Liam sighs, louder and more annoyed this time. “Who deals with things like that?”

“People who can’t handle death of family members.” Niall says quietly. “Honestly, getting a stiffy because of a hot guy is about the least crazy reaction I’ve had when someone I loved died.”

“I’m sorry Nialler.” Liam says gently. “I didn’t mean it like that. I guess other than your family I’ve never really experienced that, and I was always so focused on trying to help you through it that I never really had to deal with my grief when it was fresh.”

“Thanks Li.” Niall says through a sudden yawn. He took his pills right before the movie, and they’re finally doing their thing and dragging him down into sleep. He didn’t get his nap this afternoon, too busy trying to prepare the other two for the date while Zayn cooked. He curls up against Harry, his constant even temperature perfect for it, and then lets himself fall that last little bit.

Liam isn’t at all surprised when he wakes up and Niall is already gone. He doesn’t get great sleep anymore, so he’s probably in the kitchen, having dragged Zayn out of bed at an ungodly hour, and making pancakes or something. Harry will probably sleep for about another hour, and Liam is torn between staying and cuddling with him, or going to get the twins fed and ready for the day. His bladder makes the decision for him, feeling like it’s about to burst.

He quietly sidles out of the bed and rushes to the bathroom. By the time he’s done the coldness of the bathroom has completely woken him up. He never should have let Harry put in the large window over the tub. It leaks warm air like a sieve. He’ll have to install a double-pane one once the weather gets a bit warmer. It’ll be nice to work with his hands again. He loves being around here, playing with the twins and running the changeover, but he really misses his old work sometimes.

“Get off the toilet.” Harry grumbles, walking into the bathroom like a zombie with morning wood.

Liam does, flushing it and trying not to stare at Harry’s erection. They’ve never done this somehow, in all the months they’ve been together. None of them have ever seen the other on the loo, except when they had to carry Niall down to it, and even then he always waited until they left. It’s weird having it happen now, but also slightly sweet in a strange, domestic kind of way. He washes his hands, keeping his eyes averted and trying not to giggle when the loud stream starts.

“Don’t you laugh at me Liam Payne.” Harry growls. “I had a whole bottle of wine last night, and my head is throbbing like I did body shots off that lad in Mexico again. I’m in no mood for it.”

“Nialler was right.” Liam grins. “You are getting old.”

“Sod off.” Harry says, throwing an extra loo roll at him from the basket by his feet.

“Listen, Nialler suggested that Zayn and I go spend some time together in private today, but I want your okay first.” Liam says.

“That’s fine. He probably just doesn’t want Zee to see him grieving.” Harry sighs. “It’s not a bad idea though, you two spending some real time together. Not having it end in a dramatic storm off would be a bonus.”

“Will you be alright, being all alone with Niall today?” Liam asks.
“We’ll be fine Li.” Harry nods. “Now go away. This is not how I want you to remember me for the rest of the day.”

“You’re still beautiful, even disheveled and taking a wee Haz.” Liam laughs. “Take some paracetamol and I’ll have Niall fix up his anti-hangover drink.”

“Thanks.” Harry says as Liam closes the door behind himself. He pulls on some jeans and a shirt, and then goes to the nursery. He guessed Niall probably had the twins already, but he wanted to check just in case. He can hear Niall and Zayn talking in the kitchen before he walks in, so he stops to listen.

“Zee, please just go with him. You two need to get to know each other better.” Niall urges. It hurts a little that he has to convince Zayn to spend time with Liam. Actually it hurts a lot.

“What if I ruin it though?” Zayn asks. “What if I say something stupid, and he doesn’t want to try with me anymore?”

Oh, well now that makes sense. Liam has the same fear about this one on one not-really-a-date. His biggest fear in this is that he’s just the extra baggage, but apparently that isn’t the issue. He almost walks in then, but Niall says “Just don’t be a shit with him. Liam is the sweetest man alive, and he likes you. Show him who you really are, the secret geek. He’ll love that.”

“I’m not a geek.” Zayn scoffs. “I’m an aficionado. An enthusiast if you want to be more crass about it.”

“You have Batman underwear. You’re a geek.” Niall cackles. “And Liam loves Batman.”

“How do you even know about those?” Zayn asks grumpily. “I hid them when I lived here, and they’re back in Bradford with the rest of my stuff now.”

Liam laughs at that, revealing his position and his eavesdropping in one fell swoop. He reaches a hand up to cover his mouth, but the damage is already done. Niall leans back in his chair until he can see Liam, and gives him a disapproving glare. “My mum raised you better than that Liam Payne.”

“I wasn’t eavesdropping?” Liam says, his questioning tone giving away the lie far too easily.

“Your Daddy Liam is a gigantic fibber.” Zayn coos, pointing at Liam with one of Gemma’s hands. “That’s just rude.”

“Alright, I’m caught.” Liam sighs, walking in and picking Sam up off of Niall’s lap. “But now I have a shield.”

“Vibranium Alloy has nothing on Sam’s cute little toesies.” Zayn giggles, munching on the aforementioned appendages that are hanging next to his face. “You hear it all then?”

“I heard Niall trying to convince you to go out with me today. If you don’t want to I under-” Liam starts.

“I do want to Li.” Zayn smiles. “I’m just nervous.”

“Me too.” Liam admits. He takes a seat in front of delicious looking pancakes and then shifts Sam onto his knee when he makes a grab for them.

“Well you don’t have the same habit of shoving both your feet in your mouth like I do.” Zayn sighs. “I don’t want to embarrass myself any more than I already have.”
“You haven’t embarrassed yourself at all Zee.” Liam says softly, shooting him a smile. “Last night was brilliant.”

“So you really didn’t tell them?” Zayn asks, turning to Niall. “You’re an angel.”

“Tell me what?” Liam asks.

“Of course I didn’t.” Niall laughs, ignoring him. “I said I wouldn’t, didn’t I?”

“Tell me what?” Liam asks again.

“Yeah, but you’re Liam and Niall.” Zayn says. “You tell him everything.”

“Tell me what?” Liam asks, growing frustrated with how he’s apparently shifted out of the the dimension so they can’t hear his question.

“Not everything. I didn’t tell him about when you-” Niall laughs.

“Don’t you dare!” Zayn hisses. “You promised.”

“Relax Zee, I knew you’d catch on before I said it and stop me.” Niall says through a cackle.

“Do I still exist?” Liam asks incredulously. “Did someone put me on mute when I wasn’t looking?”

“Oh my god Liam, what?” Niall asks grumpily.

“What didn’t you tell me?” Liam asks, trying to ignore the anger in Niall’s voice. Today is a rough day for him.

“That I reacted like a teenage girl when he told me you all wanted to go on another date again.” Zayn groans, dropping his head on the table. “I squealed like an idiot and it was embarrassing, alright?”

“It was definitely more of a manly whooping sound.” Niall says, placing a hand on the back of Zayn’s head to play with his hair. “And it wasn’t that embarrassing, I promise. You good Li? Want to know anything else? Maybe how Sam and Gems’ diapers were? Or how about how many pancakes I burned this morning? Or-”

“I’m sorry.” Liam sighs, interrupting Niall’s rant before it can really get going.

“I’m just saying, Li, he was polite enough not to interrupt us when we went off on a tangent last night about buying produce to avoid a fight with the geriatric loudspeaker that runs the town gossip mill.” Niall huffs. “We’d have stopped in a minute, so you didn’t have to snap at us.”

“He said he’s sorry Nialler.” Zayn mumbles into the wood. “Just leave it at that please?”

“It is too early, and I have too big of a headache for a row.” Harry grumbles when he walks into the kitchen. “Did you ask him Li?”


“Niall.” Harry says harshly. “Stop it. Liam apologized. Zayn asked you to drop it. Just- we can talk about it once these two go out, I promise. Until then, please make me one of your hangover smoothie things, which is what he was supposed to ask you before.”

“Zayn hasn’t actually agreed to go out with me yet Haz.” Liam says.
“Yes. Let’s.” Zayn says, sitting back up. “Should we bring the twins, or leave them here?”

“Leave them here.” Harry says while Niall stands up to make the drink. “Don’t take them just to act as a buffer. My children are not conversational crutches.”

“That’s alright. What I have planned wouldn’t be much fun for them anyways.” Liam says.

“You already have something planned out?” Zayn asks.

“Yeah. It’s a surprise though.” Liam smiles. “It’s a longish drive though, so wear something comfortable.”

“Outside or inside?” Zayn asks. “Like, should I wear a jumper, or just a jacket?”

“Inside, so a jacket should be fine.” Liam tells him. “We can head out whenever you’re ready.”

“Nialler has scones in the oven because I didn’t feel like pancakes. Can we wait for those?” Zayn asks.

“Yeah, I need to eat anyways.” Liam nods. He digs in, enjoying the buttery taste of the pancakes Niall made. There’s turkey bacon too and Liam feels fat by the time he finishes eating it all. He looks down at his stomach, placing both hands on it and frowning.

“Yer not fat.” Niall grumbles, sipping on his tea while he finishes up his task.

“I haven’t had a proper work out in months.” Liam sighs. He’s been so focused on the twins and Niall, plus it’s been so cold out. “I’ve gained like nine pounds.”

“Ya can give it to me if yer that upset about it. That’ll get me past the three-quarters point back to me old weight.” Niall says, handing Harry the magic drink that has saved Liam’s life on so many occasions. It took longer to make than usual because Harry started crying about halfway through the blending process due to the noise, and Niall took him into the other room for a few minutes.

“Does Louis have anything to say about that?” Zayn asks.

“Actually we haven’t talked much lately. He’s really busy with the triplets and I’m pretty sure he’s on the verge of a mental breakdown.” Niall explains. “I’m trying to set something up for a spa weekend for the two of them, but El refuses to leave the boys for two full days.”

“What if we took them in?” Harry asks, grimacing at Niall’s concoction. Liam knows from experience it smells like year old vomit, but it really works and doesn’t taste that bad.

“Five infants under the age of six months, for two days.” Niall groans. “Brilliant. I’ll offer though. That might work.”

“Doesn’t she breast feed though?” Liam asks.

“Ed and Tanner won’t take it from her apparently. It’s all that time in the hospital. So she pumps already.” Niall explains. “Only Johnathan will drink from her. She’s really upset about it though, so don’t mention it to her.”

“I highly doubt El’s breasts will come up in conversation.” Zayn chuckles. “Actually...”

“The blue dress?” Liam asks.

“That’s the one.” Zayn grins.
“Gross.” Niall laughs.

“Stop objectifying women you two. She’s a person, and a wonderful one at that. Her breasts aren’t there for your pleasure.” Harry groans. “And soon she’ll be working for us, so it would be sexual harassment.”

“Never stopped you from staring at Louis’ arse.” Liam giggles.

“That was you two.” Harry glares. “Three, probably, given the blush Zayn is sporting behind his coffee cup.”

Liam looks over and Harry is right. The darker man is definitely flushed and trying to hide it. At least Liam and Niall weren’t the only ones who noticed it. “You called it gay-bait Haz.” Niall points out.

“Once again, that was you.” Harry sighs. “I did call it massive once, but that’s it. And while we’re on the subject-”

“We should slip out now before we get yelled at anymore.” Zayn whispers to Liam, taking full advantage of the bickering.

“Go get dressed. I’ll meet you at my truck in ten minutes.” Liam grins conspiratorially. Zayn nods and slinks off while Liam slips Sam into Harry’s arms. He goes to the hall closet and grabs a jacket, a tight brown motorcycle one Harry had gotten him for Christmas, even though he doesn’t have a motorcycle. It goes well enough with his outfit that he won’t embarrass Zayn with it by being seen together in public.

He pecks Niall and Harry on the cheeks while they argue, throwing a quick “Goodbye,” over his shoulder.

They shout one back to him before he gets out the door and then go straight back to their fight. Zayn joins him after a few minutes that give him time to warm the truck, looking fantastic in all black, skinny jeans framing his thin legs and a patterned shirt with a Batman logo made out of a coarse black glittery substance under a black leather jacket. “Nialler said you like him too.” Zayn says with a small smile.

“I do.” Liam nods. “You look better in the logo than Affleck does too.”

He pulls out of the garage, and then they’re on their way.

“Oh thank god.” Niall groans. “I thought they’d never just go.”

“It’s like pulling teeth with those two.” Harry laughs. “You ready to go see Bobby?”

“Yeah.” Niall nods. “If you’re feeling better that is. I can wait until your headache is gone.”

“It pretty much is.” Harry shrugs. It isn’t really, but he knows how much this means to Niall. The Irish boy goes upstairs to get properly dressed for the day and Harry downs the rest of his drink. It’s bitterly sweet and Harry almost gags on the last bit, but he forces it down and then leaves the glass and blender in the sink to soak. He’d gotten dressed when Liam left him alone after their awkward bathroom encounter, so he’s ready to go in a big fuzzy jumper and wool socks. Neither of them were properly dressed last time, so this time he wants to be ready for the chill in the cemetery.

Niall hands him a coat and his keys when he comes back, not saying a word before shuffling off to
the garage with the twins held cautiously in each arm. Harry follows him, respecting Niall’s need for silence the entire drive. They park a respectful distance away, because there seems to be another funeral going on at the moment that they don’t want to interrupt. Harry grabs Gemma out of the back and Niall squeezes his hand tightly before letting go, holding Sam in his other arm, and they walk through the large iron gates.

The Irish lad leads him down an obviously familiar path, brushing his fingers over some select headstones they pass. All of them have their final dates within the last ten years and Harry silently wonders if Niall knew any of them, or worse, all of them. They come across three that he knows by their names, all sharing one with the sad man to his right.

“Hey Da.” Niall says quietly. “Its me again, but I guess ya already knew dat. I brought someone ta meet ya this time. This is Haz. He didn’t remind me ta get any flowers, so you can’t blame me. I’ve never been good at remembering dose important tings.”

He lets out a small laugh at his own joke, but Harry can see the tears rimming his eyes already starting to fall. Harry gives his hand a gentle squeeze, saying nothing. He doesn’t want to mess up this moment for Niall. “I can’t believe ya been gone a whole year. Sometimes, even dough I moved to a different house, I keep expectin ya to walk through dat door and crack a stupid joke. Shite-” Niall chokes.

“I just miss ya so much Da.” Harry can feel Niall shaking as he says it. He wipes the back of his hand over his eyes and continues. “I forgot to tell you last time, but Loki and Thor are gone too. Dey died while I was gone, bein a stupid amadán in da middle o Europe. Liam buried dem by da old house.

“Oh, and we’re doing what you always talked about. Haz convinced us to switch to horses, and he has the money to do it. They’ll be here soon, and I jus wish you were here to help us. None o us got a proper mind for business like you do. We’ll probly muck it up in a few months, but we’re gonna try. Li’s been doin all da work on it so far, but he’s letting us help now. I have no idea what’s goin on, but it’s excitin.

“Dere’s somethin else I need ta say, and I don’t want ya laughin at me up in heaven if I’m just crazy, but here goes. Tank you. Tank you fer everything. Ya gave me so much when ya were still here, and it looks like you did it again. Dat sign ya gave me, da flower petals, they helped me so much. I finally have a chance ta get everything I ever wanted, and you did dat fer me. Haz here let us try tings with Zayn, and I tink dey might work out. I tink I could be so happy. I am so happy.

“So ya know what, go ahead and laugh yer arse off, because even if ya didn’t do it, it worked out because I believe in you. I have to get back home, so I’m going to do the most important part now. Dese two are Sam and Gem, yer grandchildren. I hate that ya didn’t get to meet dem in person, but I tell dem about you whenever Haz and Li aren’t around to stop me from corruptin dere little minds. Dey’ll know all about you three, I promise.”

Harry can feel his own tears starting to freeze on his cheeks in the early morning frost. Niall says he can’t ever find the right words, but everything he’s said has been beautiful and just light enough to keep it from being too sad. He’s worried about the twins getting too cold, but they’re wrapped up in so many layers they can’t even move. They’re probably too warm, if anything.

“I love you Da, and I miss you every day. I know it’s sappy of me to say, but you can blame Haz for that. He made me do stupid shite like ‘get in touch with my feelings’. He’s very not-Irish.” Niall laughs. “I’m gonna go now, so the twins don’t catch cold, but I’ll swing by again soon, when it warms up probably. I love you guys.”
He stands there silently for a moment, and then nods his head at Harry before he starts to walk away. Harry leans down in front of Maura’s headstone, because she’s at the center. “Thank you guys so much for him. You three helped make him into an extraordinary man, and I’m going to work every day for the rest of my life trying to deserve him. I just wanted to say that. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.” Harry whispers.

“I feel bad leaving him today.” Zayn admits after they’ve been on the road for a little while. The drive has been mostly quiet, but comfortably so. Liam focuses on the road, because apparently every crazy person in Ireland is out on the road today, but he tries to make conversation when he can.

“He wasn’t ready for you to see him grieving.” Liam says quietly. “He hates letting other people see him cry.”

“I’ve been around him when he’s been upset though.” Zayn tells him. “He’s cried in front of me before.”

“This is different.” Liam says with a shrug. “When Niall grieves he pulls in on himself. Normally when he’s upset he’ll yell and break down, and you can help him with that. You have helped him with that. This though-it’s left a wound on his soul losing his family. He can’t help the way he clings or cries, and that makes him feel weak. He can’t be angry, just sad. Niall was never built to handle being sad.

“You may not know this, but he was always a happy kid. I don’t think I ever saw him cry once in the ten years I knew him before Greg died. In fact I know he didn’t. If he hurt himself, he just laughed it off and went back to what he was doing. Whenever his parents would yell at him, he would smile until they forgave him. Then something broke inside him when Greg died. He was coming home from Uni, and crashed while he was talking to Nialler on a call. He heard the whole thing, including Greg’s dying breath. He ran as fast as he could, but he just didn’t get there in time to say goodbye.

“After that he ran away for three days and came back with his hair dyed blond. He’s never told me what happened in those three days, but I know it wasn’t good. It took him months to even smile again, and about a year after things got back to normal, Maura was diagnosed. She fought for two years before she died, and it broke him again. He almost died in the car wreck that broke his knee for the first time.

“We started dating two years after that, and things were finally good. For three years we were happy, and he smiled every day like he hadn’t been through so much pain already. I ruined that though, with Dani. He hid away from the world until Bobby died, and you know the rest. You might even know all of that already.

“They aren’t the only people he’s lost though. The cemetery he’s going to today is filled with people he’s known and loved his entire life. His best friend, before he met me, died after being backed over with a truck when we were seven. His first boyfriend froze to death three months after they broke up. He was kicked out in the middle of winter, just for being gay. There were people from church, and all around town that have passed. He was well loved by so many people, and knew so many people, because his family has been here forever. He’s lost so much, but he still manages to smile most of the time. He doesn’t want you to see that part that just can’t do it. Not yet.”

Zayn feels numb by the time Liam finishes talking. Niall had never told him most of this. He’s surprised the Irish lad is even still standing after all of the loss he’s experienced. Zayn certainly wouldn’t be. There’s silence filling the truck like an avalanche and then Liam breaks it again. “I
know this may not work out between the four of us. You may not be able to handle polyamory. I just want to ask one thing of you though. If you do decide to leave, then do it gently this time. I don’t know how much more grief he can handle before it just shatters him too much to pick up the pieces.”

“I’m not leaving unless you three ask me to.” Zayn tells him softly. “I know we’ve only had the one date, but I’m committed to this. I want to be happy, and I am when I’m with the three of you. I want this to work more than I’ve ever wanted anything in my life.”

“That’s good, because we want it too.” Liam smiles at him. “Thank you for giving this a shot. It means a lot to all of us. We all really like you, even if Haz and I aren’t great at showing it.”

“I really like you too.” Zayn says, his cheeks flushing at the admission. “The timing isn’t brilliant, but I’m glad we’re doing this. I wasn’t sure you’d actually want to spend time with me. You always wander off to find Nialler or Haz whenever we’re alone.”

“I have trouble keeping secrets when I get too excited.” Liam admits with a blush. “I was afraid I’d accidentally slip and tell you about the dating thing before we were ready.”

“Instead Nialler did it.” Zayn chuckles. “Honestly you should have seen that coming.”

“I’m amazed he lasted as long as he did actually. He’s been bouncing off the walls waiting to ask you, but we’ve been putting it off until he stabilizes. I’m not sure he was actually ready, but that’s not up to me to decide.” Liam sighs. “It all worked out for the best though I think. Last night was great.”

“Especially the last part.” Zayn mutters under his breath with a smile.

“Especially that, yeah.” Liam laughs with a wink. He wasn’t supposed to hear it. Why Zayn couldn’t just think it is beyond himself. There’s that foot-in-mouth disease, showing up at the worst times. He briefly considers throwing himself out the door onto the motorway, but reconsideres when he realizes Liam didn’t actually think he was a slag for saying it.

“You um- You didn’t kiss me back last time, so I didn’t realize how good you’d be.” Zayn admits. “I always thought Haz would be the best kisser in the world, but- I mean wow.”

“You’re just saying that.” Liam giggles with a blush.

“No I’m not Li. That was the second best first kiss of my life.” Zayn says, trying to take back some of his dignity and a little control over the situation.

“Second?” Liam scoffs. “Damn. And it wasn’t really our first kiss.”

“I’m choosing to count it, since last time I basically just macked on your face, and you sat there like a dead fish.” Zayn laughs.

“I didn’t want to cheat Zee.” Liam says quickly. “I fucked up my relationship with Nialler with nothing more than a kiss. I’m just lucky he forgave me after that time with you. And you’re lucky he didn’t storm out onto the porch and rip your tongue out when he saw it.”

“He saw it?” Zayn asks. He didn’t know that. He just figured that Liam had told him.

“Yeah.” Liam nods. “Its part of why I was so surprised when everything started happening with you. He doesn’t forgive easily, but Haz convinced him to let it go. Sometimes I wonder if he started liking you long before any of us thought.”

“I don’t think so.” Zayn admits. “He told me his feelings started after mine did, and that was after the
“Alright, no more using Nialler or Haz as crutches either.” Liam says after a few minutes of quiet. “Today is about the two of us getting to know each other better, not just being around each other without fighting or running off.”

“You sure you can do that?” Zayn asks. Liam shoots him a curious look and he explains his question. “You two have been a part of each others lives for over twenty years. Won’t it be hard for you not to mention him? I know it will for me, and we’ve only known each other for a year. He’s important to us, so we shouldn’t be afraid to talk about him or Haz if they come up.”

“Okay yeah, I can agree with that. I really do want to get to know you though, so no bringing them up just to steer the conversation away from it, deal?” Liam asks.

“Oh, Deal.” Zayn agrees. “So are you going to tell me where we’re going yet?”

“Dublin.” is all Liam tells him. He smirks just a little bit and Zayn finds it irritatingly cute.

“I figured that around the time we passed Kilcock.” Zayn says with an eye roll. “Do I get anything more specific?”

“South Dublin.” Liam giggles. “I think you’ll like it though, so don’t worry. I promise I based this around you. The whole day. I took everything I know about you into account when I did, so there’s no hiking or cathedral tours or anything. Don’t want you to be bored.”

“I don’t think I could be bored with you Li.” Zayn smiles. “At least I’d have something good to look at if we went hiking. Until I passed out ten minutes in that is. Smokers lungs and all. And you could take me on a cathedral tour, and I’d sit there and whisper filthy things in your ears just to watch you squirm.”

“Niall did the same thing, and he’s an actual Irish Catholic. You two are terrifyingly similar sometimes.” Liam laughs. Zayn can picture it. Liam pretending to be all stoic and contemplative while Niall leans up, muttering a few words that make the muscular man flush that bright red. Niall’s self-satisfied smirk when he manages to get Liam to hiss ‘Stop!’ It’s a great image.

“Thirty six seconds.” Zayn says, checking out his watch. “We’re more pathetic than I thought.”

“To be fair you didn’t say anything yet. Only I’m pathetic.” Liam groans.

“It’s not pathetic. It's cute.” Zayn smiles. It really is. He doesn’t mind if they talk about Niall or Harry. The way Liam smiles when he does is definitely one of Zayn’s favorite things.
to be sorry for Nialler.”

“I’m sorry I dragged ya out here jus because I’m scared ta drive.” Niall whispers. “I should have just
called a cab or somethin. You shouldn’t be up this early after last night. Especially when yer lyin
about yer headache bein gone.”

“I’m not- okay how did you know?” Harry asks.

“Because you keep makin dat face whenever somethin gets too loud.” Niall admits. He’s been
feeling guilty since they left because he could tell Harry was lying, but he didn’t want to be alone. It's
selfish as hell, and Niall hates himself for it.

“Nialler, I promise it’s not that bad. I wanted to be there with you. A bottle of wine isn’t going to
stop that from happening.” Harry says. Niall can’t tell if he’s being honest or not, and he can’t tell if
that’s because of Harry, or because he’s so upset. “Niall. I promise. Now we’re going to go home,
you’re going to get into the comfiest outfit you can find, and we’re gonna cuddle up on the couch.
We’ll watch whatever you want, and eat all the junk food you think I don’t know is in the freezer.”

“No.” Niall says suddenly. “Take a right up here.”

Harry does as he’s told, his face a mask of worry. “Go another block and then park.” Nial tells him,
stripping off his jacket. Harry parks and Niall hunches over and climbs out the door. “You guys go
home. I can catch a cab from here.”

“Nialler, what are you-” Harry asks. Niall heads inside before he can finish the question. The buzz of
a needle is a familiar sound by now, setting Niall’s nerves at ease. There’s a smell in tattoo parlors,
like rubbing alcohol and incense and sweat. It’s Niall’s new favorite scent. It means he can just relax
for a bit while someone marks him, making another piece of his heart show on his skin.

“Hey Jess.” Niall grins at the now familiar girl. “Who’s on point today?”

“Oliver is just finishing up, and Finn is open now.” she tells him, already pulling out the design
book. “And of course I’m always available for your cute self.”

“Relentless flirting won’t get you in me pants Girlie.” Niall giggles. “Not unless I get something on
me hip.”

“I’ll get you naked eventually.” Jess laughs.

“You will not.” a rough voice says behind Niall.


Niall turns around, suppressing a groan. Of course Harry wouldn’t just go home. Life is never that
easy. “Haz, I told you to go back home. You can’t just bring the twins in here.”

“He can do whatever he wants.” Jess says with a laugh. “He’s Harry Styles. He can literally do
anything he wants to me- I mean here. He can do whatever he wants here.”


you didn’t tell me?”

“If you say my full name again I might just have a seizure, Love.” Harry says gently, setting down
the twins’ carriers. He turns to Niall and fixes him with a stare. “This is how you react, Nialler? This is what you’re doing? Why you jumped out of the car?”

“I need it Haz.” Niall admits in a whisper. “I need to do one thing fer me Da. Fer me family.”

“Then why leave me behind?” Harry asks, reaching out and lifting Niall’s chin up so their eyes can meet. “I told you I’d get one with you next time, remember?”

“What about the twins?” Niall asks.

“Oliver can watch them. He has three of his own.” Jess says, trying to be helpful.

“You just wanna get yer hands on Harry Styles.” Niall scoffs.

“Can you blame me?” she giggles. “He’s bloody gorgeous.”

“Also right here.” Harry groans. “Nialler, I’ll leave if you really want me to, but I want to do this with you.”

“You should probably see Oliver before we leave him with the twins.” Niall sighs. “He’s the scariest looking son of a bitch I’ve ever met.”

“I’m good with kids though.” A gruff voice says behind them. Oliver is a large man, easily the size of Paul, with a scraggily black beard, and no inch of skin under his chin uncovered by ink. “And me mum was the sweetest woman on Earth, so watch your mouth. I can watch yer kids while you two tat up.”

“Perfect.” Harry grins, handing him the carriers, and then standing on his tiptoes to hang the diaper bag around Oliver’s neck. “Thank you very much Mr. Oliver.”

Oliver nods and takes the twins over to his room and Harry turns back to Niall with a huge smile plastered to his face. “Fine” Niall concedes, whispering to Harry. “But you get Jess. And she’s probably going to feel you up because she’s dripping back there.”

“I can deal with that.” Harry agrees. “So what are you getting?”

“BMG” Niall tells him.

“Bobby, Maura, Greg.” Harry says, sussing it out much quicker than Niall thought he would. “I should have figured.”

“Probably, yeah.” Niall sighs. “You have any ideas?”

“A banana on my arse.” Harry laughs.

“You slag.” Niall scoffs. “Complete slut you are.”

“I’d be more than happy to do that idea.” Jess pipes up.

“Go wipe yourself down before you flood the place Jess.” Niall groans. “He’s getting something on his upper body.”

“Don’t be rude Nialler.” Harry says with a winning smile. “I wasn’t serious, Love. Do you have any designs so I can take a look? I’m sure they’re gorgeous.”

“Right here.” Jess giggles, sliding him the design book. Niall is quickly starting to grow jealous,
which is an unusual feeling for him. He’s almost never jealous. He drags Harry by the wrist over to the chairs set up across the waiting area.

“Sit down and stop flirting with her.” Niall hisses.

“I thought you didn’t get jealous Nialler.” Harry says with a wolfish grin. “Can’t handle me flirting a little? You were doing it when I came in.”

“But not right in front of you, or at least purposely.” Niall glares. “And unlike every other person in this relationship, I have never slept with a woman. I have never had any desire to sleep with a woman.”

“You know I’m gay. She knows I’m gay.” Harry scoffs. “I slept with Taylor a few times, yeah, but I didn’t enjoy it Niall. It was so she didn’t suspect anything and out me. And I love you. After everything we’ve been through, after last night with Zayn, I think I deserve some leeway. I’m about you. I want you to pick it out.”

“You want me to pick something you’ll have for the rest of your life?” Niall asks.

“I do.” Harry nods.

“A clover.” Niall says suddenly. Harry already has one on his left wrist, something about a parlor in Los Angeles, but that was before he met Niall.

“Then that’s what I’ll get.” Harry says with a smile. “Where?”

“Yer hand.” Niall says quietly, pointing to where his thumb meets his finger. “Right here, opposite from the cross. I want it there when you wank, reminding you that you’re mine. When you eat, when you read, when you write the bloody grocery lists, I want you to see that and think of me.”

“Do they have a loo here?” Harry asks with a heavy voice.

“A few of them. In the back.” Niall tells him, pointing the way.

Harry stands up, pulling Niall in by the waist. His lips graze the outside of Niall’s ear and he whispers darkly. “Meet me back there in two minutes.”

He’s gone after that, before Niall can say another word or even nod. He’s blushing, and he knows Jess can see it from the counter. “Don’t bother waiting. I already know what you’re doing.” she giggles. “I’ll crank up the radio so we don’t hear anything, but only because I’ve loved his music for like half my life. Have fun, but make it quick, yeah?”

Niall nods and follows after Harry, the sudden increase in volume throbbing in his veins. He saw which door Harry darted into, so he knocks on it to let Harry know he’s there. The door opens up just enough to let Harry drag him inside. “That was not two minutes.” Harry giggles. “Eager are we?”

“I don’t know what I’m doing.” Niall admits. “I shouldn’t be doing this. I’m not supposed to pick one of you over the other.”

“Do you want me to stop?” Harry asks as he undoes Niall’s belt. His long fingers splay over the bulge of Niall’s cock, begging to touch him. His lips are attached to Niall’s neck, sucking lightly at the skin while he talks. “Because Li and I have been fucking regularly. All I’m asking for is to suck you off. Nothing back there. Nothing that could send you spiraling. Nothing that’s a betrayal.”
“He won’t get mad?” Niall asks, already feeling himself giving in.

“I don’t think so, no.” Harry mumbles into his skin. “If we had, like, sex-sex that would be one thing, but I think this will be fine. He’s worried about you having an attack, not us doing something.”

“Then start sucking.” Niall moans. Harry drops to his knees, mouthing at Niall through the material of his jeans. His hands pull down Niall’s trousers, letting him spring free of the clingy material. He takes it in his hand and starts kissing at the underside. Niall’s head falls back against the wall and he moans when Harry swallows him down.

He hasn’t cum in weeks, not since Zayn got him off, and this feels amazing. Harry allayed his fears about Liam being angry, but that doesn’t completely eliminate the guilt he’s feeling. Especially when he starts wondering how it would feel if Zayn did this. Harry is spectacular at it. He was basically born to give head. And Liam is better than he gives himself credit for. Niall has never had Zayn like this though, and the thought crosses his mind.

His orgasm is quick to build under Harry’s expert lips. His fingers are wrapped around the meat of Niall’s thighs until he reaches up and puts the Irish man’s hands on the back of his head. “You sure?” Niall asks breathlessly.

Harry looks up at him with big eyes and nods, never stopping how he swallows Niall down. Niall takes that as confirmation and fucks into Harry’s mouth, fistfing his fingers into Harry’s locks. Harry’s hands curl around Niall’s arse, pulling him into his greedy mouth. Niall keeps thrusting, not bothering to stifle his moans because he doesn’t care anymore. All that matters in this moment is how warm and wet Harry feels around his cock. How he’s basically begging Niall to claim him as his own. It doesn’t take long before he grunts out “Fuck, Haz I’m gonna cum.”

Harry surprises him by pulling off, something he’s never done before in all the times they’ve done this. His hand wraps around Niall, tugging him until he starts spurting all over Harry’s lips and chin. It’s so hot seeing him like this, marked, branded as Niall’s. He’s grinning dopily, that stupidly cute smirk of his, and Niall loves it. He loves it even more when Harry runs his bright pink tongue across his lips, swallowing down what Niall left on him.

“Feel better?” Harry asks.

“Much.” Niall says with a nod. “Now get yerself cleaned up and let’s go get inked.”

“You’re not even going to offer to get me off too?” Harry asks. “Why do I find that hot?”

“Because, right now, you like being my bitch.” Niall giggles.


“No, you horny git.” Niall says with a grin. “I’m going to tuck meself back in me pants, and then I’m openin the door. You might want to be presentable by then.”

Harry’s eyes fill with panic when Niall starts doing what he said he would. He slips himself back into his jeans, zipping them and fixing his belt, while Harry scrambles to wipe all of Niall’s jizz off his face. The only thing that stops Niall from throwing open the door is when Harry wipes it off with a finger, and the sucks that into his mouth. “You can’t tell anyone I just did that.” Harry groans when he notices Niall watching him in the mirror.

“Oh I’m definitely keeping that for myself.” Niall says, just taking over his mind. “Can’t let everyone know about that, yeah? Now are you going to go get marked for me, or what?”
“Fuck.” Harry groans. “Why is this possessive thing turning me on so much? Yeah, lets go.”

Niall opens the door and Harry walks out in front of him. He leads Harry over to Jess’ chair. “You wait here. I’ll go get them and then we can get started, yeah?” Niall says heavily

“Hurry back, yeah?” Harry asks.

“Of course.” Niall nods. He finds all three artists in Oliver’s room, cooing over the twins. It’s kind of hilarious considering all three of them look like they belong to a motorcycle club, but there they are, making kissy faces at a pair of five month olds. “Jess, Finn, you guys ready?”

“Yeah.” Finn nods. He’s the guy who gave Niall his first tattoo what feels like a lifetime ago. He’s also hot, like extremely hot. He’s got platinum white hair on top, styled up like a whisp, and then his jet black sides and back trimmed down to nearly nothing. He has long skinny legs and never bothers to wear a shirt under his unbuttoned jacket. Harry will totally be the jealous one now.

“A comic book store?” Zayn asks Liam when they finally park.

“THE comic book store. The best shop in all of Ireland, and believe me, I’ve done my research. I drive all the way out here every few weeks to stock up, and then I squirrel them away in my room.” Liam grins. “I know you’ve left all of your things wherever you’re living, and that means you need to resupply. Pez has probably already burned them if they’re here in your old flat again.”

“Oh fuck.” Zayn groans. “I hadn’t thought of that.”

“Don’t worry. They’ll have what you want here. They have trades for days, and all the rare stuff you can think of.” Liam tells him. He hadn’t meant to upset Zayn with that comment about Perrie. This was supposed to be a good thing, not a mean one.

“Two years ago Haz got me a first print Iron Man number one, signed by Stan Lee.” Zayn sighs. “That’s the only thing I’m afraid of losing. I doubt she burned that though. She knows how much it’s worth and she needs money.”

“Then these guys might know where to find it.” Liam says. “They know everything about the scene here. If she went anywhere in Dublin to try and sell it, then they’ll know about it.”

“You sure?” Zayn asks hopefully.

“She might even have sold it to them.” Liam nods. “I’m not sure if they have that kind of money, but even if they didn’t, they’ll know an auction or something for it.”

“Then let’s go.” Zayn says, jerking his head towards the store. Liam nods and leads the way into the store. It’s one of his favorite places in all of Dublin, even if he doesn’t really care for the big city. It’s loud and brash, a far cry from the smaller town he thinks of as home. The people are friendly enough, but it just doesn’t feel quite right to Liam. Like everybody is too busy to notice just how beautiful everything is. “Holy shit.”

“I know, right?” Liam grins, waving his arms grandly at the store interior. “I know there are probably better stores in London, but I love this place.”

“This is amazing Leeyum!” Zayn squeals.

“Okay, so there’s Marvel, DC, Image, Dark Horse, IDW, Indie.” Liam says, pointing to each area
respectively. “The rated R stuff like Marvel Max is in another section they have to take you to, if you like those. Niall mentioned that you speak a bunch of languages, but not which ones. The foreign language comics are over there. They have some in Japanese, Spanish, German, French, Portuguese, and one I think is called Afrikaans. It’s mostly Japanese stuff though. I never got into that, but I won’t judge if you like it. As long as it’s not like, tentacle porn or something.”

“I can’t read Japanese.” Zayn laughs. “And no, I’m not interested in tentacle porn.”

“How many languages are you fluent in?” Liam asks.

“Nine.” Zayn shrugs, like that isn’t one of the most amazing things Liam has ever heard. “Urdu, Arabic, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese, and obviously English.”

“Holy shit.” Liam groans. “You make me feel so unaccomplished.”

“Languages are easy for me.” Zayn says like it’s a real explanation. “In my spare time I’m also working on Dutch and Irish Gaelic so I can understand when Niall insults me.”

“When do you even find time to do that?” Liam asks.

“When Niall is hanging out with you two.” Zayn says. “I could help teach you something if you want.”

“I’ll stick with English and the few things I know in Irish.” Liam sighs. “I barely have a good grasp on those. Academic things aren’t something I do well.”

“You’re good at other things then.” Zayn smiles. “Like taking care of other people. You’re good with your hands. And based on how loud Harry gets-”

“And that’s enough of that.” Liam says hurriedly. He can feel his cheeks heating up at that comment. “Go look through the shelves. I’ll ask if they know about your Iron Man.”

“You could ask me instead.” Zayn winks. “I doubt they’d know about your co-“

“You’re relentless.” Liam groans. “Now stop flirting with me or I’ll tell Nialler you named your cock after a booze hound that only fucks women.”

“One, I don’t actually call it anything. That was a joke. And two, why can’t I flirt with you?” Zayn asks.

“You can, just like, not so much.” Liam says, another blush filling up his cheeks. “I don’t know if I can handle a whole day of you saying things like that. I’m not like Haz and Nialler. I’m not used to people flirting with me. I’m not charming like them.”

“Alright.” Zayn sighs. “I’ll cut back on the flirting if you do it with the self depreciation. It’s by far your least attractive quality, and completely out of place for someone so perfect.”

“I wish people would stop calling me that.” Liam groans. “I’m not perfect. Far from it.”

“Leeyum, look at me.” Zayn tells him forcefully. Liam obeys the command, strangely attracted to the authority in Zayn’s voice. “I didn’t mean it like that, but you have to know how amazing you are. You’re funny and thoughtful and so so sweet. I know nobody and nothing is perfect, but you’re about the closest thing I’ve ever seen. Nobody tries harder than you do, and nobody loves more than you do. You’re a brilliant father, and an amazing partner to Niall and Harry. And an amazing bloody kisser on top of that. Stop being so hard on yourself, because nobody is holding you to a Kryptonian
standard when we say you’re perfect. We mean that nobody has a heart as good as yours. Nobody.”

“Hey, are you two going to buy anything, or just stand around the store, making dramatic statements like a soap opera?” a gruff man who looks about forty asks.

“We’re going to buy a lot, like thousands of dollars a lot, so you should probably cut the rudeness.” Zayn says flatly. He pulls out his mobile and flips through it for a second and then strides over to the counter. “Have you seen this girl? She’d have been trying to sell a first print Invincible Iron Man number one, signed by Stan Lee.”

“Yeah. She sold it to us a week ago for half it’s worth. Why?” he asks.

“Because it’s mine.” Zayn tells him. “I have no problem buying it for whatever price you want, but it was a birthday gift from my best friend, and my ex sold it.”

“Eight thousand.” The man smirks.

“Fine.” Zayn says without hesitation, pulling out a black credit card and sliding it across the counter. “Let me see it first.”

“Its mint still, don’t worry.” the man chuckles, walking back behind a curtain.

“You’re spending eight thousand euros on one book?” Liam hisses.

“It’s literally the only thing I care about from that apartment Leeyum. I can replace all of my books and movies and things, but this was special. And he’s gouging me really badly, because it’s rare and he can. It should be maybe three thousand at best. I don’t care though, as long as it’s really mine. I’m just glad she got shit money for it.”

The man returns, showing the plastic wrapped book to Zayn and taking out the certificate of authenticity. “Alright. Charge it.” Zayn sighs.

The man gleefully runs Zayn’s card and Liam decides that even with the selection he won’t be coming back here. He’s never seen someone so mean, and it’s disappointing. “Alright, you run this back to your truck, and I’ll get started on the trades, yeah?” Zayn asks, surprisingly excited.

“You sure you want to stay after that?” Liam asks quietly.

“I got it back Li.” Zayn grins. “You helped me get back the only thing I wanted. I’m so happy I could cry.”

“Well alright then.” Liam smiles. “I recommend starting with the Marvel section.”

“Li would be ashamed of us.” Harry giggles as he slides three different kinds of junk food into the oven. There are frozen pizzas, meat pies, and sausage rolls. They’ve already busted into the crisps and have two different kinds of popcorn just for the hell of it.

“Don’t act like yer not just as bad as he is most of the time with that health food shite.” Niall scoffs.

“And yet I’m going to eat an absurd amount of junk food with twenty thousand calories.” Harry grins. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen this much cheese and grease.”

“I’m so proud.” Niall laughs. “How’s yer hand?”
“Fine.” Harry shrugs. “I’m used to it. How about your shoulder?”

“It stings a bit, but I’ll be good once I slip into a fat-coma.” Niall says with a smile. He looks like he’s feeling better now, which makes Harry feel better too. They probably shouldn’t have hooked up in the loo like common whores, but who cares? Not Harry. He was so turned on by how possessive Niall got. There was no turning back. “So um- what are yer feelings about last night?”

“I had fun.” Harry tells him. “It was probably the best first date I’ve ever had honestly.”

“So you really do want to keep going then?” Niall asks cautiously. “Not for me, but because you want to?”

“Yes Nialler, because I want to.” Harry smiles. He walks over to where Niall is sitting on the counter and stands between the Irish man’s legs. “I’m sorry I put up such a fight about this. I was just afraid of losing you, and I handled everything wrong.”

“Not everything Haz.” Niall says quietly, laying his head down on Harry’s shoulder. “I don’t think everything would have worked out if we’d tried before. Now that we’ve all had time to figure things out, it might. I can’t ask more than that from you, that you take a chance on him.”

“Look at that.” Harry grins. “Got you to have a real talk without having to sex you up first.”

“You ruin everything besides food.” Niall grumbles.

“Sorry.” Harry pouts when Niall pulls away from him. “You just don’t do this very often. It was exciting.”

“Yeah, but you don’t have to say it.” Niall groans. “You’ve been doing this all day. You can’t just let things lie. You keep poking at me.”

“I’m in a good mood.” Harry sighs. “And I know that’s awful considering what today is for you, but I can’t help it. You let me stay while you talked to your parents. You let me stay for the tattoo. You got all jealous and possessive, which I never thought I’d see in a thousand years. Then you tried to make me jealous with Finn even though he’s clearly straight. You let me touch you after two months. We had an amazing date last night because your meds are finally stabilizing and I have my best friend back. You talking to me is just one more good thing and I can’t keep my mouth shut when I’m happy.

“So I’m sorry that you feel like I’m pushing you. That’s not what I meant to do, and I’ve been trying so hard for the last few weeks to stop doing exactly that. I just thought I could be happy around you without it making you upset. I shouldn’t have done it today, but this is the most time we’ve spent alone together since you’ve been home, and sometimes you actually seemed happy too.”

Harry feels winded after saying all that so fast. He’d meant to stop way earlier, like his second sentence earlier, but his mouth just kept going. He feels guilty piling all that on Niall, especially at such a high speed. It was like a bullet train/guilt trip. “I have been happy Haz.” Niall says quietly. “That’s why I’m upset. I know I should be sadder than I actually am, and that’s making me feel guilty. I’ve been having fun, but I shouldn’t be. I shouldn’t be happy. I should mourn my father like he deserves, but I never have. I got too caught up with you to do it last year after he died, and now I can’t even spend the anniversary of his funeral doing it because I’m happy.”

“Nialler.” Harry says, taking Niall’s cheeks in his hands. “It’s okay to not be okay. I told you that weeks ago. It’s also okay to be okay. Bobby knows how much you care about him, and frankly I think he’d prefer to see you happy rather than sad. I know I didn’t know him, but between you and
Li, I feel like I do. He wouldn’t want you to stop your life just to be sad. You’re at an exciting time in your life. It’s okay to feel whatever you’re feeling, whether that’s happy or sad or angry. And because I love you, I won’t hold it against you if you keep being pissy at me today.”

“I’ll stop.” Niall says, pressing a kiss to the tip of Harry’s nose. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t be taking this out on you. You’ve been incredibly sweet to me today, and I promise I’ll make this up to you tomorrow when my moods aren’t still swinging around even with the pills.”

“You don’t have to make anything up to me Nialler.” Harry grins. “Just cuddle with me while we watch your movies and eat way too much fat for our own good. Be upset if you need to, but also be happy if you’re happy. Just don’t hide what you’re feeling from me anymore. We did that for too long already.”

“I have to poop.” Niall says, his face completely deadpan.

“And you say I ruin everything.” Harry scoffs.

“You wanted to know how I’m feeling.” Niall shrugs. “I’m feeling like I have to poop.”

“Because that’s totally what I meant.” Harry says with an eye roll.

“Are you going to let me go use the loo?” Niall asks.

“Nah. You can just hold it until you explode.” Harry grins, moving his hands so they trap Niall’s to the counter. “I wanna keep you here.”

“Then snog my face off and distract me.” Niall giggles. Harry leans in, chasing Niall as he ducks back. He squirms around, laughing and squealing until Harry finally captures his mouth. He’s not dominant like earlier, instead letting Harry take control of the kiss. He does so as the resident expert on how Niall likes being kissed.

Niall is needy, unbelievably so sometimes. You wouldn’t know it by how independent he is most of the time, but Niall loves to be taken care of. He likes to feel like he can lose himself in something more. He likes to be filled up with somebody else, and Harry knows just how to do that. He knows how to tell jokes that make Niall laugh, even when he’s sad. He knows how to fuck Niall for hours until he’s fully satisfied. He knows how to kiss Niall so it feels like they melt into one being, invading each other’s space until there’s nothing left untouched.

Niall does it this time too. He melts into the taller man, whimpering his desire to be touched into Harry’s mouth. He’s more than happy to oblige the Irish lad, sliding his hands up Niall’s arm, carefully avoiding the fresh marking on his shoulder. They grip Niall strongly, cupping his jaw and the back of his neck so Harry can push himself further inside, filling up all the little cracks with himself as a mortar.

He tilts his head just a bit so he can pull Niall in closer, eliminating the temporary height advantage the other man gains by sitting on the counter. The hand cupping Niall’s jaw slides back until it finds the small of his back instead. Harry’s fingers splay across it, pulling him in until their bodies are pressed together so tight that air couldn’t move between them.

Harry devours the smaller man’s mouth, teasing him with his tongue until he pulls back and Niall is the one giving chase this time. He bites desperately at Harry’s bottom lip, begging not to let it end. Harry is pretty sure neither of them can really breathe that well anymore, but it’s not important. All that matters is that Niall wants this and Harry wants this.

It’s fucking magic, the way everything slots into place between them. The way Niall grips Harry’s
shoulders, desperate to pull them together as close as he can. The way it can feel passionate and exciting, but also warm and familiar, at the same time. Everything is this mix of old and new, their pasts and futures being mapped out in this one moment they’re sharing.

They don’t break apart until the oven chimes to let them know the food is done. Harry groans against Niall’s lips, sighing his displeasure at the short cooking time of frozen foods. “Let it burn.” Niall mumbles, trapping Harry by the neck so he can’t pull away.

“Can’t let the house go down in flames just because we want to keep snogging Nialler.” Harry sighs. He doesn’t want to stop either, but he knows Niall is looking forward to this. He needs it more than he needs to kiss Harry. “Besides, we can keep going once everything is out of the oven. It needs to cool down after all.”

“Harry Edward Styles, I swear, if you walk away from me right now I will scream.” Niall hisses.

“Fine, just one more minute, but you don’t get to complain if it’s burned.” Harry grins, pushing their lips back together. Niall grunts and nods, pressing heavily against Harry. His fingertips sear themselves into Harry’s skin, branding him so he’ll feel it for days. Harry doesn’t bother counting the seconds, too lost in Niall to care until he smells the cheese burning.

“You’re going to have to tell me what to get.” Liam says quietly. “I’ve never heard of almost anything on this list.”

“Then why did you pick a Pakistani restaurant?” Zayn asks. It was sweet, but Liam looks confused and slightly scared. “We could have gone anywhere. Maybe somewhere with a menu you could read a single dish’s name from.”

“I can read some of it.” Liam huffs.

“Do you want me to order for you?” Zayn asks.

“Is it pathetic if I say yes?” Liam asks back.

“Not at all.” Zayn smiles. “I actually kind of love doing that. Makes me feel like a proper gent.”

“And yet I’m sure, at some point while we’re here, you’ll talk about your penis.” Liam laughs.

“Oh almost definitely.” Zayn says with a wink that sends a blush flaring up on Liam’s cheeks. “It’s one of my best features. Behind my cheekbones, eyelashes, and complexion of course.”

“And of course your boundless modesty, Zee.” Liam says with an eye roll.

“It’s not a bad thing to acknowledge that I’m attractive.” Zayn shrugs. “Allah blessed me with good looks and I’m not ashamed of it.”

“How can you do that?” Liam asks. “How are you always so confident all the time?”

“Do you know how hard it is growing up Pakistani in Britain? Especially after everything started up in the Middle East again?” Zayn asks. “Here’s the thing, everyone is at least a little racist. They judged me before ever knowing me. Called me a terrorist. On top of that I never made it a secret that I like blokes and birds, which, as I’m sure you’ve noticed, is even harder sometimes than just being gay. I was bullied my entire life, and then one day I just decided to stop caring.
“I’m talented and smart. Objectively, I’m fit as hell. I speak nine languages and I’m worth millions because my best friend and client was on the path to be the next Axl Rose or Paul McCartney. I have everything I want in life, especially now that I have a chance with you three, so I’m done being down on myself. Also I’m on a date with one of the four hottest men in the world, so there’s that.”

“And what number am I?” Liam asks, cocking an eyebrow.

“It cycles day to day. Today, you’re number one. Tomorrow, it could be you again, or Nialler, or Haz, or me.” Zayn explains. “Today though, definitely you. The motorcycle jacket, the barely done hair, the taking me on a date to a comic store. You’re the clear number one.”

“So it is a date then?” Liam asks quietly.

“Isn’t it?” Zayn asks.

“I mean, yes and no?” Liam says like a question. “I’m not sure I feel comfortable calling it that without the other two here. But I don’t want to not call it that either. I don’t know. I’m not making any sense.”

“You’re making perfect sense Leeyum.” Zayn says, reaching his hand across the table and taking Liam’s. “We can call it something else. Like Leeyum-And-Zee-Fest-Twenty-Eighteen.”

“That’s a mouthful.” Liam giggles.

“Yeah, well Ziam sounds too coupley considering we’re not calling this a date. And I like the way you blush when I say your name.” Zayn smiles. “You ready for me to order?”

“Very.” Liam nods. “Let the dining portion of Liam-And-Zee-Fest commence.”

“It’s better crispy.” Niall grins, holding a slice of charred pizza in Harry’s face. “Just try it.”

“No.” Harry says stubbornly for the tenth time. “You covered it in mustard and sriracha. That’s disgusting.”

“I’m trying to add flavor to charcoal.” Niall shrugs. “You’re the one that burned it.”

“Little shit.” Harry grumbles. He’s not taking the bait, much to Niall’s disappointment. “Eat your charcoal and condiments and settle down.”

“You’re not being any fun.” Niall pouts. He crawls up the couch on his elbows, careful not to get any of the sauces on the leather or clothing, and flops down on top of Harry’s torso. “Play with me.”

“But the movie.” Harry whines. “I’ve never seen Three-Hundred.”

“Hot men wear speedos and capes, they fight, they all die.” Niall laughs. “It’s very bloody.”

“Don’t spoil it Niall.” Harry pouts.

“It came out twelve years ago Haz. It’s loosely based on an actual event called the Battle of Thermometer.” Niall grins. “That’s hardly a spoiler.”

“It’s Thermopylae.” Harry corrects, his eyes still glued to the screen. “And there were a lot of other Greek soldiers there in real life. Even during the last stand. This is a wildly inaccurate film.”
“Yeah, but Gerard Butler looks really good.” Niall giggles.

“He’s really nice in person.” Harry mumbles. “Makes great jokes.”

“You have got to introduce me to some of your celebrity friends some time.” Niall pleads.

“So you can squeal and then pass out because they look better in person?” Harry asks, finally turning to look at Niall. “I’ll see what I can manage, but I make no promises. Celebrities tend to only hang out with other real celebrities. I’m fairly certain I’ve dropped off the radar too much to qualify anymore.”

“Well then I guess I’ll just have to settle for Harry Styles.” Niall says, mimicking the way Jess squealed when she said his name.

“Millions of people would be so jealous of that you know.” Harry pouts. “Do you know how many threats have been sent to my exes? Lots. I’m a catch.”

“Thank god I have no social media presence then. They’ll never find me.” Niall laughs. “You’ll always be my favorite celebrity Haz.”

“Should I assume there’s an unsaid ‘except’ in there somewhere?” Harry asks.

“Nope.” Niall says, shaking his head. “Nobody could compare to you. So stop being grumpy and play with me.”

“I’m not grumpy. I just didn’t want to watch this because it’s all violent, but you picked it. Now I’m actually into it, and all you want to do is distract me.” Harry sighs.

“I can’t help it.” Niall pouts. “I’m needy.”

“Well then... Put down that thing you’re calling pizza, come cuddle into me, watch the rest of the movie, and then we’ll do something fun.” Harry offers. “I promise.”

“Like what?” Niall asks suspiciously. Harry can have a very boring idea of fun sometimes. It’s gotten even worse since the twins came. He actually enjoys watching those kids shows and playing along. It’s absolutely adorable, but not much fun.

“Well, no sex puts a bit of a limit on things, because I can’t help thinking of something in the licking-chocolate-sauce-off-your-naked-body area.” Harry says contemplatively. “But I do have twenty cans of silly string in the garage and we could set a trap for when Li and Zee get home.”

“How would we even do it though?” Niall asks curiously. “Do we have enough string to set something up?”

“There’s a whole bunch of things.” Harry giggles. “Water balloons. Whoopie cushions. A fire extinguisher that sprays green foam. I think Louis was contemplating suicide-by-Liam a lot.”

“He never learns.” Niall grins. He drops the pizza on a napkin and moves into the space that Harry makes for him, choosing to nuzzle in facing towards him instead of the screen. He doesn’t even
realize he’s tired until just before he drifts off to sleep.

“So I couldn’t decide between these two places next.” Liam explains, holding up fliers for two different museums. “This one is all modern art, and this one is more varied, but mostly classical.”

“Li, we don’t have to go to a museum if you don’t want to.” Zayn chuckles.

“I want to do things for you.” Liam says adamantly. “I just don’t know anything about art. I don’t know which one you’d like.”

“Which one would you like?” Zayn asks. He’s been annoyingly agreeable and chivalrous for the last few hours. It’s very frustrating when Liam tries to do something for him, like pay for lunch or decide on a museum.

“Okay, I’m going about this wrong.” Liam sighs. “Zayn, what would you like to do next?”

“Watch you get all flustered.” Zayn says with a smirk.

“Why has getting to know each other almost entirely consisted of either you flirting with me, or teasing me?” Liam pouts.

“I’m not teasing Leeyum.” Zayn grins. “It’s cute when you get all blushy and shit. You look like a big dominating jock, the kind that beat up the artsy kids like me when we were young. But instead you’re this super sweet guy that can’t even take a little bit of flirting, or a compliment, without getting all red and losing track of your thoughts. I love that about you. I’m not sure how you’ve survived around Niall this long, considering how much he likes to flirt, but I love it.”

“Do you want to go to a museum?” Liam asks, trying desperately to change the conversation back and not to flush.

“Do you want to go to a museum?” Zayn asks, his grin growing more wolfish by the second. Liam decides to get rid of it. It’s not technically against the rules when he takes Zayn by the back of his neck and pulls him into a kiss. He shows Zayn just how dominating he can be, his hands strong, his tongue darting into Zayn’s mouth. He bites just a little bit at the darker boy’s bright pink bottom lip, and then lets him go by an inch.

“Stop being a shit Malik.” Liam growls.

“Okay.” Zayn says breathlessly. “Totally will. If you do that again.”

“Maybe later, if you behave yourself.” he smirks, his voice just heavy enough with lust to catch Zayn’s attention.

“Does this end in me being spanked?” Zayn asks eagerly. “Because I’m totally down with that.”

“It’ll be a few more dates before we get to that point.” Liam tells him. “We can discuss it then.”

“I’ve been meaning to ask about that by the way.” Zayn says quickly. Liam lets go of the back of his neck and then nods for Zayn to continue. “Well Nialler and I were supposed to sleep together to see if he can handle it with anyone else. Now that we’re all dating though, it would feel weird to cut you guys out of it. Especially since it would be our first time together.”

“We haven’t figured that part out either.” Liam sighs. They’ve had quite a few talks about it, but no
real solution has presented itself yet. Four is such a weird number in bed because it naturally lends itself to pairing off, which can create a bit of a rift if it happens the same way too many times. None of them want that to happen.

They’ve talked about having everyone focus on Niall the first time, but the Irish lad thinks that would be overwhelming. He’d rather everyone focus on Zayn, but Liam wants him to feel more involved than just laying back while all three of them worship his body. Harry suggested pairing off just for the first time, but then immediately rejected the idea because he and Liam want a piece of Zayn too. “Personally I was most leaning towards you and Niall having a time first by yourselves to make sure it can even happen, but if that makes you uncomfortable we can go back to the drawing board.” Liam sighs.

“We’ll save that for at least another couple of dates, yeah?” Zayn asks. “No need to get into it now when you guys might still decide this isn’t right for you.”

“Honestly Zee, I know it’s still early in this, but I don’t think that’s going to happen.” Liam tells him. “You’re amazing. You throw us off our balance a little bit, but we’ll adjust. I do have to admit, it was nice having a built-in tiebreaker because then we could go majority rules. You’re totally the better choice though.”

“I just don’t want to get my hopes up too high.” Zayn admits quietly. “I already want this so much. I’ve put so much of myself into this opportunity. It’s not the safe way to go, but I don’t want to play it safe any more. That doesn’t mean I’m not afraid though.”

“We all are.” Liam says gently. “I’m afraid you don’t really like me as much as you do the other two. Haz is afraid that he’ll never get his best friend back if this doesn’t work. Nialler is afraid you’ll leave in the middle of the night again. We’re all putting ourselves out on a limb here. I’m willing to take that gamble though, because I truly believe betting on you is the way to go.”

“Of course I like you as much as the others, you dork.” Zayn smiles. “Thank you for betting on me Leeyum. It means a lot to me that you would.”

“I doubt I’ll regret it.” Liam says happily. “Now tell me what you want to do next.”

“The answer to that isn’t at all appropriate.” Zayn giggles.

“Something outside of that general vicinity please.” Liam groans. “For instance something we could do in public. I love Haz, but he’s a recluse now, so we never go anywhere. And I haven’t been apart from the twins for this long since the day we went to London. I love them so much, and I miss them, but I want to enjoy my day of freedom, away from any responsibilities like the farm, or changing diapers, or triple checking to make sure Niall takes his pills on time because more often than not he forgets. So let’s go have some out in public fun while we can, because who knows when we’ll get the chance again.”

“Let’s go drinking then.” Zayn beams.

“It’s two in the afternoon.” Liam laughs.

“It’s Dublin.” Zayn shrugs. “I’m positive we wouldn’t be the only ones.”

“We can’t get pissed and then drive home.” Liam points out.

“I don’t drink to excess.” Zayn says simply. “I’m not even really supposed to drink at all. Think about it though, have you ever seen, or even heard about, me getting drunk?”
“Um-” Liam says, racking his brain for any memory of that. “Actually no, I guess I haven’t.”

“I drink sometimes in other people’s company, but never more than a glass, and never anything too strong.” Zayn explains. “It’s something I had to get used to in my business. People go to clubs or restaurants to get things done. Drinking alcohol comes with that, but I exercise restraint as best I can.”

“Then why should we go drinking?” Liam asks curiously. “Today is supposed to be fun for you.”

“Oh it will be.” Zayn smirks. “Haz tells me you’re phenomenal when you’re drunk. An absolute riot. Louis is wrong about you for the most part, thinking you’re uptight and rigid. Even I think you need to loosen up a bit though. Emily Post would be frightened of your self restraint.”

“I don’t know who that is.” Liam admits.

“Not the point Leeyum.” Zayn says with an eye roll. “The point is that I want you to have fun too. Quit trying to be such a people pleaser, and loosen up. You’ll have a much better time if you stop worrying about whether or not I’m enjoying myself. I’d tell you if I wasn’t.”

“Alright then.” Liam says sheepishly. “We’ll find a pub somewhere. Think you can handle driving my truck home?”

“Oh no!” Zayn squeals in a feminine affectation. “How could a delicate flower like myself ever handle such a large and manly vehicle?”

“Arse.” Liam groans, rolling his eyes at the way Zayn collapses on a bench, completely ignoring the grunt of the little old woman his head lands on.

“Woe is me!” Zayn cries, still in his girlish voice. “That he could think a dainty thing like me could handle his big strong machine! He must think me so improper!”

“You and Louis are made for each other.” Liam grunts.

“You take that back!” Zayn hisses, sitting up so quickly he nearly pushes the old woman out of her seat. “Sorry Love, this guy is a complete prat.”

She mutters something in what Liam thinks is Russian and shuffles onto a bus that pulls up. “No, your mother was a goat!” Zayn shouts after her.

“Russian was not on the list of languages you said you speak.” Liam laughs.

“That was Ukrainian, and I only told you the ones I’m fully fluent in. There are about five other ones I can speak in conversationally, but not to the point of full translation, and I can’t really read in them.” Zayn shrugs.

“Oh.” Liam says in surprise.

“Now you take back that comment about Tomlinson or I’ll drive your truck into a telephone pole.” Zayn glares.

“Would not.” Liam grins.

“No, I probably wouldn’t.” Zayn sighs. “But I will find something equally as awkward and unpleasant to do to you. Something with ice cubes while you’re sleeping or gluing together the pages of whatever book you’re reading at the moment.”
“Totally meant to be with Louis.” Liam smirks.

“My vengeance will be swift and terrible Payne.” Zayn says evilly. “Swift and terrible.”

“You’re terrible.” Niall giggles.

“You’re the one that came up with this.” Harry says around the bottle of food coloring in his mouth. His hands are full with Zayn’s shampoo and conditioner. He has about ten thousand hair products, not that anyone knows when or how they got here. According to Niall these two are the ones he uses most often though.

“Yeah because I’m a little shit.” Niall cackles. “I didn’t think you’d actually go for it. Zayn will kill us.”

“I’m not even sure it will work with his hair.” Harry admits, taking out the bottle and pouring it into the shampoo. “It might just magically deflect the coloring.”

“It is oddly perfect.” Niall says thoughtfully. “But now it will be perfect and green. Just make sure to add a ton of it.”

“I poured in the whole bottle.” Harry snickers. “Now what color for Li?”

“Blue.” Niall says, handing him the bottle. They leave Zayn’s bathroom and head down to the one the three of them share. They’ve already planned to stick dozens of self inflating whoopee cushions under every inch of Zayn’s sheets, another on their long list of pranks. Harry is still trying to find an equivalent for Liam. There’s not enough whoopee cushions in Ireland to cover their bed, so he’s got to do something else. The underwear in the freezer trick won’t work. He’d just steal Harry’s. He’d make Harry clean up if they did the cling wrap on the toilet thing. It’s proving to be exceedingly difficult.

They make quick work of pouring the dye in Liam’s shampoo, making sure they have more under the sink first. Niall’s mobile goes off and he wanders off to answer it while Harry finishes screwing back on the cap. “Hey Zee.” Niall says, waving at Harry. “Completely smashed, huh? It’s like five. Why is he already drunk? Oh, well you’re terrible. Yeah, we’ll make him some coffee. Five minutes? Okay yeah, we’ll be waiting.”

He hangs up and looks at Harry with fear in his eyes. “We fucked up.” he groans.

“Oh come on.” Harry giggles. “It’ll be even more fun if he’s pissed.”

“He’s going to get so mad.” Niall pouts.

“He’d let you get away with anything today.” Harry smiles. “They both would. Hell they probably would any day.”

“I’m blaming you if everything goes to shit.” Niall sighs. “I’m pulling a full Judas.”

“I can handle that.”Harry says, chuckling at Niall. “Babes, calm down. We’ve been having fun, haven’t we? Getting your mind off of things?”

“Yeah.” Niall says softly. “But I basically kicked them out so Zee wouldn’t see me grieving, and then I spend all day planning pranks and getting a tattoo? He’s going to think I’ve gone mad and run away as fast as he can.”
So that’s what this is about. Harry crosses to him and takes him by the wrist. He leads the Irish lad to the bed and sits them both down, Niall in his lap. He plants a gentle kiss to Niall’s cheek and brushes his hair off of his forehead. “He’s not going to leave again Nialler.” Harry whispers.

“You don’t know that.” Niall says, choking back a sob. “None of us know that.”

“Not technically, but I know it Ni.” Harry says softly. “This is going to work out. He’s going to stay. He’s as gone for you as you are for him.”

“He won’t be after I dye his hair green!” Niall cries, finally giving in to the tears he’s been fighting so valiantly since the cemetery. “He’s going to hate me and leave and it’s all my fault.”

“Then we tell him about the shampoo before he has to shower.” Harry says. “He’s not going to hate you for it though, and he’s not going to run away. He’ll be glad you had fun. They both will. That’s part of loving someone. Even if you get mad, you’re still happy that they’re happy.”

“It’s too new to be making him mad though Haz.” Niall says, curling into Harry. “You don’t do this kind of thing to someone when you’ve just started dating. You would have killed me if I had done it to you.”

“Yeah, but I’m high maintenance.” Harry smiles.

“Zayn is just as bad.” Niall scoffs. He rubs the tears out of his eyes, and smiles just a little bit. “We should warn him though. And Liam.”

“We can go unhook the silly string and foam thing if you want to.” Harry offers.

“Are you sure?” Niall asks.

Harry is about to say yes, but then they hear it. “What the fucking hell?” Zayn roars so loudly it sounds like he’s right next to them. Impressive considering they’re on the second floor behind closed doors. “I’m going to kill you both!”

“I am not sure actually.” Harry giggles. “Not sure at all.”

“Do we have time to stop it before the gelatin balloons?” Niall asks, worrying at his lip. Liam’s loud scream tells them that’s not an option either.

“Hide?” Harry asks.

“No.” Niall says, shaking his head. “Run as fast as we can to the nursery and use the babies as human shields.”

“Good idea.” Harry nods. They giggle as they flee the bedroom, picking up speed when they see Zayn charging up the stairs like a green foamy bull, while Liam slides around in the foyer in jello covered shoes. They slam the door behind them, Harry leaning against it while Niall grabs the twins. Zayn pounds on the door, shouting something Harry doesn’t understand. “We’re going to die. They’re going to show us on the news, torn to shreds and decorating our Brother-Husband cult nursery. I’ll finally top Elvis in something at least. Better death.”

“Come grab Sam.” Niall urges over the sounds of Zayn yelling. “You’ll be safe!”

“I won’t make it in time.” Harry says desperately. “Go on without me!”

“I won’t leave you behind!” Niall cries.
“I can’t hold him back anymore!” Harry says, struggling to keep the door closed after his hand slips off the doorknob. “Run!”

Niall scurries into the twins’ bathroom, closing the door behind himself with one last look thrown over his shoulder. Harry jumps across the floor as Zayn throws open the door, slamming it into the dresser. “This jacket was three thousand pounds Harry!” Zayn growls.

“Hey Zee.” Harry says, putting on his most winning smile. “You should take a shower. Got a little something on your cheek there.”

Niall cackles through the door and Zayn narrows his eyes. In for a penny, in for a pound.

Liam is happy, like weirdly happy. It’s strange. He’s sitting there with blue hair, munching on cold chips, and just- happy. It’s throwing Niall for a loop. “You gonna keep staring like that?” he asks.

“Did you fuck him?” Niall asks.

“Nope.” Liam giggles, shaking his head.

“Did he blow you?” Niall asks, narrowing his eyes. “Wank you maybe?”

“No, Niall. We didn’t do anything sexy.” Liam laughs. “We kissed once, but I mostly just did that to shut him up. He was being annoying on purpose.”

“Then why are you so happy?” Niall asks suspiciously.

“Have you ever tried Long Island iced tea?” Liam grins. “Zayn ordered me like six so I wouldn’t have to do it and look silly. They’re amazing.”

“So you had a good time then?” Niall asks with a smile.

“The best.” Liam nods. “We went to a comic book store, and then he ordered for me at the Pakistani restaurant I picked, like a total gentleman, and it was delicious. We were supposed to go to a museum next, but then we went to a pub instead. At two in the afternoon Nialler. It was fun.”

“So you aren’t mad about the pranks then?” Niall asks cautiously.

“It was funny.” Liam laughs. “You should have seen Zayn’s face when everything went off at the garage door. Priceless.”


Niall gladly agrees, scooting off the floor and shifting Harry’s sleeping body to make space for Zayn. “Big spoon or little spoon?” he asks.

“Big.” Zayn says gruffly, laying them both down. Liam smiles at them and then goes back to watching whatever inane cartoon he had put on. Zayn wraps his arms around Niall, putting his hand on the Irish lad’s shoulder. Niall tries to bite back the hiss, but he can’t in time. “What’s wrong?”


“No. Tomorrow.” Niall says with a laugh. “Yes, today.”

“Can I see it?” Zayn asks.

“Why Mister Malik!” Niall gasps. “I do think you’re trying to get me naked! How inappropriate!”

“It’s your shoulder.” Zayn huffs, rolling his eyes so hard they look like they’ll pop out of their sockets.

“I also got one on my cock.” Niall lies with a big grin. “It says ‘suck it’ with seventeen exclamation points.”

“Don’t do that to me when other people are around.” Zayn grumbles. “Drooling in public is very unappealing.”

“Slut.” Niall giggles.

“Tease.” Zayn grins. “Can I see it or not?”

“Buy him a Long Island.” Liam laughs. “He’ll totally take it off after that.”

“Ask me nicely.” Niall grins.

Zayn rolls his eyes and then says “May I please see your new tattoo Nialler?”

“Now ask me dirty.” Niall whispers in Zayn’s ear.

“Take off your fucking shirt.” Zayn growls, nipping at the skin of Niall’s neck.

“Mm, that’s- that’s not asking Zee” Niall says, his pitch going higher as he gives in to the sensation. Zayn turns him over roughly, positioning his own body so he hovers inches above Niall.


“If you two are going to fool around, go do it upstairs.” Liam laughs. “And no stuff inside the underwear please.”

“Will do.” Zayn smiles, pulling Niall off the couch and running up the stairs. The door is closing behind them before Niall even knows what’s happening. “Now take off the shirt Nialler. I’m going to kiss every inch of you not covered by briefs.”

“I’m not wearing any underwear.” Niall admits with a blush.

“Put on some of mine then.” Zayn smirks. “Don’t know if I can resist without a barrier.”

“They might get a little messy.” Niall says. “I’m already leaking a little.”

“Fuck, Nialler.” Zayn hisses, pulling Niall in for a snog. “Quit saying things like that to me. I want to make good on my agreements.”

“Willpower Zee.” Niall grin. “We’ll get there eventually.”

“I haven’t gotten off in weeks, and even that wasn’t intentional.” Zayn admits.

“Harry sucked me off at the tattoo parlor.” Niall tells him, hoping he won’t get angry. “I had him branded and he got so turned on he let me fuck his mouth in the loo.”
“You- you had him branded?” Zayn asks.

“Like a tattoo I made him get, not an actual brand.” Niall laughs. “Marked him as mine.”

“That is insanely hot.” Zayn moans. “Would you do that to me too? Mark me?”

“You already did that for me.” Niall says, running his thumb along the hem of Zayn’s shirt, touching the revolver hidden underneath Zayn’s skin. “But yeah, I could do it again. If you decide to stay.”

“I decided to stay the second you blurted out the thing about wanting to date me.” Zayn says roughly, grabbing Niall around the waist and finally tearing off his shirt. “Now put on some underwear, and get in the bed.”

“Take off me trousers first.” Niall says, challenging Zayn with an arch of his eyebrow. Zayn drops to his knees, his hands slowly opening Niall’s fly. He reaches in to pull Niall out, but is greeted with a harsh slap on his hands. “Naughty naughty Zee. No touching there.”

“Is this dominant thing usual, or no?” Zayn asks. “Because it’s incredibly hot.”

“No, so enjoy it while it lasts, and do as I told you, Zayn.” Niall growls. “Take off me jeans.”

Zayn slides his hands behind Niall’s back, brushing his fingers over the swell of Niall’s arse as he pulls them down. Niall’s knees almost buckle with the sensation of the jeans sliding down his hard cock. It’s rough and scraping, but also intense and pleasurable. The material pools at his ankles and Zayn looks at him hungrily, but exercising enough restraint to keep himself from touching Niall. He even manages to keep himself in check when Niall’s prick bounces closer to his face as he steps out of his jeans.

The darker boy starts to stand, but Niall pushes him back down before he can. He saunters over to the dresser, pulling on a pair of sheer black briefs that are far too small to hold him hard. He tucks himself up, so the head of his cock is poking out towards his stomach inviting Zayn to touch it. “Now you can stand.” Niall says darkly after crawling into the bed, suddenly very glad they never got around to placing the whoopee cushions.

Zayn strips quickly, crawling his way up the bed towards Niall. He has the pillows stacked up behind him, and his legs laid out in front and crossed. He looks regal like this, dominating, and fuck if it doesn’t turn Zayn on. He’s always been the stronger partner, the man, even with other men. Even when he bottoms he’s on top. He’s in control. That’s completely gone right now.

He wants to kiss every inch of Niall. He wants to beg for even the slightest permission to touch Niall. He wants to fill himself, patch up all the cracks, with NiallNiallNiall. Niall catches him on the chest with a foot, smirking at the hungry look Zayn knows he’s wearing. “Start down there.” Niall says firmly. “Work your way up.”

Zayn is more than happy to comply. He grabs the foot against his chest, lifting it up to kiss lightly at the underside. It’s sweaty and smells like boy, but that just turns Zayn on all the more. He runs his tongue up it when he reaches the bottom, reveling in the soft moan that parts Niall’s bright pink lips. He lays it down, kissing around the delicate ankle and slowly up his shin. He remembers when Niall had told him about having shaved everywhere, and he vaguely wonders how his soft skin would feel without the blockade of hair, not that he minds the hair. It’s very much a turn on at this moment, adding to the dominating manliness.

Niall tries to stifle the moaning, to keep the control in the moment, but Zayn doesn’t want him to.
Every time he moans at the press of Zayn’s lips it eggs the darker man on further. Niall is very much still in control. Zayn is practically begging by the time he reaches the edge of his own black briefs. He can see Niall’s cock leaking all over his stomach, trapped down by the waistband. He doesn’t touch it, won’t touch it, not without permission. He wants to, wants to take the Irish man into his mouth and suck until he’s spent and doesn’t want to even think about moving again, but he’s made a promise.

There’s something he hasn’t been able to get out of his head since he met Niall. For over a year he’s wanted to play with the smaller man’s hips. He wants to kiss them, lick them, bite them, dig his fingernails in and watch the flesh fill back out, to burn his fingerprints in so he can see them forever. He’s not sure why, he’s never been particularly fascinated by hips before, but it’s what he wants and he’s right there. He kisses at them tentatively at first, his lips barely brushing the pale delicate skin.

Niall moans louder than he has been, biting down on his lip and running his hands through his hair to keep from screaming. Zayn is driving him wild, his teeth scraping along Niall’s hipbone so slowly it’s like an orgasm in and of itself. His skin is on fire, tingling from his scalp to the pads of his feet, begging for release. He knows better though. They’ll have their time eventually, but today is not that day. Today he has to settle for Zayn mouthing and scratching at his pelvis, which in all honesty does not feel like settling at all.

Zayn is very focused at the moment, having stopped his progression up Niall’s body in favor of staying at his hips. At first Niall thought it was going to lead to oral, which he would have had to turn down, but Zayn has been very careful to avoid his prick. Niall is almost bitter about it, but it feels so amazing that he can’t be bothered.

Niall isn’t sure how long that goes on before he drags Zayn up by his hair. The darker man lets out a whine from the back of his throat, but Niall silences him with a kiss. It’s fluid and dark and hungry, everything their kisses have never been before. There’s more lust between them than ever before, made all the more intense when Zayn grinds his cock against Niall’s. “I didn’t say you could do that.” Niall growls, tugging on Zayn’s hair to make his head snap back so that he can bite at his neck.

“It was an accident.” Zayn mumbles.

“We made a promise Zee.” Niall says, sucking bruises into the dark flesh.

“We’ll keep it.” Zayn moans. “I don’t care about cumming. Not as long as we can just be close. As long as I can-”

“As long as you can what what, Zee?” Niall asks, dragging his fingernails over the dip of Zayn’s collarbone.

“As long as I can keep touching you.” Zayn whispers.

“I want you to cum for me.” Niall says darkly, his mind taken by lust. “You can’t touch yourself, can’t rut against me, but you can touch me anywhere in bounds with your hands or mouth. And I want to hear you say my name when you cum.”

He hears Zayn breathe out a gentle “Fuck”. He’s probably not even aware he did it, given how lidded his eyes are, how agitated his fingers have become, scrambling to catch on to anything of Niall’s he can touch. His breathing is heavy and broken, desperate. Niall loves it. Loves how he’s reduced Zayn to panting and whining with nothing but a few words. It makes him feel powerful again, not the broken wreck he was after he came back. He needs that. If he’s ever going to have sex
again, he needs to feel like he has control, no matter what’s happening.

He releases Zayn’s hair, letting his head fall against his chest. Zayn groans, leaning up and mouthing at the skin under Niall’s ear. “Where do you want me to touch you?” he asks, his tone needy.

“Wherever gets you off.” Niall tells him. “Just not this shoulder, alright?”

“Alright.” Zayn nods, moving his way back down Niall’s body until he reaches the Irish man’s hips. He grinds down on the mattress, biting at Niall’s hipbones.

“Is the hip thing normal for you?” Niall asks, his voice gravelly.

“Just you.” Zayn mumbles. “You have gorgeous hips.”

“They’re too bony.” Niall admits. He hates the way everything juts out on his body. His ribs are still visible, a cage poking through his skin. His elbows are sharp, accidentally injuring the other boys when he moves in his sleep. His knees look huge and you could dip crisps in his collarbones. He’s worked hard putting back on weight, but his stomach has mostly undermined him.

“You’re beautiful Nialler.” Zayn smiles. “Now stop thinking so much. I can see it on your face, and frankly, it’s a little insulting considering what I’m doing here. So lay back, and just let me do my work until you can’t think any more ever again.”

“When did you start being in charge?” Niall asks, cocking an eyebrow.

“I’m not.” Zayn grins. “You’re definitely still in control here. Got me humping the mattress like a horny fourteen year old because you’re so in charge. It’s hot as fuck.”

“Carry on then.” Niall says, pushing Zayn’s head back down. Zayn does carry on, with vigor in fact. Fourteen was not an understatement. Zayn rocks against the bed, kissing and moaning into Niall’s hips. It’s frenzied and uneven, stuttering like he’s just working off of instinct.

“Fuck, Niall, I’m close.” Zayn moans. Niall can see his arse grinding down harder and faster.

“If you must.” Niall sighs wearily, hoping this would last longer. It feels great and he doesn’t want things to end quite yet. “Cum for me.”

“Fuck!” Zayn groans. “Oh, Niall!”

He keeps going for a minute, but eventually comes to a stop and rests his head on Niall’s hip. He presses kisses to it and runs his fingers up the inside of Niall’s thigh. “Is it always going to be that fast?” Niall asks after he’s had a minute to breathe.

“God I hope not.” Zayn mumbles. “Never been a problem before. You just fuck with my head. Make me lose all my self control.”

“I’m glad it’s not just me.” Niall giggles.

“Please.” Zayn scoffs.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Niall asks, narrowing his eyes.

“It means I just came on command Nialler.” Zayn smiles. “You have total control. You have Liam levels of control.”

“That’s different.” Niall laughs. “Li has self control oozing out his ears. I can just put on a
“Don’t ruin things and say that was just an act.” Zayn pouts. “I don’t think I’ve ever been more
turned on in my life than I was at that.”

“Fine, it wasn’t an act.” Niall grins. “Now get up here and snog me a little before we go back
downstairs.”

“Not yet.” Zayn smiles. “I’m gonna get some new pants on, and you flip over.”

“We’re not allowed to nap in the bed, remember?” Niall asks, hating that decision.

“We’re not gonna take a kip Nialler.” Zayn laughs. “I’m going to give you a massage.”

“A massage.” Niall says flatly.

“A massage.” Zayn nods. “I have some oil for it. I can light some incense. Do a good long session
for you.”

“Can we um-” Niall sighs. “Can you actually start with my knee?”

“Of course.” Zayn smiles sweetly. “Has it been bothering you?”

“A lot.” Niall admits. “And I haven’t even looked at getting a new physical therapist. Nobody will
be as good as Louis, but he has that nursing job he wanted. And triplets.”

“He’d do it for you.” Zayn says softly. “Sometimes I think he’s a little in love with you.”

“He told me he would be if he’d been gay.” Niall laughs. “It was adorable the way he wanted me to
tell him that he’s my type. I had to tell him he was totally fuckable just to shut him up. Not that it’s a
total lie.”

Zayn snorts and climbs out of the bed. His Calvin Kleins are a total mess, along with the duvet.
“Linen’s still in Haz’s room?” he asks.

“Later.” Niall grins. “My knee needs you more than the duvet needs changed. Now strip off your
undies so I can at least see your pretty brown cock.”

“You’re- you’re something else Nialler.” Zayn smiles.

“I love you.” Niall whispers.

“I love you too.” Zayn says back, leaning into the bed to kiss him.

“What was that for?” Harry asks, tucking himself back into his joggers.

“You just looked so pretty sleeping there like that.” Liam giggles. “I was gripped by the sudden and
overwhelming urge to suck you off.”

“You’re still drunk.” Harry scoffs. “Where are the other two?”

“Upstairs.” Liam says simply. “Fooling around still probably.”

“They’re what?” Harry asks, bolting upright so fast Liam rolls off the couch.
“Nothing inside the underwear Haz.” Liam laughs. “They promised.”

“That’s not- I-’” Harry says, unable to actually pinpoint why he’s upset. Liam seems fine with it. He should trust them to keep to what they said. He knows they probably will.

“Haz.” Liam says calmly, staring up at him from the floor. “Relax. If this is going to work, then we have to give them some leeway. He’s further along in his relationship with Niall than he is with us. And Niall still needs to try things with him before he does with us. They promised not to do anything without permission again, and we should trust them.”

“Fine.” Harry huffs. “But last time they did something it ended with Niall having a panic attack from guilt. I just don’t want that happening again.”

“Then make sure to let him know you’re okay with it.” Liam beams. “Now get down here so we can cuddle.”

“How about on the couch instead?” Harry offers.

“But I’m comfy.” Liam pouts.

“I won’t be comfy on the floor though.” Harry sighs.

“You can lay on me. Maybe wiggle around a little with that cute little arse of yours.” Liam grins, wiggling his eyebrows.

“Give me a few minutes to cool down.” Harry laughs. “Then I’ll do more than that.”

“Don’t let us interrupt.” Niall laughs, walking into the room with Zayn smiling sheepishly behind him. “Sounds like a better show than Li’s cartoon.”

“Avengers Assemble is a work of art.” Liam grumbles. “Let’s go upstairs Haz.”

“Hurry up.” Niall giggles. “Turns out Zee sucks at knee massages, so I need Li’s hands when you’re done with them Haz.”

“We can stay.” Liam offers.

“No, you guys go.” Niall waves them off. “Have your fun. Just don’t fall asleep afterwards.”

“That might be tough.” Harry laughs. “He’s pissed off his arse, and you know how that goes. Why don’t you call Louis and Eleanor? Have them bring the kids. Offer them dinner, I’ll cook, and decent pay for it.”


“I’m dying!” Liam groans. “My boner is going away Haz. Don’t let my boner go away.”

Zayn and Niall burst into a fit of giggles, falling on the couch in a pile of stupid laughing boys that brings a smile to Harry’s face. He tugs Liam up by the hand and smacks him on the arse. “Get upstairs before it goes away then Li.” Harry smiles.

Liam runs, stumbling drunkenly and cackling like a loon while Harry chases him up the stairs. Harry makes sure to close the door behind them after the looks they’ve gotten from Niall and Zayn for forgetting. Liam is already trying to take his trousers off, and failing miserably at it. “Can you help with these?” he grunts when he falls back on his arse.
“But it’s such a great show.” Harry giggles. Liam pouts exaggeratedly and kicks his legs like a toddler. “Yeah Li, I can help.”

He pads on over, lifting Liam up onto the bed and then making quick work of his clinging jeans. It doesn’t help much as Liam is now stuck in his shirt, trying desperately to get out of the fabric. Harry lifts up the hem and Liam falls out, a grateful smile stretching his mouth. “Thanks beautiful.” he laughs. “I think my clothes are out to get me today.”

“I think it may be all those drinks you had.” Harry tells him, climbing up to straddle his man. “Not that I’m complaining. You’re even hornier than usual when you’re drunk. Reminds me of the hallway.”

“The hallway?” Liam asks.

“After our first outing to the Chair.” Harry explains, pushing Liam back onto the bed instead of letting him try and pull off the curly haired man’s shirt. “You trapped me against the door. Starkers.”

“Oh, god.” Liam groans, covering his face. “I had forgotten about that.”

“I couldn’t.” Harry admits. “Right after that I went to tell Niall that I was willing to try things with the two of you.”

“But, you told me Niall proposed that when he was in the hospital.” Liam says, his face a mask of confusion.

“He did.” Harry nods. “But then you spent all night at the Chair talking about Niall. I kind of panicked and Nialler and I had a fight. I was afraid you wouldn’t even notice me until you did that.”

“Oh.” Liam sighs. “I had, you know. Noticed you. A lot. Like, a lot, a lot. There was a lot of noticing going on. Guilt and noticing.”

“Li, darling, love of my life, you’re rambling.” Harry laughs. “I’m fine with it, but your boner is going away again.”

“You should fuck me then.” Liam grins. Harry’s mouth drops open, because, yeah, that is definitely not where he thought this was heading. Drunk Liam is hard to read properly. “Please Haz? I haven’t bottomed since Niall fucked me. In September. That’s- that’s like so long. I really really want to.”

“I mean- yeah. I’m not gonna turn that down.” Harry finally says.

“Can we- I mean- would you be okay if-” Liam stutters, blushing furiously. He takes a breath to steady himself and then calmly says “Can we try one of the toys?”

“Oh fuck yes.” Harry groans. “I bought one special for you, forever ago. It’s smaller than most of mine, but you would not believe how hard you’ll cum from it. It vibrates like- like- just oh my god. You’ll just have to see.”

“Does that hurt?” Liam asks timidly. “I’ve never tried anything like that, but it sounds like it would hurt.”

“Oh, Li, Babes.” Harry smiles softly. “I promise it doesn’t hurt. In some ways it’s better than the real thing.”

“Oh really?” Liam asks, not looking at all pleased with that statement. “Well maybe from now on you can just play with your-”
“That’s not what I mean Li.” Harry groans, interrupting before Liam can ruin Harry’s excitement. He’s wanted to do this for too long for a row to get in the way of things. “Just lay back, yeah?”

“Fine.” Liam pouts. “This better be the best orgasm you’ve ever given me, or I’m going to hold it over your head for years.”

“Better than riding you on the kitchen counter last week?” Harry asks, reaching over the side of the bed to get into his special drawer. “That’ll be difficult. I finally get why Louis and El did that.”

“Your real obstacle will be topping the time we shagged on the couch for an hour.” Liam laughs. “I swear you gave me blue balls starting and stopping like that. Came so hard I stopped breathing for a full minute.”

“Ooh, that was good.” Harry smiles. He finally finds the package, still unopened from seven months ago. He’s just been waiting for Liam to ask. He grabs that, a cloth, and the bottle of lube, thanking god that there are batteries in the package. “I’m pretty sure I lost half of my brain cells from how hard my head hit your shoulder.”

“I didn’t even feel it.” Liam admits with a giggle. “I think I was legally dead for a little while.”

“This will be better.” Harry says, turning back around. “Li, take off your underwear. This is much more fun if you do.”

Liam looks down and stares at his briefs like they’ve suddenly appeared without his knowledge. He smiles dopily, lifting his hips and wiggling out of the offending article of clothing. His cock springs out, heavy and hard, slapping back against his stomach. “Now what?” he asks, still grinning.

“Now, you prepare yourself while I put in the batteries.” Harry says, tossing him the bottle of lube. “Just do like I showed you, yeah?”

“I’ve figured it out by now Haz.” Liam sighs. “Done it enough times that I don’t hurt myself anymore.”

He lubes up his fingers and Harry’s brain fries a bit when he shifts his position so he can make a show of it. He lays back with his legs pulled back, his finger circling his rim for a moment before he pushes in. Harry is a little upset that he’s not the one doing it. Watching Liam fuck himself onto Harry’s fingers is probably the hottest sight in the world to him. This is a close second though. Very close. “Batteries, Haz.” Liam smirks, moaning just a little bit because he totally loves the attention. “Batteries.”

Harry rips open the package as fast as possible. He ignores the instructions, because honestly, it’s a vibrator. Only idiots would need instructions with a vibrator. He unscrews the base, popping the batteries in, and then screwing it back together. He tests out the dial on the bottom, sufficiently satisfied with the strength of it, he looks back up to see Liam working himself open with a second finger. “You ready then?” Liam asks smugly.

“Are you?” Harry asks, already moving back into position.

“Very.” Liam nods. He pulls his fingers out, grimacing before Harry hands him the rag. “Thank god for Harry-cloths.”

“I wish you two would stop calling them that.” Harry pouts, lining up the toy with Liam’s entrance. It’s on it’s lowest setting, vibrating slow and weak as he pushes it in slowly. Liam moans, pushing down on it until Harry gets it down to the base.
“Well that definitely doesn’t hurt.” Liam pants, circling his hips until he finds the right spot. “O-o-o-h fuck. Definitely does not hurt.”

“If you think that’s good, then just wait.” Harry grins, nudging the dial up another notch. There’s a pulsing function too, but Harry decides to wait on that.

“Hooooly fuck!” Liam moans. “Fuck, Haz, why didn’t you tell me it was like this? You’re cruel keeping this from me.”

“And that’s only the second setting.” Harry smiles cockily. “We’ll work you up to the better stuff.”

“Do whatever you want to me.” Liam groans. “Just don’t stop.”

“Do you want to try doing it yourself, or have me keep doing it?” Harry asks, pulling it out shallowly and pushing it back in.


Harry smiles and leans forward, nipping at the exposed skin of Liam’s thigh. He keeps working the vibrator into Liam, short shallow thrusts that leave him melting into it. After a few minutes and several dozen muttered “Fuck”s from Liam, Harry turns it up another notch. “You like that Babes?” he asks breathlessly.

Liam nods, biting his lip so hard it looks like it hurts. “Yeah.”

“Li, are you okay?” Harry asks, stopping his ministrations.

“I’m trying not to cum.” Liam admits, pressing his eyes closed so tight they almost disappear. “I haven’t even touched myself, but I’m right there.”

“It’s okay Babes.” Harry smiles. “You can cum.”

“I want you to fuck me.” Liam says, shaking his head. “But I also don’t want you to stop.”

“Li, I’ll fuck you if you want me to, but I have to admit I really want to see you cum from this.” Harry grins. “I’ve wanted this for so long.”

“And you won’t be mad?” Liam asks, worrying at his lip.

“Not at all Li.” Harry says softly, starting back up his work. He turns the dial up to the highest setting, and smiles watching Liam unravel underneath him. “Now go ahead and touch yourself.”

Liam grabs his cock, squeezing tight and fisting in time with Harry’s movements. He’s panting and moaning, whispering Harry’s name. It’s so fucking hot, and then he cums. He’s streaming over his stomach, streaks of white painting his abs. Harry wants to frame this moment and hang it in the foyer so he can see it every day. He doesn’t resist the urge to lean down and lick Liam clean when he finishes.

“I need to talk to you.” Niall says the second Louis walks through the door.

“Then take these two.” Louis groans, handing over two of his son’s carriers. Niall isn’t sure which ones they are. They’ve grown so much in the last few weeks. “I have to go get Ed out of the car.”

“I’ll do that.” Zayn says, stepping into the foyer with a jacket. Niall discouraged him from getting too
dressed up, but he’s still wearing a suit because he’s Zayn. He walks out past Louis. Louis, who has the strangest look on his face that Niall has ever seen. It’s a mix of confusion, worry, and pure rage.

“What the bloody fuck is he doing here?” Louis hisses.

“That’s part of the talk.” Niall says sheepishly.

“This better be one hell of a dinner Niall.” Louis glares. “Otherwise I’m going to stab you all in the face.”

Niall doesn’t have time to respond before Zayn walks back inside carrying Edmund, with Eleanor close behind. “Bring the boys in here!” Harry calls from the kitchen.

Zayn smiles and takes one of the carriers from Niall before heading off. Niall hustles behind him, hoping his shirt doesn’t burst into flame from where he can actually feel Louis glaring from behind him. Harry gasps happily when he sees the triplets all lined up on the island. “They’re so big now!” he giggles.


“And I’ll be taking him downstairs now.” Niall says, sweeping him out of the room. He’s got the massage table he’d bought months ago, so that Louis wouldn’t have to lug one everywhere, set up in the theatre. He’d planned on Louis yelling, so the sound-proofing should come in handy. “Don’t yell at Haz. He’s excited to see you all.”

“What the bloody hell do you think you’re doing?” Louis screams. “Why is Zayn Malik upstairs? Why is Zayn Malik even in the bloody country?”

“We’re dating.” Niall admits.

“And you’re still living here?” Louis says, disgust lacing his voice. “How could you do that to Liam and Harry?”

“We’re all dating him Tommo.” Niall sighs.


“We, as in Haz, Li, and I, are dating Zayn.” Niall says slowly.

“We’ve all gone insane.” Louis groans. “You’ve gone insane and Harry has my kids and wife within easy knifing range.”

“Your kids are safe, and as long as Zee doesn’t feel particularly randy, then so is your marriage.” Niall giggles. “Then again she is wearing the dress that Li and Zee like.”

“It’s the breasts. You wouldn’t understand.” Louis says, waving him off. “How did this happen?”

“We asked him to try, and he agreed.” Niall explains. “We started yesterday.”

“You’re an idiot.” Louis sighs. “I’m not trying to hunt you down again when this goes to shit and you run off. I’m done with your drama Niall. I’m done being a second thought to my best friend.”

“I’m sorry.” Niall says softly. “I don’t have any defense for that. I’ve been a terrible friend.”

“Yeah Niall, you have.” Louis groans. “You haven’t talked to me in forever. I still have no idea what happened to you for those two months. And I want to thank you for paying for everything with the
triplets, because El and I are swimming in bills right now, but that doesn’t mean I forgive being forced out of your life, or being called just because your knee is acting up.”

“I called because I wanted to see you again Tommo.” Niall whispers. “You were the only person I wanted to talk to when Zee said yes. I’ve missed you.”

“I’ve missed you too Ni.” Louis sighs. “Now take off your trousers and get on the table.”

“Are we okay?” Niall asks. Stripping off the joggers he put on after his time with Zayn.

“Ask me again after I do your knee.” Louis grins. “You may just want me gone.”

“Don’t be too mean.” Niall pouts. “Zee messed it up pretty bad. Amazing hands most of the time, but not for massages. He’s very bad at massages.”

“Well I guess he isn’t God after all.” Louis scoffs.

“Get it all out now.” Niall sighs, sitting down on the table. “It’s too early in this to have you go upstairs and spoil it all for us.”

“Do you really think this is going to work out?” Louis asks, pushing Niall down onto his back.

“I do.” Niall nods. “Everything is going really well. He made us dinner last night, and oh my god Tommo, he looked so good. I wanted him to fuck me right after I finished dressing him. Not that I’ve built up to that yet, but oh my god.”

“What do you mean by that?” Louis asks, gripping Niall above the knee and digging in his thumbs.

“There’s a lot I didn’t tell you about the time I was gone.” Niall sighs. “And I’m going to tell you, but I don’t want to talk about it okay? I’ve had the talks with Li, and Haz, and Zee, and two separate therapists.”

“Okay.” Louis nods.

“While I was gone I kind of lost my mind. I started paying for it everywhere I went. Every night. One night the guy I thought I was hiring beat me, mugged me, and raped me. He gave me syphilis that I was just getting over when I came back. The worst part though, is that I hired him because he could have been Liam’s brother. I haven’t been able to have sex since then because I’ve been having panic attacks, which is why I’m on a cocktail of Prozac, Celexa, Buspar, and Lyrica if the others aren’t enough to keep me calm.

“Originally Zee was here to help me work everything, but then Liam suggested dating him and Harry agreed to try. Because he caught a flower petal, which really doesn’t make sense if you weren’t there. But it’s working. It’s working so well. He went on a date with Li today so they could get to know each other better. Liam got totally pissed, just flat out on his arse drunk. That’s why he’s upstairs still. He’s sleeping. So yeah. That’s the important stuff. I fucked whores. I was raped. Zayn is back. I’m on enough drugs to stop an elephant. We’re dating. Any questions?” Niall asks.

“Am I allowed to ask questions?” Louis asks.

“Just that one.” Niall laughs. “Too bad for you.”

Louis rolls his eyes and sighs. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine now.” Niall nods. “Well, I will be. There are some things I still need to get control of, but
I’m getting better. It would help if I had my best friend back though. And he wasn’t a cranky arsehole.”

“I could literally pop your patella off right now.” Louis glares. “I’m pretty sure that the screw is loose, Niall. You need to go back in for a surgery to have it tightened. And in case you’re worried about it, this isn’t something Zayn did by himself. My guess is it’s been happening for a while.”

“Long recovery?” Niall asks.

“Not really. A couple days at most. No PT necessary.” Louis tells him. “You need to schedule it as soon as possible though. Like, yesterday.”

“I’ll call tomorrow.” Niall groans. He’s really not looking forward to it. “Is El ready to start?”

“She’s desperate.” Louis smiles. “I on the other hand am not. I’m not looking forward to her working around Superman all day, and leaving me with the boys.”

“Don’t forget about Zayn.” Niall cackles. “Li is going to ask him to be our business manager if this all works out.”

“And that’s it.” Louis groans. “I’m moving back to Doncaster. There’s no blokes that look like that in Doncaster.”

“Li likes to work shirtless in the Summer too.” Niall grins. “She’ll finally have something nice to look at.”

“Doncaster!” Louis shouts. He tosses Niall his trousers and climbs back up the stairs.

“This is lovely Harry.” Eleanor smiles.

“He’s the best isn’t he?” Liam beams. He’s still a little sleepy, but Harry woke him up with sweet kisses so he’s in a good mood. That may also be the fact that he doesn’t have a hangover yet, which probably mean she’s still drunk. His wine is definitely helping keep it that way. “Then again Ni and Zee have apparently become chefs too. I’m officially the worst cook in the house now.”

“Is he still drunk?” Louis stage-whispers to Niall.

“Very much so, I think.” Niall giggles.

“Li, Babes, I think maybe you should switch to water.” Harry says gently. “Nialler used the last of his remedy ingredients for me this morning, so the only thing getting you through tomorrow is aspirin and prayer.”

“Oh god.” Liam groans, dreading the thought of tomorrow morning. He’s suddenly very thankful there’s a bench in the shower, because now at least he won’t be laying in his vomit. He points an accusatory finger at Zayn and hisses “This is all your fault.”

“I’ll hold your hair back.” Zayn grins. Stupid pretty Zayn with his stupid, pretty smile. His stupid, pretty lips. His stupid, pretty, extremely kissable lips.

“You better.” Liam pouts.

“You’re in for a treat.” Niall laughs. “Li is a bottomless pit of vomit.”
“Eating here, come on!” Louis grumbles. “Haven’t had anything that didn’t come out of a box in weeks. Let me savor it without thinking of Liam blowing chunks everywhere.”

“Be nice.” Eleanor hisses, bat Louis on the shoulder.

“He’s fine.” Harry says. “Nialler, behave yourself. Zee, don’t encourage him. Li, get your hand off my knee and eat some bread.”

“I don’t wanna.” Li whispers to Harry, his hand drifting up the skinny leg under it.

“Later.” Harry says firmly, picking up Liam’s hand and putting it on the table. “How have you two been?”

“Better since we hired Mary.” Eleanor smiles. “Thank you boys so much for doing that for us.”

“We’re happy to.” Harry smiles. He’s so beautiful when he smiles. Liam wonders if anyone would notice if he slipped under the table and sucked Harry off. Probably. Harry is way too loud for that. Silly loud Harry. So indiscreet. “Are you getting any proper sleep?”

“Some.” Louis shrugs. “El more than me. I have to get used to being alone with the three of them.”

“Hey, why don’t you guys move into our old house until the triplets are older?” Liam offers suddenly. “It’s right down there, so if there are any problems, it’s easier access. Plus Haz and Nialler and Zee can help. And Louis can be around other adults.”

“More like keep an eye on Superman’s wandering hands.” Louis mutters.

“Louis!” Eleanor hisses. “He is going to be my boss!”

“It’s my fault El.” Niall giggles. “I planted ideas in his head because the boys were talking about that blue dress and how good your bre-”

“And you’re done.” Zayn says, clapping a hand over Niall’s mouth. Liam knows from experience that Zayn’s hand is already coated in spit from Niall’s tongue. He admires Zayn’s self-control in keeping it there.

“There won’t be any wandering hands Louis.” Harry says, throwing a glare at all three of them in turn. “El, I’m so sorry for this. They aren’t allowed in public anymore. I’ll lock them up in the basement from now on. Liam’s offer definitely stands though. We can have all your stuff moved up here whenever you want. Mary already knows where we live, so that won’t change anything. I can have it ready by the end of the week if you like.”

“You already bought us a house Harry, we couldn’t put you out like that.” Eleanor says sweetly.

“It’s not putting us out El. You’re our best friends, part of our family, and we’ve been just terrible to you lately.” Harry tells her. “If you don’t feel comfortable with it, I completely understand. The offer is still there though.”

“We’ll discuss it tonight and get back to you after Niall’s surgery.” Louis says.

“Surgery?” Zayn asks sharply, dropping his fork. “What surgery?”

Niall mumbles something into Zayn’s hand and Harry looks around like someone let a flock of pigeons loose. Niall pries Zayn’s hand off and says “The screw in my knee is loose. I need to go back under and have it redone. Also, your hand tastes like peppermint and it’s making my mouth
“It’s the massage oil.” Zayn explains, wiping it up with his napkin. “You didn’t have to keep licking.”

“Yeah, but it tasted like peppermint Zee.” Niall giggles. “Which this lamb is sorely missing Haz. Mint and lamb go hand in hand. How did you not add mint? Angelo would have a heart attack from this.”

“Because Johnathan kicked it off the counter while I was playing with him.” Harry admits sheepishly.

“It’s still delicious Haz.” Liam smiles. “He’s just freaked out.”

“I know Li.” Harry says quietly. “When did your hand get back on my leg?”

“I have no idea.” Liam says, staring curiously at his hand, which has once again found it’s way back to Harry’s lap. “It has a mind of it’s own. It’s a bad bad naughty hand.”

“Once again you two, I am so sorry about this.” Harry groans.

“Sit down.” Louis hisses. Zayn has never been intimidated by the smaller man before, but his eyes look like fire and it’s terrifying. The others have all gone to play with the babies while Zayn was supposed to clean up. He takes a seat, trying not to incur any more wrath than he apparently already has. “This is a terrible fucking idea. When you came by to get your bags I thought it was so you could leave. For good.”

“I.” Zayn starts to defend himself.

“You are not talking. I am talking.” Louis says harshly. “You broke him. You all broke him. Niall is one of the best people in the world, and you three fight over him like dogs with a bone. He’s happy about this though, for some stupid unfathomable reason. He’s setting himself up for heartbreak, but I swear to god, if you hurt him again, I will kill you. This is not exaggeration. This is not an idle threat. I will slit your throat and decorate your amazing car with your intestines. I would gladly go to prison for him, because he needs one person in this who is actually on his side.

“So that’s me. I am the one in his corner. I am the one making the threats because his family is dead and his fiancés are too stupid to see how badly this could end. So this is the deal, I’ll leave it alone. I won’t interfere and kidnap him away until he comes to his senses. I won’t stand outside with a board that says ‘Break up with Malik’ every day. I won’t try and mess things up in any way. But you will promise me right here, and right now, that you are in this for real. You aren’t doing it just so you can finally fuck him. You want to be a part of his life, of all five of their lives, for the rest of yours. You make that promise or so help me god, I will end you.”

Zayn waits a few seconds, making sure Louis is finished with his very Shonda Rhimes style rant. Zayn has really got to lay off the Netflix. “I promise Louis. I’m here for Niall yes, but also Haz and Li. I love the twins, I love Niall. I was already in love with Harry for years. I’m well on my way with Liam. It’s new, and scary, but also amazing. I know I’ve hurt them all so much, but I’m trying to make amends. I care about them so much, and I promise I want to be here for all of them. I want this life.”

“Fine.” Louis says with a nod. “But know that my threat will stand until you die. I will kill you if you hurt them.”
“I’ll keep a knife sharp for you, because if I ever did that I would want you to.” Zayn says solemnly. “Now can I clean the dishes? The carrots are a pain in the arse if they dry on.”

“Get to it.” Louis says. “I want to see you do dishes in a four thousand pound suit.”

“This suit was only fifteen hundred pounds.” Zayn scoffs. “You think I’m going to waste the good stuff on you? Maybe if I’d known ahead of time that El would wear the blue dress, but I’m already dating three men. Adding El would just be extraneous. Besides Haz and Nialler wouldn’t be interested.”

“I’m watching you Zayn.” Eleanor giggles, walking in with Gemma. “Louis is more than enough for me, even if you do dress better than he does.”

“Isn’t that the truth?” Niall grins, sending Zayn a wink and adjusting Edmund in his arms. “But Tommo has a much better arse. Zayn’s bum is so little.”

“Ha!” Louis crows. “I beat Malik at something! Suck it bitch!”

“Go ahead and whip it out.” Zayn smirks. “If I can find it without a magnifying glass I will.”

“No worries there then.” Liam laughs. Zayn is pretty sure he’s holding Tanner, but him and Johnathan are almost identical.

“You three need to stop being awful.” Harry glares. He’s holding whichever triplet Liam isn’t, and Sam. Zayn really wants to steal his boy, to munch on his toes and tickle his tummy because it makes him smile. Unfortunately he has a table full of dishes to clean.

“Tommo, take your kid.” Niall says suddenly.

“Not if he shit.” Louis says, throwing up his hands. “I’m done changing diapers for one night.”

“He didn’t.” Niall laughs. “Zee wants to hold Sam. I’ll do the dishes while you guys play with the kids. So take your son.”

“It’s fine Nialler.” Zayn says, smiling at how well Niall can read him.

“Zee, take Sam.” Niall says firmly. “I know you want to, and I’m more than happy to do the dishes. Besides he’s too active to play with Johnathan right there. He’s used to playing with Gems, and she’s tougher than he is. She whoops his arse.”

“That’s my girl.” Eleanor smiles, giving Gemma a very cute high-five. “Kicking bums and taking names.”

Louis makes grabby hands and Niall hands Tanner over with a kiss on the forehead. “Now give me the dishes, and then grab Sam.” Niall says with a sweet smile.

Zayn manages not to squeal when he pushes the plates into Niall’s hands, picking Sam up gleefully. He loves the twins equally, but Sam is much more willing to play with him most of the time. Gemma just wants to scoot around, but Sam is content in Zayn’s arms or lap without having to crawl. Zayn spoils him rotten. “Now you come with me Blue-Eyes.” Niall says with a pointed glance at Louis.

“How dare you!” Niall says angrily, placing the dishes in the sink and whirling around on Louis with a glare. “How fucking dare you threaten him!”
“I had to say it Niall.” Louis says flatly.

“You have no right!” Niall hisses. “I can make my own decisions, we can make our own decisions. We chose to do this. All four of us. I’m so mad right now I could strangle you.”

“Do you still not understand how much you mean to me Niall?” Louis groans. “‘Best friend’ may not be a phrase that means much to you, but it does to me. You’re my fifth favorite person in the world, and I made three of the people in front of you with the other one. I hate seeing you hurt, and he has done nothing but bring you pain.”

“Don’t you dare.” Niall says, somehow managing to keep himself from yelling. “I know I’ve been a shit friend. I know that. But I’ve had a lot of shit to deal with. I’m doing my best here. Zayn is a part of my life, whether you approve or not. I love him. We want him here. So stop threatening him. I need you to support me.”

“I do support you Niall.” Louis sighs. “I just want to protect you.”

“Thank you for that Louis, really, but I don’t need anyone’s protection. I’m done needing protection. After what happened to me, I broke. I’ve spent so much time building myself back up. I’m stronger now.” Niall says slowly. “I need you to be happy for me. I need to be able to tell you about this without you threatening to disembowel the man I love.”

“I know.” Louis says softly. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t apologize to me Louis.” Niall sighs wearily. “Let’s just leave it at that.”

“He agreed with me.” Louis tells him.

“I know, and I’ll have a talk with him about that later. I was the first one down the stairs and I caught the last few seconds of the conversation.” Niall admits. “I’m just glad Zee was desperate for some baby action after spending all day in Dublin. Normally he’d know it was just a ploy for me to get you alone and vent.”

“Okay, I have a very serious question, and then I’ll back off. I promise.” Louis sighs. Niall nods and he continues. “Why is his hair green? Liam and the blue kind of works, in a really weird sort of way. But green for Malik?”

“Oh you’re gonna love this.” Niall grins.

“Hey.” Harry sighs. Zayn has walked up behind him, and all Harry wants to do is go to bed. Niall did the dishes, but he’d completely forgotten about putting away leftovers. Now he’s upstairs asleep with Liam, and Harry is left to do the work.

“Need some help?” Zayn asks.

“I could have used it five minutes ago. I’m pretty much done now.” Harry grumbles.

“I was putting the twins down for the night. Gemma wasn’t happy about it.” Zayn explains. He grabs a stack of Tupperware and smiles. “You go up to bed. I can handle the rest of this.”

“It’s fine Zayn.” Harry says sharply, tearing the container out of Zayn’s hands. “I’ll do it myself.”

“Are you mad at me?” Zayn asks, his face falling.
“No.” Harry sighs. “I’m just frustrated. So much happened today. It was a good day for most of it. Then that dinner happened. Louis was such a prick and Eleanor was trying so hard not to be negative, but it’s obvious she doesn’t approve either. Probably the only reason they stayed is because I paid them triple what I normally would. Niall is using the last of his funds and paying for their kids’ food and diapers, their nanny, their doctor’s visits, everything. I bought them a fucking house, because I thought of them as family, and they can’t even try to be happy for us.”

“They’re concerned Haz.” Zayn says softly. “I would have the same doubts if the roles were switched. You had them, and you probably still do. It’s natural for them to be hesitant. This was a rough thing to spring on them.”

“They still could have tried though, for Niall’s sake at the very least.” Harry grumbles.

“Louis was doing what he thought was best. I can take the threats if it means he’ll back off of Niall.” Zayn says softly.

“What threats?” Harry asks, snapping his head up.

“The standard older brother ‘I’ll kill you if you hurt him’ blah blah blah shit.” Zayn says, waving it off.

“Does Niall know about that?” Harry asks, concerned for Louis’ safety and Niall’s ability to look innocent in a courtroom.

“Why do you think he dragged Louis off when they did the dishes?” Zayn scoffs. “I caught a bit of that conversation, and Niall was furious. I’m not looking forward to my end of that in the morning, because he’s already tried to murder me with just his eyes.”

“He’s had a really hard day.” Harry sighs. ‘Just-just let him have it yeah? He already had a bit of a breakdown earlier.’

“Was that before or after you sucked him off at the tattoo parlor?” Zayn asks harshly.

“Well after.” Harry says flatly, not at all surprised that Zayn knows about it. “Because he thought you were going to leave him again. Because of the pranks Zayn. He thought you’d leave him over something as stupid as dying your hair green and silly-stringing you. He’s scared out of his mind right now, and Louis piled him needing surgery on top of that. Just let him yell a bit, if that’s what it takes. And don’t get shitty with me for doing something, just because I wanted to pull him out of his head.”

“He thought I’d leave because of that?” Zayn asks softly.

“He’s been terrified of it Zayn, and not without good reason.” Harry tells him. “We all know you’re trying, but you’ve run away from him before.”

“I won’t do that again.” Zayn says, doing his best to keep his voice steady. “I ran because I thought the only way he could be happy was without me. Now I think we can all be happy together. I know we can. This is where I belong, and I won’t forget that. Not ever.”

“I’m glad you feel that way.” Harry smiles. “I’m glad you’re giving us a chance. Although there is something I’m not so happy with. Something Li told me before he drifted off earlier.”

“We didn’t do anything.” Zayn says worriedly. “I swear.”

“Oh I know.” Harry smirks. “Liam couldn’t keep that secret for ten seconds if you had. He told me,
that you said he’s a better kisser than I am.”

“I don’t know what he’s talking about.” Zayn says, his best poker face coming out. “He’s been drunk since before we got back here. He must have just imagined it.”

“That won’t work on me Zayn.” Harry says with a smile. “I can see right through it when you lie to me, and technically we haven’t rescinded your rules yet. You have to be honest with me. So, Zee, do you think Liam is a better kisser than I am?”


“And first?” Harry asks.

“If you have to ask, then you haven’t been paying attention to Nialler very well.” Zayn smirks. “He blows you both out of the water.”


“Yes, that Niall.” Zayn nods. “He’s way better than either of you.”

“So now I’m the worst kisser in the house.” Harry pouts.

“You should work on that.” Zayn giggles. “But I can’t speak as to myself. I’ve never kissed- well, myself. I’m not an accurate judge of that.”

“You’re a bit passive actually.” Harry smiles. “I thought you’d be more into it than you were.”

“Honestly, I wasn’t expecting it from any of you except Nialler.” Zayn shrugs. “Especially you. By the time Li did it, I was slightly more prepared. Not when he did it this afternoon though. You guys are very surprising kissers.”

“You kissed Liam?” Harry asks icily.

“No, he snogged me. Probably to shut me up because I kept teasing him. I wasn’t aware that I wasn’t allowed to.” Zayn says defensively. “I didn’t think you’d get mad.”

“I’m not mad.” Harry says, slinking around the counter. “I’m just wondering why we’re standing around talking, if I could be kissing you instead.”

“Have at it then Haz.” Zayn smirks. “Got somethin to prove, don’t you?”

Harry suddenly realizes why Liam wanted to shut him up. Zayn can be infuriatingly smug. He’s also frustratingly attractive, darting his tongue out to swipe across his bright pink lips. He’s teasing Harry with every part of himself now. His hips are cocked out, his eyes challenging, his teeth biting the slightest bit at his puffy bottom lip. He wants this almost as much as Harry does, but he’s too good at this game to say it. He doesn’t have to. He knows Harry is already caught, and Zayn is just reeling him in now.

Harry grips him by the neck, dragging him in closer and taking a second to hover over his lips. He smells like wine and cologne used to cover up the cigarette he’d snuck at some point. The faint scent of nicotine rolls off his tongue, but Harry finds himself not minding so much right now. He closes the gap, not for the first time thinking how strange this is. Zayn and him have kissed plenty of times, but never like this. Harry never put any thought into it before. Zayn was just his best friend, and occasionally best friends snog. Maybe not actually. He’ll have to look that up later.
Zayn opens up for him easily, pressing his hand into the small of Harry’s back to pull him closer. Their tongues meet without hesitation, because Harry does think about it this time. He thinks about how gentle, how sweet, how gorgeous Zayn is. He thinks about how much he wants this suddenly. How something flicked a switch for him, and instead of Zayn just being his best mate, he wants to snog him instead. He wants to do more, but that can wait.

Right now the kiss is plenty. Harry may well have to accept his place as worst kisser in the house, because Zayn is absolutely brilliant at it. It’s like he’s spent years studying how Harry likes to be kissed. He’s passive at first, letting Harry control things. But that changes slowly, because Harry likes to experience everything in a snog. He’s so caught in the middle of the top/bottom spectrum, and Zayn lets him sample everything.

By the time it ends Zayn’s hands are tangled in Harry’s curls, and they’ve stumbled back so that Harry is pinned against the fridge. He’s pressed so tightly into the darker man, he’s sure his growing erection is obvious. “That all you got Haz?” Zayn asks, his smirk returning with cocky vengeance.

“No even close.” Harry says, fully aware of how his breath is coming out in pants, totally betraying him. “But if I add any more, we’ll be shagging on the kitchen floor. I would not look forward to having that conversation with the other two tomorrow.”

“Just from a kiss?” Zayn asks, feigning innocence. “I thought you and Li went upstairs for a little fun earlier?”

“I fucked him with a vibrator and then gave him a tongue bath.” Harry says, smirking at the look that crosses Zayn’s face at that. “I haven’t gotten off since he woke me up by sucking me off.”

“You’re a cruel man Harry Styles.” Zayn growls. “Cruel, but you gave me great material for what I’m about to go do now. Have a good night Haz.”

Zayn leans in again and plants a small kiss on Harry’s lips before leaving him with a tent in his pants, and a very dirty image.

“It’s all set up for tomorrow morning.” Harry sighs.

“Stupid efficient hospital.” Niall whines. He’s really unhappy about having to go back in for this surgery. It’s grating against his nerves on what should be a happy day, the anniversary of the day Harry moved in. It’s also two days short of being on it’s own anniversary.

“Babes, you’ll be fine.” Harry says soothingly. He’s playing with Niall’s hair, twisting it up into spires because he’s obviously just as worried. “Louis said there’s nothing to worry about.”

“Tommo isn’t a surgeon.” Niall huffs. “And I can’t eat after midnight.”

“You shouldn’t eat that late anyways.” Harry says softly. “It’s bad for your digestion.”

“My digestion is fine Mum.” Niall pouts. “You want me to start eating prunes too?”

“It couldn’t hurt.” Harry grins.

“You’re a disgusting human being.” Niall scoffs.

“Well then you can find someone else to play with your hair and make you dinner.” Harry says flatly. “Since I’m so disgusting.”
“Zee will do it for me.” Niall says with a smirk, calling Harry’s bluff. “He might even be nicer to me.”

“Why are you being so mean to me on our anniversary?” Harry pouts.

“We didn’t start dating for another several weeks from now Haz.” Niall sighs, rolling his eyes when Harry pouts even more.

“Yeah, but we met today.” Harry says. “About twenty minutes from now in fact.”

“Well I had planned on doing a recreation of that event for you, ratty old towel and all, but my knee is apparently truly fucked up, and Li is sound asleep for now.” Niall explains. “But soon he’ll start puking and ruin any romance this day has in it. We should just wait until our actual anniversary to celebrate.”

“To think I had a ceremony set up for that day.” Harry groans. “Canceling all that was a pain in the arse.”

“I’m sorry.” Niall tells him softly. “I’m sorry I ruined everything.”

“No, no, Nialler that’s not-” Harry sighs. “I didn’t mean it like that. It’s just, we’d be down to the wire now. Three months until then, and I’d be panicking and going crazy with every detail.”

“Remind me to not let you near anything this time.” Niall laughs. “I’ll plan the whole thing.”

“That is so far from what is going to happen.” Harry scoffs. “I’m not having my commitment ceremony at The Chair with a cake made out of snack cakes.”

“Arse.” Niall grumbles. “I’ve been planning my wedding for years. It’s not at The Chair.”

“No.” Harry gasps. “You’re one of those?”

“One of what?” Niall asks crankily.

“Those people that plans their wedding their whole life. Those people who have every minutiae scribbled out in a notebook, hidden in a box with fabric samples and flower magazines.” Harry explains. “You never said anything the whole time I was planning it.”

“You never let me.” Niall says. “Every second you weren’t with the twins, or fighting with me, you locked yourself in the study and did it all without any input from Liam or myself.”

“To be honest, I thought you’d hate doing it.” Harry admits. “You and Liam are so- so masculine. I just figured you’d want me to do it because I’m-”

“The girly one?” Niall finishes with a laugh.

“Sadly, yes, that is how I was going to end that sentence.” Harry sighs.

“Well I do want to help.” Niall huffs.

“As long as you don’t want to do it with anything related to Derby.” Harry smiles.

“White and black is too cliche for a wedding Haz. Except the tuxes, because it will be classic style tuxes.” Niall giggles. “My reception colors are baby blue and silver.”

“That’s perfect!” Harry gasps. “I was going scarlet and gold, but that’s so much better. We’ll talk
about the tuxedos. I have a perfect one in all white.”

“Classic. Tuxedos.” Niall says firmly. “I’m not going to look back at the pictures and sigh every time because you spilled red wine on yourself and didn’t notice it.”

“I would notice, and you don’t drink red wine at weddings. You drink champagne.” Harry pouts.

“Champagne doesn’t compliment lamb.” Niall argues.

“Good thing we aren’t having lamb then.” Harry smirks. “We’re having chicken and fish.”

“Could you be more cliche?” Niall groans. “This was a sheep farm for over a century Haz. We’re having lamb.”

“It’s a horse farm now. Do you want to serve people horse?” Harry grumbles.

“Lamb.” Niall says adamantly.

“Chicken.” Harry argues.

“I’ll give you fish, but not the chicken.” Niall says, sitting up. “We’re having braised lamb shanks with mushrooms and Port.”

“Liam doesn’t even like mushrooms.” Harry counters.

“Then no fish.” Niall grins. “We’ll do a pasta instead.”

“So now I get nothing?” Harry scoffs.

“We’ll have fish in the pasta. Grilled tuna steaks and angel hair with peas in a cream sauce.” Niall smiles.

“God damn it.” Harry groans. “That sounds so good.”

“Years of planning Haz.” Niall laughs. “How long am I going to have to argue this? Because I can keep going.”

“Are you feeling better yet?” Harry asks. “Because we can stop whenever you’re too distracted to worry about your surgery.”

“You’re such a dick.” Niall groans. “Stop distracting me from something huge.”

“Nialler, it’s not huge.” Harry says softly. “It’s minor surgery. A couple hours, and then you’ll be back home, and have the three of us taking care of you. I’ll even wear a nurse’s outfit if you want.”

“Not my scene, but I appreciate the offer.” Niall giggles. “If Li ever gets sick I’ll be sure to let him know you’re willing.”

“He’ll get it dirty.” Harry laughs. “He’d make me ride him in it. You’d just laugh and throw things to knock my hat off.”

“You’d love it though.” Niall says. “You love feeling pretty.”

“I am pretty.” Harry pouts.

“Mind-numbingly gorgeous.” Niall tells him, laying back down on his chest. “The absolute most
beautiful man I’ve ever seen.”
“Don’t let Zee hear you say that.” Harry grins. “His ego is so fragile.”
“I’m sorry, who just had to snog me last night to try and prove he’s better at it than Leeyum?” Zayn asks sleepily, walking into the room with a weary expression. “Oh that’s right, you.”
“Did he make the top of the list then?” Niall asks.
“You still reign supreme Love.” Zayn smiles softly, collapsing on the couch and shutting his eyes.
“Why didn’t you wake me up?”
“I accidentally woke Haz up when I got out of bed. Thought you’d appreciate getting some extra.” Niall giggles. “Zees.”
Harry loses his shit at that. Zayn manages to roll his eyes, even though they’re still closed, but Niall can see him smile a little bit. “I would’ve still gotten up with you if you’d asked.”
“Yeah, but Haz called to set up the surgery for me.” Niall grins. “You would have just grumbled until you had more coffee.”
“I would’ve called for you.” Zayn pouts.
“Maybe, but it’s my name that gets us a private waiting room and a meal while he’s under the knife.” Harry says proudly.
“Leeyum is still the better kisser.” Zayn says, sticking his tongue out.
“Don’t be rude.” Harry hisses.
“The truth isn’t rude or polite.” Zayn smirks. Well, he half smirks. One side of his face is pressed into the couch. “It’s just the truth.”
“Niall, settle this.” Harry huffs. “Who’s better at snogging? Me or Liam?”
“I am not answering that.” Niall laughs.
“So it’s Liam?” Harry asks, pouting so big it looks painful.
“Let me rephrase that. I can’t answer that question Haz.” Niall sighs. “You’re both excellent kissers. It’s a tie.”
“You are no help at all.” Harry says, narrowing his eyes.
“Zee, when we’re alone, I’m going to punish you for this.” Niall glares.
Zayn smiles and wiggles his bum in the air. “I’m tingling with anticipation.”
“Slut.” Niall laughs.
“Tease.” Zayn grins. It’s kind of become their thing since that day Zayn helped him shower. Niall likes having them, pet names that aren’t too cutesy.
“You two are sickening.” Harry laughs. “Completely dysfunctional.”
“Yeah, because you three are so normal.” Zayn scoffs. “I heard something about a nurse’s outfit on
my way in here.”

“Ooh, Zee would like that too.” Niall grins. “And I doubt he’d throw things to knock your hat off.”

“I’d slip my hand up his skirt and wank him until he cums all over it.” Zayn laughs.

“See?” Harry asks. “Everyone else wants to get my outfit all dirty. Those two are naughty as all hell, probably even while they’re sick. You’re the only one I can wear it for. You’re just all clingy and pathetic when you don’t feel well. Much easier on the washing cycle.”

“You’d look hot all red-faced and moaning in it though.” Zayn tells him.

“I have to admit, the idea is getting more appealing as time goes on.” Niall giggles.

“None of you appreciate how hard cum is to get out of white cotton.” Harry groans. “It like- it never really goes away.”


“You’re hateful.” Harry hisses. “Wash it yourself.”

“I don’t know how your spaceship washing machine works.” Zayn whines. “It ruined three of my silk shirts last time.”

“Because you should have silk dry-cleaned.” Harry cackles. “You’re so helpless when you’re domestic.”

“I clean dishes, I change diapers, I give the twins baths. I’m not good at laundry.” Zayn shrugs. “I had a maid for laundry.”

“Well I’m not your maid.” Harry says flatly.

“What if I buy you the outfit for it?” Zayn asks, waggling his eyebrows.

Harry’s eyes narrow and then he grabs a muffin from the coffee table. Niall watches it sail through the air, and land perfectly on Zayn’s face. Harry looks so surprised, and Zayn so offended. Niall doesn’t even attempt to stop the cackle. There’s no point in trying.

“I had no idea your stomach could hold so much.” Zayn sighs. Liam can’t really respond. The echo of his voice of the bowl of the toilet is so loud it makes him want to cry. He chokes up his fourth round of vomit and holds his hand up for another glass of water. “Feel better yet?”

“Stop yelling at me.” Liam whines before taking a drink. “This water tastes like throw up.”

“Trying spitting some out first Li.” Zayn says, softer this time.

“Can you turn on the shower?” Liam asks. “Just warm please. Like room temperature.”

“Do you need help getting in?” Zayn asks, reaching into the glass box and causing a racket with the water.

“I’ll crawl in.” Liam sighs.

“You’re ridiculous.” Zayn says quietly. “Stand up. Lets get your clothes off.”
“No.” Liam says, shaking his head a little too fast so it hurts again. “You don’t get to see me naked yet. Not when I’m like this.”

“Then we’ll leave the underwear on.” Zayn says. He pulls Liam’s arms up and tugs off his shirt. “Can you stand up long enough to get your trousers off?”

“Maybe.” Liam sighs, struggling to stand on wobbly legs. Zayn slips cool fingers under the waistband of Liam’s joggers and slides them down. Liam thanks god that Zayn keeps his shoulder steady, because he really need the support to stay upright. “Thank you.”

“Don’t thank me until I get you to the shower.” Zayn smiles. “I’m a little afraid I’ll drop you.”

“Please don’t.” Liam whines. “I won’t get back up.”

“I’ll do my best.” Zayn says softly. He walks Liam over to the shower and slides him onto the bench. Apparently he doesn’t mind that his pajamas are getting soaked through, because he doesn’t even flinch. “Call for me when you need to wash off, yeah? I’ll come right back in.”

“Don’t get water everywhere. Just stay in here.” Liam says, resting face down on the cool tile of the bench.

“I don’t think Haz and Nialler would be okay with us showering together yet Li.” Zayn says, brushing Liam’s hair back out of his face.

“They’ll understand.” Liam says. “Don’t leave me alone please. I feel like I’m dying, and I might need you to bring me back if I stop breathing because I bash my head against this tile to make the pain stop.”

“Fine, but I’m totally not taking the blame if they get mad.” Zayn smiles, sitting on the bench near Liam’s head.

“Your pajamas are getting wet.” Liam says after a few minutes. His head is starting to hurt slightly less. The wonders of hydration. He makes a mental note to torture Harry at the earliest possible opportunity for taking the last of Niall’s hangover cure. “And probably cold.”

“Yup.” Zayn says quietly. “I’m actually kind of freezing.”

“You could take them off.” Liam points out.

“I’m not wearing underwear, so that’s not really an option.” Zayn laughs. “I’ll be fine Li.”

“If you insist.” Liam shrugs. “Not like I’m not going to see it eventually.”

“I like the enthusiasm, but I’m going to stay clothed until I can get some privacy.” Zayn tells him. “If I don’t get to see you, then you don’t get to see me.”

“I’m the only one you haven’t seen naked. I have to make it decent when you do. Have it trimmed or something.” Liam sighs. “Maybe not be puking my guts out right beforehand.”

“The first time I saw Niall naked, he made me wash his feet. As for Harry, he just cried and ate two quarts of ice cream.” Zayn explains with a soft laugh. “It was after a break up, and it was very awkward. Honestly, this might still be the clear winner if you had gotten starkers. I’ve heard very interesting things about the size.”

“I’m well aware.” Liam chuckles. “It’s not as big as they make it seem.”
“I think you’re just being modest.” Zayn shrugs. “I’ll find out eventually though. I’m a patient man.”

“Thanks for that.” Liam says softly. “Thank you for taking things slow with us, with Niall especially. We all really appreciate it.”

“Honestly, I’m just as happy taking it slow.” Zayn admits. “I want this, but I need time to adjust to the idea of it still. This is definitely not what I had pictured my life being. Living in the middle of nowhere with three amazing guys. My mother is going to kill me when I tell her.”

“Maybe you’ll get lucky like me, and they’ll just completely reject you and move away so they never have to never see you again.” Liam grumbles bitterly.

“I’m sorry that happened Li.” Zayn says softly, petting Liam’s hair. “I’ve always had a good relationship with my family. They weren’t exactly thrilled when I told them I like blokes, but they adjusted. This might be too much though. My older sister, Doniya, might still talk to me, because she’s totally in love with Haz, but I don’t know about the rest of them.”

“Just like me.” Liam laughs. “Ruth is good with it, but Nici isn’t. Forget about my parents. I already have.”

“Have you tried talking to them since everything happened?” Zayn asks.

“God no.” Liam scoffs, wincing slightly at how his head throbs when he does. “They said they never wanted to hear from me again, and I’m more than happy to give them what they want. They never tried with me, so I’m done trying with them.”

“And you’re okay with that?” Zayn asks cautiously.

“I am.” Liam nods. “Nialler, Haz, the twins, and you are all the family I need. And Nici of course, but we don’t talk as much as we used to. I don’t see the point of keeping toxic people in my life just because we share genes.”

“I can see that point of view.” Zayn says, resuming his hair playing. “You’re really brave Li.”

“Hardly.” Liam sighs.

“Going out on your own like that? It’s the bravest thing I’ve ever seen. When everything with Niall and I happened, I went running home. I don’t think I could have ever tried to strike out on my own like that, especially when I was that young.” Zayn admits.

“That was nothing. I had the courage of youth and I had Niall.” Liam says quietly. “To be honest, I’m more scared now than I’ve ever been in my life, except when Niall left.”

“Why?” Zayn asks.

“Because you’re amazing, and I’m afraid you’ll leave.” Liam admits. “And yeah, I’m worried because I think if you leave it will break Niall, and maybe even Haz, but I’m also worried because I think I’m falling for you too quickly. I’m not sure how I’d get over it if you left. And that’s why I’m afraid, because things have moved so slowly, but I’m moving too fast. It took me years to admit to myself that I was in love with Niall, and a full two months to figure out my feelings for Haz, but if you asked me right now, I’d say I’m pretty much there. But you could always choose to leave, and that’s terrifying.”

“That’s- that’s a lot to take in.” Zayn sighs. “I’m not leaving Li. I don’t know how many times I have to say that, but I’m not. Not unless you three don’t want me here anymore. God, I feel like I’ve had this conversation a hundred times in the last few days.”
“I’m sorry.” Liam tells him. “We’re very needy and codependent in this house. Roma is very concerned with it.”

“I can live with that.” Zayn smiles. “I just want you to know that I’m not leaving, and I’m not changing my mind. This is the life I want. You and the boys and the twins. This is where I want to be, even if it’s not what I had planned out.”

“Will you come with El and I this weekend?” Liam asks suddenly.

“To look at horses?” Zayn asks.

“Yeah.” Liam nods. “If you’re going to stay, I’d like to ask you to help me run the financial aspect of things. Harry is terrible with money, and Niall isn’t any better honestly. I’ll be out on the farm most of the time to get things going, so I need someone I can trust doing the books.”

“I can do that.” Zayn says with a smile. “And yes, I’ll come with you.”

“That’s not all though. Haz, Nialler, and I talked about it, and we want to convert the area above the garage into a studio for you.” Liam smiles. “All the bedrooms are taken for our private spaces, and the other two will go to the twins as they grow up, but you should have your own space.”

“You really don’t have to do that.” Zayn says, blushing furiously.

“We want to though.” Liam says, finally sitting up because his head isn’t throbbing so much any more. “We want this to feel like home to you too. We talked about making the downstairs office into your room, but it doesn’t have it’s own bathroom or closet. Then Niall suggested the flat over the garage as a place for you to do your art, and it seemed perfect.”

Zayn doesn’t say anything, just leans over and presses a gentle kiss against Liam’s lips. It doesn’t last more than a second or two, but it helps allay Liam’s fears more than he thought possible. “Thank you for making me a part of your family Leeyum.” Zayn smiles. “Thank you for betting on me. I’m almost there too.”

“You’re an idiot.” Niall groans. “You could have just let one of them see you naked, instead of making the guy who’s going for knee surgery tomorrow walk up our horrible giant staircase.”

“Not until it’s time Nialler.” Zayn whines. “I just need you to get me a towel and some fresh clothes.”

“You have nothing to be ashamed of Zee. Your bum may be a bit flat, but you’ve got the prettiest cock on earth.” Niall grins. He’s clearly enjoying watching Zayn huddle for warmth in the shower as his clothes are freezing and sticking to him like a second skin. “And the tattoos. Mm, the tattoos.”

“If you don’t get me some clothes, I will not kiss you for a month.” Zayn hisses. He’s tempted to turn on the hot water, just for warmth. “Not once.”

“Haz was right.” Niall pouts. “You are rude.”

He disappears and Zayn can hear the drawers opening and closing. He walks back in and he’s holding a jock strap and a sheer top that Zayn knows belongs to Harry. “No.” Zayn says firmly.

“It’ll look so good though Zee.” Niall giggles.
“Nialler, no.” Zayn sighs. “Please just get me some real clothes.”

“Fine.” Niall groans, elongating the i for at least three seconds. He comes back a few minutes later with a jumper and a pair of Harry’s skinny jeans. “Will these do princess?”

“Yes.” Zayn nods. He starts unbuttoning his shirt, regretting the idea to ever get sleeping clothes. Niall pads over and hands him a towel.

“Quick question, why didn’t you just take off the clothes after Li left you up here to get me?” Niall asks.

“I’m cold.” Zayn says, pulling the shirt off.

“And I’m sure the soaking wet clothes didn’t help.” Niall laughs.

“Nial, I’m cold.” Zayn groans. “Everything is- smaller.”

“Oh my god!” Niall cackles. “You risked a cold because you didn’t want me to see it all shrunk?”

“I don’t look good all shrunk and flaccid.” Zayn shrugs, running the warm fluffy towel over himself like it’s the greatest thing on the face of the planet.

“I could warm you up.” Niall says, waggling his eyebrows.

“Oh really?” Zayn smirks. “What are you waiting for then?”

Zayn opens up the towel and Niall saunters up and says “An opening.”

He shoves Zayn back and turns on the hot water. It hits Zayn right in the face, which would be terrible, but it’s so warm. So delightfully warm. And then it isn’t warm anymore. It’s boiling. He yelps and jumps back out of the spray. “I’m going to kill you for this.” he snarls.

“Get it set to an appropriate temperature.” Niall grins. “I got permission to take a shower with you so I could get that horrible green out of your hair.”

“You did?” Zayn says, a smile splitting his face.

“I did, so take off your trousers and get ready to have your hair back to normal.” Niall laughs, stripping off his shirt.

Zayn slides off his trousers, kicking them off to the side and drops the completely soaked towel on top of it. He’s already warming up by the time Niall steps in, and everything feels normal again. His skin isn’t freezing, and his cock is getting back to it’s normal size. “Missed this.” he smiles.

“Me too.” Niall admits. “I shower alone now every morning because nobody is up that early.”

“Why aren’t we allowed to do this again?” Zayn asks.

“It’s too intimate I guess.” Niall shrugs. “They don’t really have a leg to stand on anymore with that, seeing as Liam showered with you this morning, so I may be able to swing doing this from now on.”

“Sounds brilliant.” Zayn smiles, ducking in for a kiss. Niall giggles against his lips and then melts into it. Zayn doesn’t make it too intimate, trying to keep some boundaries up while they’re both naked. Niall isn’t having any of that. He presses himself flush against Zayn, slotting himself in between the darker man’s legs. Zayn pulls back and mumbles “Nialler, we need to stop now.”
“I’m ready Zee.” Niall tells him. “I want to tell Haz and Li that I’m ready.”

“Nialler, we need to talk about that. About the sex thing.” Zayn sighs. “Now that we’re all dating, I don’t think it’s right to exclude them from it.”

“That’s fine.” Niall nods. “I always wanted them to be there for it too. I need it to be you, but I agree with you.”

“But you’re good with that?” Zayn asks. “Sharing our first time?”

“Zee, if this goes right, if I don’t have a panic attack, and I can make it through with Liam right beside me, we’ll have plenty of times between just the two of us. You’ve seen how Haz and Li are. We don’t— it’s not like it’s always all of us, even before I left.” Niall explains. “We’ll all have sex with each other together and separately. There will be times when you go off with Li, and I go with Haz, or you and Haz, and me and Liam. It happens. So our first time, just the two of us, it’s not going to be diminished by this.”

“I just wanted to be sure.” Zayn smiles. “I hadn’t really thought of it that way though. I mean, yeah, I’ve thought about it. I don’t know. Is it weird if I thought you guys didn’t usually pair off? I thought it might create tension.”

“Zee, do you know how exhausted I’d have been all the time if I had constantly had sex with both of them? I’m the bottom. I can only be penetrated, or double penetrated, so many times before my body just gives out.” Niall giggles.

“You’re trying to give me a heart attack, aren’t you?” Zayn groans. He can feel himself growing hard, pressing into Niall’s thigh. And of course Niall can feel it too, because god forbid anything make Zayn’s life less frustrating. “Don’t. Don’t say anything. Just leave it alone Niall.”

“Fine” Niall pouts. “You want me to do your hair now?”


“Actually you made it work last night.” Niall giggles. “El couldn’t keep her eyes off of you.”

“Because I looked like an Oompa-Loompa.” Zayn scoffs. “You guys gave Leeyum a good color. Why couldn’t I get like, red, or something? I could actually make that look decent. Or the blue on me. That’s an actual thing. It’s called Raven. My hair looks so strange with a green tint.”

“It’s the one we had the most of.” Niall shrugs. “We figured it’s the only one we had enough of to actually make a dent in that gorgeous hair of yours.”

“Well that I can handle.” Zayn smiles, leaning in to peck at Niall’s cheeks.

“Hands off Slut.” Niall laughs, batting at Zayn’s chest. “You’re the one who said to leave it alone.”

“But you’re so much more fun to touch.” Zayn mumbles, sliding his hands down Niall’s back. He nips at the spot where Niall’s shoulder meets his neck and mumbles “Your bum definitely isn’t flat. And you’re just so much cuter than I am. Downright edible.”

“You are making it extremely difficult to say no.” Niall moans.

“I won’t do anything you would need permission to do.” Zayn tells him. “Maybe right on the edge of it, but nothing too much. Just tell me if you want me to stop.”
He slips his finger between the cheeks of Niall’s arse, running his finger gently around the rim. Niall moans and curls his fingers into Zayn’s hair, pulling him in for a much deeper kiss than before. Zayn keeps up his ministration, placing the other hand on Niall’s chest to tweak lightly on his nipple. “Fuck I’ve missed that.” Niall groans, breaking apart from Zayn to bite at his own lip. “It’s been so long since anyone’s touched me there.”

“So, keep going?” Zayn asks.

“Just like that.” Niall pants, dropping his head on Zayn’s shoulder. “Oh fuck Zayn.”

“You like that?” Zayn asks heavily, trying to focus on Niall rather than his own throbbing erection. Niall nods in affirmation, too busy moaning to bother saying words. He grinds up against Zayn, desperate for friction. “Now now, none of that Nialler. We’re not getting off. I’m just making you feel good for a bit.”


“I know.” Zayn says quietly. “Soon enough we’ll get to that.”

“But I have surgery tomorrow.” Niall says desperately. “I should have a good orgasm before that.”

“Then ask Haz to give you one, or wank.” Zayn smirks. “I’m not going to ruin things with the other two just because I want to finger you.”

“You’re cruel.” Niall huffs. “Get me going like that, and just stopping. Cruel.”

“I haven’t stopped though.” Zayn laughs. His finger is still going, slowly dragging across the surface of Niall’s hole. Occasionally Niall presses back, but Zayn makes sure to move his finger with it. “But we should get going on my hair or the other two will get suspicious.”

“Fine.” Niall pouts. “But I’m gonna be loud when I wank. Loud so you know what you’re missing.”

“I’m surprised you aren’t going to ask Haz.” Zayn chuckles.

“I don’t want Li to feel like I’m picking Hazza over him.” Niall sighs. “The tattoo parlor was one thing, but it was spontaneous, and honestly, I don’t think I could resist asking him to ride me right now.”

“I thought you wanted it to be me.” Zayn pouts.

“I do.” Niall says gently. “Which is why I’m going to spend the entirety of the afternoon locked in your room, and wanking until my balls dry up.”

“Think of me?” Zayn asks.

“The entire time.” Niall nods.

“Not enough grease Haz.” Liam is whining for the hundredth time. It’s giving Harry a migraine. “Why don’t we have any real bacon?”

“Because Zayn is Muslim, and you’re a health nut!” Harry groans. “You insisted on completely cutting out regular bacon last month, remember?”

“I wish I could go back in time and punch myself in the face.” Liam sighs.
“I’m more than willing to do it right now.” Harry says coarsely under his breath. “Will sausage work? I have some chorizo stashed away somewhere.”

“No you don’t.” Niall laughs, walking into the kitchen. It’s a blessing, because now somebody else can deal with Liam being whiny. “I used it the night we made tacos, remember? I put it in half of the rice for you and me.”

“Fuck!” Harry groans. “I’ll figure something else out then. Maybe I can make hash-browns or something.”

“No potatoes left after the other night.” Niall tells him.

“Christ in heaven!” Harry sighs. “Fine, I’ll go out and get something. Burgers all right?”

“Zayn can go get them Haz.” Niall says softly. “You go play with the twins. Calm down a little, maybe.”

“I’m fine!” Harry snaps. He’s really not. Niall left them alone to go shower with Zayn, and Liam is being completely infantile about his hangover. It’s petulant, but that doesn’t stop him from being grumpy.

“How about being whined at incessantly for over an hour?” Harry hisses. “You took forever up there with Zayn. You’re up there sucking his dick, and I’m dealing with the world’s hairiest baby!”

“Stop it.” Niall glares. “We didn’t do anything we need permission for, not that I feel like I should need permission to do something with the man I’m dating. So go get whatever bug crawled up your arse. I have enough to worry about today without you being a prat. And Li definitely doesn’t deserve to be made to feel worse.”

“Fine.” Harry bites out harshly. “I’m going to get the burgers. I’ll be back soon.”

He storms into the foyer and grabs his wallet and keys, and then makes his way back out to the garage. He’s not completely shocked to find Zayn already waiting in the Range Rover. Niall had said something to him in the kitchen when Harry went for his keys. “I don’t need a baby-sitter Zee.” he sighs.

“That’s not why I’m here.” Zayn shrugs. “Nialler needs a few things picked up from the pharmacy. Why bother taking two cars when you’re already going into town?”


He pulls out of the garage and turns on the radio to show he has no intention of holding a conversation. Niall keeps messing with his stations, so right now it’s stuck on classic rock. The Eagles come pouring through his speakers, Life in the Fast Lane. Harry doesn’t bother changing it. It’s loud and fun, one of his favorite songs, immediately lessening his bad mood.

“We didn’t do anything you know.” Zayn says after a few minutes.

“I know.” Harry admits. “I came up to the room to get aspirin, but I stopped when I heard your conversation. I heard him trying to sneak around behind our backs again.”

“He misses intimacy Haz.” Zayn says quietly. “He misses having someone touch him. It’s part of
why he thinks he’s ready to go to the next level. None of us get to make that call for him.”

“You think I don’t know that?” Harry asks angrily. “I know we don’t get to make that choice. I’m well aware that it needs to be him. I’m also well aware that we haven’t all come to a consensus on what to do exactly about sex. This first time is an extremely delicate thing. It will be the first huge step in our relationship, coupled with the biggest test of Niall’s recovery. We need more time, but he’s clearly ready now, and Niall has all the patience of a toddler sometimes.”

“After tomorrow he’ll be on bed rest for a few days. That will give you some time Haz. But for what it’s worth, we both want you two to be there.” Zayn says carefully. “He doesn’t want to do it separately, with me first, to test if he can, and I don’t want that either. I believe him when he says he’s ready.”

“We’ll take that into consideration then.” Harry sighs. “But time is also an issue. I don’t know if we’ve been dating long enough to go there yet. It could put a strain on an already difficult situation. We want to make sure you’re really comfortable in our lives before we take that step. Sex is a connection you can’t just take back, and it will be that much harder on all of us if you leave afterwards.”

“I’m never going to be forgiven for it am I?” Zayn asks bitterly. “Every conversation I have, you three make it sound like I already have one foot out the door. I don’t. I plan on staying as long as you three want me to. Why is that so hard to believe?”

“Because if you were in love with Niall, and you left so easily, why couldn’t you do it this time?” Harry asks.

“Do you really not see the difference?” Zayn asks. “I left because I never thought I would have this chance, and that I would want it if I did. I didn’t think I’d be able to love three people at once, but now I know I can. I know that this is where I belong. With you, and Li, and Nialler. This is what I want in my life.”

“Has Niall ever told you about when we first decided to try things?” Harry asks suddenly.

“A little bit.” Zayn shrugs.

“I spent every day for over two weeks begging for reassurances, or trying to back out. He was miserable with it, but he constantly told me what I needed to hear. He kept me from being too afraid. I’m sorry if we’re making you angry with all the thoughts that you could leave. I am. But we need those reassurances. We need to hear over and over that you want to be here, because we’re all scared that this isn’t really what you want.” Harry says, barely stopping to breathe between sentences. “You have every bit of the power right now, because none of us ever wants you to leave.”

“Li said you were all needy and codependent. I never figured you for the type.” Zayn scoffs.

“Yeah, well, neither did I.” Harry sighs. “I always fancied myself as independent. Figured I’d be a bachelor for most of the rest of my life.”

“Nah. You were always going to find someone.” Zayn smiles. “I’d always hoped it would be me. I spent years pining over you.”

“And now it is.” Harry says, flushing bright red. “Nialler, and Li, and you. No pining necessary.”

“Up here is my stop.” Zayn says, pointing out the pharmacy. “You just wanna pick me up after you finish?”
“I’ll go in with you.” Harry smiles. “I need to get some things as well.”

He parks the car and gets out, following behind Zayn to get inside quickly. In his tantrum he’d forgotten to grab a jacket. Liam may be satisfied with the rise in temperature, but Harry is most decidedly not. “Harry, Dearie, how is our boy?” Rita asks the second he steps through the door.

“Actually he’s going into surgery tomorrow.” Harry says with a frown. “We’re here to pick up some things for his recovery.”

“Oh dear, is it his knee again?” Rita frets. “It’s always the knee with that lad.”

“It is.” Zayn nods. “Do you sell those icepacks you crush?”

“That whole shelf over there has pain management items.” Rita says, pointing Zayn towards the back of the store. He smiles and nods, taking off towards the section she had pointed out. “Anything I can help you out with, dear?”

“Magazines.” Harry smiles. “Music ones preferably. He’ll need something to keep him busy when we bug him too much and he makes us all go away.”

“Yes, he does hate the fussing.” Rita says, smiling fondly. “It drove his mother mad whenever he’d hurt himself and she’d try to comfort him. Magazines are all over there.”

Harry walks over to where she indicates. He picks up several different ones, including a five month old Rolling Stone that has his name on the cover. He flips through it, and is surprised to find a blurry picture of himself and Liam from the night of the auction. “The new Yoko Ono?” he reads. “Unidentified man spotted with Harry Styles at homeless benefit last Thursday. Is this the reason Styles left behind a promising career? He’s hot, but not that hot. Our reporters have been unable to find his name. We’ve reached out to Styles’ agent, but he has yet to respond as of this article.”

“Oh god, that again?” Zayn sighs, shocking Harry with his stealth. Why does he only date ninjas? “I didn’t bother responding because you can’t even see Li’s face. Hardly worth breaking radio silence over.”

“Maybe I should have given them something to tide them over.” Harry sighs. “One day this story could leak, and god help us all if it does.”

“Come upstairs with me, yeah?” Niall asks once they’re alone. Harry is being a shit for some unknown reason, and Liam clearly needs comforting.

“Is Haz mad at me?” Liam pouts.

“I think he’s mad at me actually.” Niall sighs. “I’ve sent my best agent to figure it out. For now, let’s just get you somewhere comfortable to wait for your burger.”

“I can’t believe he’s going to get me fast food. He’s so anal about the whole ‘health food thing’.” Liam says with a conspiratorial grin, like he’s sharing a secret with Niall that nobody else knows. “His brain is probably melting down at the prospect as we speak.”

Niall just suppresses a smile and the urge to tell Liam that he’s even worse about it than Harry is. He’s just happy nobody is taking out their anger on Liam for no reason. He holds his hand out and Liam takes it gently. They walk upstairs to the nursery and find the twins fast asleep, still abusing their napping times like their daddy Niall. Liam smiles down at them sweetly and then Niall sits him
down in one of the rocking chairs, proceeding to curl up on his lap afterwards.

“You’re the comfiest seat in this whole house.” Niall sighs contentedly. “Hazza spent a half a million euros on furnishings, and you’re still the best.”

“It’s my soft and cuddly personality.” Liam says happily, wrapping his arms around Niall. “How are you feeling today?”

“Frustrated and incredibly horny.” Niall admits.

“Don’t say that in front of the babies.” Liam giggles.

“They don’t know what horny means Li.” Niall says with an affectionate eye roll. “They’re not even six months old yet.”

“Oh yeah.” Liam says, his tone contemplative. “I wonder if they can remember anything.”

“Object permanence starts later.” Niall explains. “They can remember faces and toys to an extent, but only if they see them all the time. Take it away for a few days and they’ll forget it completely.”

“How do you know so much about it?” Liam asks curiously.

“I looked things up while I was gone, to see how the twins would be progressing.” Niall tells him. “In case I never saw them again. I wanted to know when they’d crawl, or start talking, when they’d remember who the people are who hold them. I wanted to know if they’d remember me at all.”

“I talked to them about you all the time.” Liam says softly. “Told them stories of all the stupid shite we got up to in our lives.”

“Thanks Li.” Niall says, nuzzling into his chest.

“I wanted them to know you.” Liam says, stroking his hands through Niall’s hair. “Even when I thought you weren’t coming back. I was so angry for a while. Hazza even had to stop me from burning your letter at one point, but you’re still their father. I wanted them to know who you were and how much I love you.”

“I’m sorry.” Niall whispers, trying to hold back the tears stinging at the corner of his eyes. He forgets sometimes how hard his leaving was on Liam especially. “I’m so so sorry.”

“Hey.” Liam says with a sweet smile. “It’s okay Nialler. You’re here. That’s all that matters now. We’ve spent too much time living in the past. I just want to move forward now, yeah?”

“How do you forgive me so easily?” Niall asks quietly.

“Because when you love someone, that’s what you do.” Liam tells him. “We’ve both hurt each other before. You always forgave me too.”

“You’ve never hurt anyone the way I hurt you Li. You’re too good to do something like that.” Niall says, trying to push off Liam’s chest. Liam holds firmly, but lovingly. “You’re by far the best person I’ve ever known.”

“Maura was the best person we’ve ever known Nialler. Maura and Bobby. I’m nowhere near as good as they were.” Liam says. “Neither of them would have kissed Danielle. Neither of them would have forgotten you as much as I did when the twins came along, or just expected you to adjust. Neither of them would have ever let you feel like you were any less than the most important thing in
“You are too good for this world Liam Payne.” Niall says with a smile. “Way too good.”

“That’s hardly true.” Liam scoffs. “But thank you for saying it.”

“I’m sorry for the way Haz was treating you.” Niall tells him, leaning up to plant a kiss on Liam’s forehead. “You didn’t deserve that.”

“I was being whiny.” Liam shrugs. “I should know how to handle a hangover better by now. Zayn was just so sweet, so I may have wanted to be babied a bit too much.”

“Zayn will report back to me once they get home, and then I’ll talk with him.” Niall says. “I still don’t think he’s mad at you. He’s an expert in being passive-aggressive or mad at the wrong person.”

“You should give him a pass on this one Nialler.” Liam sighs. “He’s having a rough time with this whole thing. He’s got to learn to see his best friend in a whole new light.”

“They snogged each other’s faces off last night in the kitchen.” Niall scoffs. “I hardly think he’s finding it that difficult.”

“There’s a massive difference between being attracted to somebody, and falling in love with them Nialler. I mean, it couldn’t have been that easy for you when you started developing feelings for me, right?” Liam asks.

“It really was actually.” Niall shrugs. “You were- it was just so obvious, you know? It was natural that I’d fall in love with you. You were sweet, and you understood me. You never had that whole ‘gay panic’ phase with me when I told you I was gay. Not to mention, you were really attractive. Falling for you was inevitable. I didn’t mind waiting for five years for you to feel the same. I wouldn’t have minded waiting a hundred if I got to be with you in the end. So yeah, it was easy. You made it easy.”

“You’ve never told me that before.” Liam says quietly. “Now I feel even stupider for taking so long to get there.”

“Don’t.” Niall grins. “If you hadn’t, then I wouldn’t have had so much time to get good at riding dick. Would’ve been a terrible shag.”

“Was that ever weird for you? Sleeping with other guys when you had feelings for me?” Liam asks cautiously.

“Yes and no.” Niall sighs. “I mean, I wasn’t going to be celibate and sit around pining for you all the time. For all I knew you were never going to come around, so I had to find some things to occupy myself.”

“That’s a really cavalier attitude to take about that kind of thing.” Liam mumbles.

“And we’ve reached stage three of the hangover.” Niall giggles.

“Stage three?” Liam asks.

“Yeah.” Niall nods. “First you vomit and cry in the shower, then you whine and lay on anything you can find, and then the last part is when you start using your big person words again and I can relax because you won’t horf all over me.”
“Glad to know I’m so predictable.” Liam pouts.

“You’re reliable, and that’s not a bad thing Li.” Niall says softly, stroking his face. “It’s a really good thing. You’re reliable because you’re strong and you’re smart and your heart is bigger than your biceps. And yeah, you might be predictable when you drink too much, but that’s not a problem, because I love you.”

“I love you too.” Liam smiles, pecking Niall on the cheek.

“Tomorrow, after my surgery, can it just be you taking care of me?” Niall asks. “I love Haz and Zee, but it’ll be too much if it’s all three of you. And I know you won’t hold it against me if I snap because I’m in pain. Just- please stay with me, just the two of us like it was before.”

“Whatever you want Nialler.” Liam says quietly. “I’m not sure if Hazza and Zee will agree to stay away, but maybe we can set up shifts or something where it’s mostly just me.”

“That’ll work.” Niall says, nuzzling into Liam’s chest.

“He’s scared.” Zayn whispers. Liam and Harry are making up quite vocally in the bedroom, again, and Zayn is trying to ignore it and the throbbing in his pants.

“Of what?” Niall asks. “And why are you whispering?”

“I don’t know.” Zayn admits. “He um- he overheard us talking in the shower. He’s scared because you’re ready and he’s not. They’re both afraid I’m just waiting to get my hands on you, and that I’ll leave afterwards.”

“Then they don’t know you.” Niall says, leaning against his shoulder.

“Haz told me you’re just as afraid of it as they are. That you panicked yesterday about the pranks.” Zayn says softly.

“I was overly emotional yesterday.” Niall shrugs. “It’s crossed my mind, sure, but I don’t really think you’re going to hurt me like that. Not after what you said to Louis last night.”

“Are you going to yell at me about that?” Zayn asks. He’s been waiting for it all morning, but Niall hasn’t seemed upset in the slightest except when he made Harry go get food.

“No.” Niall says, shaking his head. “I had planned on it, but I don’t really see a point in it. You didn’t do anything wrong. He did.”

“He’s just watching out for you.” Zayn sighs. “I swear, you’re like catnip for men.”

“Birds too.” Niall tells him. “Jess, the girl from the tattoo place, she totally wanted me before Haz came in.”

“I told you that you’re gorgeous.” Zayn says with a laugh. He slings a leg over Niall’s lap, gripping his neck and leaning in for a kiss. He wasn’t lying when he said Niall is the best kisser in the world. Niall makes sparks fly across his skin, makes something stir in his soul that ignites him with want. His lips lock against Niall’s, perfectly extending Zayn’s self into two bodies. It’s light and heavy, chaste and lust filled, Everything a kiss could be, it is with Niall. He never wants it to end, but he has to breathe some time.
“There’s something you should know.” Niall mumbles against his lips when they break apart by millimeters.

“What?” Zayn asks, pressing their lips together again lightly.

“I asked Liam to take care of me by himself tomorrow.” Niall admits sheepishly.

“Why?” Zayn asks, trying to conceal the hurt he feels at the confession.

“Because he won’t baby me too much, and if it’s you, I’m afraid I’ll do something we aren’t allowed to do.” Niall sighs. “Having you, Haz, and Li all there at once would just be too much. I’ll need one day to adjust before that.”

“So I don’t get to see you at all tomorrow?” Zayn asks with a pout.

“Of course you do, just not the whole day.” Niall tells him. “I’m sorry, but the meds will make me loopy and I don’t want to mess anything up. I might yell or say something stupid, because that’s what happens when you’re on drugs. Are you okay with that?”

“I’ll be fine.” Zayn sighs. “I’m not happy about missing a day with you, especially since you three should be spending tonight together, but I can handle it I suppose.”

“We’re not doing anything special that I’m aware of.” Niall shrugs. “My day is wide open and I’d be happy to let you fill it.”

“Dirty boy.” Zayn laughs.

“I so didn’t mean it that way.” Niall giggles. “But if you’re game for it...”

“No.” Zayn groans. “We can make out all you want, but no more of the naked stuff.”

“What if I get Haz and Li to sign off on mutual handjobs or something?” Niall asks, a hint of desperation coloring his tone.

“Maybe.” Zayn sighs. “Maybe if they both agree, I will consider it. It’s a big maybe though.”

“Come on Zee.” Niall says breathlessly, slipping a hand up Zayn’s shirt. His fingers trace over the faint hints of Zayn’s abs. His other hand palms at Zayn’s rapidly filling cock through his jeans. Zayn isn’t proud of the moan that escapes through his lips, but he grinds into Niall’s hand all the same.

“Tell me how much you want it.”

“So fucking bad Nialler.” Zayn groans. “Fuck, why do you do this to me?”

“Because I want someone to touch me back.” Niall grunts. “I want to feel normal again. I want you and this, and I want it before I’m laid up for days. So don’t say maybe. Say yes.”

“Yes.” Zayn moans, thrusting up into Niall’s grip. Niall is circling his finger around Zayn’s nipple, dragging his nail over it occasionally. It feels amazing and Zayn tangles his fingers in Niall’s hair. He brings Niall up, kissing him greedily until he’s right on the edge. “Fuck, Niall move your hand.”

He can’t suppress the whine in his throat when Niall follows his directions. He takes a deep breath, pushing his orgasm back down. Niall grins smugly, pecking a kiss to Zayn’s lips and then softly saying “You’ve got to work on endurance Zee. This is getting pathetic. I’m starting to think all that talk about fucking me for hours was just talk after all.”

“What do you expect?” Zayn sighs, dropping his head onto Niall’s shoulder. “I’ve gotten off twice in
the last two weeks. Once with you yesterday, and once last night after Haz got me all hot and bothered. I’m horny as fuck, and I just want to cum.”

“Then you should pray that Haz and Li say yes.” Niall giggles.

“I already am.” Zayn grumbles. “Haz isn’t the only one with something to prove. I’m gonna make you cum first.”

“Gonna use your fingers?” Niall asks.

“Fingers, tongue, whatever you want.” Zayn smirks.

“I am sending up some incredibly inappropriate prayers right now.” Niall groans. “I might be making god blush.”

“Mm, sex is good, but this is so much better.” Harry sighs pleasantly. The water sloshes a bit as Liam chuckles, lapping up onto Harry’s collar bones. It’s warm and pleasant, leeching all the stress out of his body. Liam is situated up against him, heavy but not too heavy, quiet but not too quiet. “I really am sorry about this morning Li.”

“I got that by the third round Haz.” Liam says softly, dropping his head back so he can nuzzle closer into Harry. “You don’t have to keep apologizing. I was whinging and it gets annoying.”

“I wasn’t upset with you.” Harry admits quietly, rubbing his hand over Liam’s stomach.

“Niall thinks you’re upset with him.” Liam tells him.

“I’m not. I’m just frustrated with myself.” Harry groans. “I’m not sure I’m ready to take the next step with Zayn yet, but he is. He’s completely throwing caution to the wind.”

“That’s who he is.” Liam says with a shrug. “He did it with you too, remember? We barely knew you, like two-and-a-half-days barely knew you, and he asked you for a three-way relationship. Caution isn’t really in Nialler’s wheelhouse.”

“I just don’t want him to get hurt again.” Harry says quietly. “I just wish he’d take things a little slower.”

“It’s been almost six months in the making for him Haz. This is slow.” Liam laughs. “We’re a bit behind, yeah, but he’s willing to wait. Maybe we should clear them for a bit more until we’re ready to go all the way.”

“Maybe.” Harry says, contemplating the possibility. It’s not really fair that he and Liam get to shag, but they expect Zayn and Niall to be completely chaste. “There’s something I should tell you, but I don’t want you to get mad.”

“I’m too relaxed to be mad right now.” Liam mumbles. “Four orgasms and my hangover is gone. Life is good.”

“I sucked Nialler off yesterday.” Harry admits quietly.

Liam goes rigid against him. Harry strains to listen for any sign that Liam isn’t going to turn around and drown him, but there’s nothing. The room is completely silent apart from his own shallow breaths. Finally Liam takes a sharp breath and asks “Was he alright? He didn’t panic or anything?”
“No, he didn’t.” Harry says nervously. “I just got carried away. I wasn’t thinking because he was saying all these things and I just- I got overwhelmed and I wanted something from him. I know I shouldn’t have, but I promise, he was okay.”

“That’s fine then.” Liam says, relaxing back into Harry. “As long as he didn’t have an attack then it’s alright.”

“You’re not mad?” Harry asks cautiously.

“No, Haz.” Liam sighs. “I’m not happy about it, but I don’t have any right to be mad. It’s not you he has a problem with. It’s me.”

“That’s not your fault.” Harry tells him, stroking his hand through Liam’s hair.

“That doesn’t make it hurt any less.” Liam says, his voice wet with a choked sob. “I hate this. I hate knowing that someone that looks like me did this to him. I hate that whenever he has a panic attack, it’s because of me. Because of my face.”

“Li.” Harry mutters, pressing soft kisses to Liam’s head.

“Can you just hold me?” Liam asks, his voice tiny in a way Harry has never heard it be before. “Can you hold me and not say anything? Just for a minute?”

Harry nods and wraps his arms tight around Liam, squeezing until he feels Liam relax into him. Liam shakes a bit, the product of silent sobs he wants to hide but can’t. Harry wants to say something, wants to say anything to take away this amazing man’s pain, but he knows not saying anything is what would really help. Liam’s hand grips Harry’s arm almost painfully, but as minutes tick by his fingers relax until he carefully laces them into Harry’s. “Thank you Haz.” he says quietly.

“Anything you need Babes.” Harry smiles just a bit. He presses another kiss to the top of Liam’s head and settles back into the water. It’s starting to cool off more than Harry would like, but he doesn’t want to bother Liam by asking him to add more hot water.

“We should probably go see the kids now. They’ve been napping too much lately.” Liam sighs.

“Babies sleep a lot.” Harry laughs. “As long as they sleep through the night still I think we’re fine. Nialler and Zee can take care of it if anything happens for now. Let’s just take a few more minutes away from all the chaos of dating, and babies, and everything else in our lives.”

“The water is getting cold.” Liam mumbles. “Do you want me to add more hot?”

“Please.” Harry giggles. Liam leans forward, the muscles of his back stretching and glistening with the water that runs down in rivulets. Harry has never been that guy, the guy who likes his men all muscled and toned just because that’s what’s considered hot by the world at large. Liam’s muscles make something stir in him though. They make him feel safe, but also ridiculously horny. “Never get tired of that view.”

“Yeah I’m getting that.” Liam giggles. He shifts his hips just a bit, bringing Harry’s now very obvious erection to his attention. Harry groans but Liam just giggles some more, shimmying back until Harry’s cock is wedged between his abs and Liam’s lower back. “I have no idea how you still have the energy for that.”

“It’s involuntary.” Harry grumbles. “The rest of me is exhausted. It takes a lot of effort to hold myself up against the windows without applying so much pressure that we go through it.”
“That was your idea.” Liam laughs. He shuts off the water and lays back against Harry, stirring the water with his hands to even out the temperature. “And I don’t think that’s half as hard as holding all of you up and fucking into you at the same time without the wall.”

“Proper adventurous that was.” Harry chuckles. “I thought for sure one of us was going to die. Made for one hell of an orgasm though.”

“Adrenaline junkie.” Liam says, rotating his body so he’s on his side. He curls a hand around Harry’s cock and tugs languidly. Harry’s hips buck up into the contact and a moan escapes his lips before he can stifle it. Liam grins wickedly, flicking his wrist and thumbing over Harry’s head. “You like that Haz?”

Harry nods, biting his lip so his voice doesn’t squeak if he says something. Liam tugs a few more times, and then his hand disappears. Harry almost whines, but then Liam’s face is submerging under the water and his lips are replacing his hand. Harry’s head falls back against the wall and he moans loudly. His orgasm builds quickly considering it’s his fifth in two hours, but Liam keeps coming back up for air and elongating things.

Harry tugs on Liam’s hair to let him know when he’s about to cum, offering him the option to pull off. Liam takes the opposite path and takes Harry all the way to the back of his throat and hums. Harry shoots hard, his entire body vibrating with it as Liam swallows around him. He twitches a few more times and then falls back completely spent. Liam surfaces again with a wide grin on his face and breathes in through his nose. He pushes forward connecting Harry’s mouth with his own and flooding his mouth with something.

Harry almost chokes when he realizes it’s his own cum, but Liam seems really into it, so he goes with it. Niall was definitely right about him needing more fruit juice, but overall the experience isn’t terrible. Liam pulls back with a timid look and asks “Is it okay that I did that?”

“Yeah.” Harry nods. “Maybe warn me next time, but it was definitely okay.”

“Five more minutes, and then we go back downstairs.” Liam says firmly, resting against Harry’s chest.

“You don’t want me to-” Harry asks, leaving the question open.

“Tugged myself off while I was sucking you.” Liam admits sheepishly.

“So it’s just like- floating around in there?” Harry asks, gesturing at the water.

“I guess.” Liam shrugs. “Doesn’t really just disappear does it?”

“Oh, I’m going to need a shower now.” Harry groans. “It’s gonna get in my leg hair and shit.”

“Better hurry.” Liam giggles. “Because in five minutes I’m dragging you downstairs, whether or not you have cum in your leg hair.”

Liam keeps true to his word, throwing Harry over his shoulder and carrying him down the stairs. He had barely managed to tug on a pair of briefs before Liam grabbed him. Harry is giggling and beating tiny ineffectual fist against Liam’s back, almost throwing him off balance a few times. He reaches the foyer without major incident and walks into the tv room to find Niall and Zayn dozing on the couch with some terrible slasher flick playing.
He ambles over and drops Harry off to Zayn’s side, startling both boys awake. Zayn looks around like he’s heard a gunshot. His eyes are wide with panic and trying to take everything in. Niall on the other hand looks over at Harry squirming and just settles back against Zayn with a faint smile playing on his lips. Liam sits on the couch, cuddling up into the space behind Niall and nuzzling into him.

“Hey boys.” Niall giggles, slinging an arm over Liam’s shoulders. “Have a good time? Did you make up?”

“Several times.” Liam laughs.

“We’re well aware.” Zayn grumbles.

“Aw, is someone jealous?” Harry coos, pressing a kiss to Zayn’s cheek.


“Niall!” Zayn hisses, pushing a pillow over the Irish lad’s face.

“About that.” Harry starts, throwing a questioning glance at Liam. Liam nods and Harry continues. “We know it’s not really fair that we’ve been having sex and you two have been holding back. We appreciate that.”

“We feel like it’s time we clear you guys for a bit more activity.” Liam says, taking over when Harry looks at him again. “We’d appreciate it if you guys didn’t go all the way, because we aren’t ready to go there with you yet Zee, and we want to discuss things a bit more first, but we think you guys should be able to do a bit more.”

“How much are we talking about?” Niall asks, lifting the pillow off his head.

“Pretty much anything short of one of you sticking your cock inside the other.” Harry laughs. “Just be careful about your knee, yeah? Don’t feel like you have to get everything in tonight.”

“So we can go, like, right now?” Zayn asks timidly.

“If you want.” Liam nods. “Would you like us to pause your film?”

“I could give two shits about this movie.” Niall laughs, throwing his legs off the couch. “Watch whatever you guys want.”

“Actually, if you could record it for me, that would be great.” Zayn smiles. “It’s a classic and next to impossible to find on dvd. I haven’t been able to track one down yet.”

“Sure thing.” Harry says with a grin. Niall plants a kiss on Liam’s cheek, and then leans across Zayn to do the same to Harry. He looks like he’s about to jump out of his skin when he takes Zayn by the wrist and runs out of the room. Harry’s smile fades just a bit and he looks at Liam and asks “We’re doing the right thing, right?”

“I think so Haz.” Liam nods, crawling across the couch to lay his head on Harry’s bare stomach. He takes comfort in the shallow breaths that move him up and down. Harry cards fingers through his hair instinctively. “Niall and Zayn both need some intimacy, and we aren’t the right ones for the job.”

“I know, it just feels weird.” Harry mumbles.
“That’s okay.” Liam says reassuringly. “You’re allowed to feel weird about it. Just don’t get too upset about it. We’re all working towards something together, so it was going to happen eventually.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Harry sighs. “I’ve already given myself the whole spiel Li. It doesn’t bother me so much the more I think about it. I’m just a little jealous.”

“Give me a few minutes to recover and I can take away the jealousy.” Liam giggles.

“Not that kind of jealousy Li.” Harry chuckles.

“What kind of jealousy then?” Liam asks.

“That they’re ready and I’m not. That I have to pick a fight with Niall over what food we serve at our wedding to distract him from the surgery, but Zayn gets to do it with orgasms. That they seem so sure of everything and our future together, but I’m not there yet.” Harry sighs.

“You picked a fight over food?” Liam asks incredulously. “With Niall? How did you come out of that without broken bones?”

“By caving in and changing my entire menu.” Harry grumbles. “That wasn’t really the important part though Liam.”

“I know.” Liam admits. “I just don’t know what to say about the other part. I’m kind of between where you are, and where they are. I trust that this is going to work out. I love having Zayn around. He doesn’t judge me for all the comic books I have hidden in my closet. I don’t get scared when I leave him alone with the twins. I would kill to eat another one of those steaks. He fits, and I know you think so too.

“You look at him differently now. You smile when you think nobody is looking at you. You’ve been happier since we agreed to try dating, and other than this morning you’ve been pretty elated since our date. Also you’ve totally been checking him out at every opportunity. You stare at his dick through his trousers so much I’m actually kind of jealous.” Liam chuckles to show Harry he isn’t serious.

“Niall keeps mentioning how pretty it is.” Harry laughs. “I’m curious to see if it lives up to the hype.”

“Wait, so you’ve never seen Zee naked?” Liam asks curiously.

“Nope.” Harry says, shaking his head. “He’s remarkably shy for someone so smug.”

“That’s really cute.” Liam laughs. He never would have pegged Zayn as shy, not even after the pajamas-in-the-shower incident this morning. He has so much swagger, so much to be vain about with the tattoos and the hair and that face, but him being shy is even better than him being sexily smug. “Like indescribably adorable.”

“It kind of is, right?” Harry says with a smile. “I barely ever even saw him shirtless in the years we’ve known each other. I think Niall may have actually seen his chest more times than I have.”

“He’s seen the infamously pretty cock too.” Liam points out.

“I doubt it’s better than yours Li.” Harry grins, leaning down and pressing a kiss to the tip of Liam’s nose. “So big and bloody gorgeous. Never seen a nicer cock than yours.”

“You wanna see it now?” Liam asks with a wink.
“Thought you needed some time to recover?” Harry asks.

“Had plenty of time.” Liam grins wickedly.

“I can’t believe I didn’t even have to ask.” Niall squeals giddily. His body is thrumming with anticipation and he’s already tugging his shirt over his head. Zayn’s hands wrap around his hips, his thumbs rubbing circles in the soft skin. “I can touch you now.”

“Niall.” Zayn says remarkably calmly. “Calm yourself. We have all the time in the world, and I want to take this slow.”

“Are you sure you can even do slow?” Niall smirks, arching his eyebrow in challenge. “Because your track record-”

Zayn cuts him off with a kiss, delicate and slow, working his way into Niall’s mouth over the course of minutes instead of seconds. Stars explode behind Niall’s eyes, filling his body with color and warmth he feared he’d never feel again if things kept moving this slowly in the relationship. His arms circle around Zayn’s neck, but he makes no effort to deepen the kiss. Zayn wants to take it slow, so they will. Niall is more than okay with slow.

“My track record is filled with flukes Nialler.” Zayn grins. “This time will be different. I promise that. Gonna make you cum multiple times before I even take off my pants.”

“Zayn Malik, you naughty slut.” Niall giggles. “What are you waiting for?”

“Don’t call me a slut right now.” Zayn growls harshly. “Any other time, fine. But not right now. Don’t make me feel guilty when I finally get to stop feeling guilty.”

“Sorry.” Niall says quietly. “I didn’t mean-”

“No I’m sorry.” Zayn sighs. “I shouldn’t have snapped like that. I’m just nervous. I haven’t done anything like this in a while. I haven’t even touched another man like this in close to six years, except for when I wanked you off.”

“It’s like riding a bike Zee.” Niall says gently. “It’ll be fine.”

“I want it to be good for you.” Zayn whispers. “I want this to be everything you want. I want this to be special.”

“Zee, we could just cuddle and it would be special to me, because it’s you.” Niall says, lifting Zayn’s chin up so their eyes meet. “I don’t need something like this in order for it to be special. I just need you. You make things special just by being around. You make every moment perfect, just because you’re here and you’re trying. We don’t have to do this if you feel like it’s too much pressure. We can just lay here or go back downstairs.”

“Not a chance in hell.” Zayn smirks. “I am going to suck your cock, my nerves be damned. Been wanting to get my hands on you for way too long to turn back now.”

“You’re sure? Like one-hundred-percent-absolutely-no-regrets sure?” Niall asks cautiously.

“Yes.” Zayn nods. “Now take off your clothes and get in the bed.”

Niall does so eagerly, stripping off his shorts and pants without any further hesitation. Zayn scoops
him up and smiles, carrying him over to the bed and laying him down gently. He kisses a line down Niall’s neck, nipping and biting in ways that have Niall unraveling like his body is coming apart at invisible seams. He’s so sure he’s going to die like this, so lost in the sensations racing across his skin white hot and tingling. It’s not fear, but the complete and total inability to form even the tiniest fragment of a coherent thought.

Zayn’s hands slowly explore his torso, working his skin like molding clay until Niall feels like a beautiful work of art. Zayn’s lips ghost over his skin reverently, panting breaths coming out soft against Niall’s neck. The pads of his fingers leave little trails of flame licking across Niall’s skin. It’s the most intense thing he’s ever felt, like a supernova inside his chest. Harry and Liam give him different feelings, strong, beautiful, but different.

Being with Harry is like standing on a cliff in a thunderstorm. The rain cooling his skin while a warm wind wraps all around him. It’s loud and strong, washing over him in waves that leave him breathless. Loving Harry is like looking over the edge of the cliff and knowing you’d be safe if you jumped, because he’d never let you fall.

Liam is softer. He’s like lying on a beach, waves lapping at his toes while the sun shines down and heats his skin. Everything is this strange mixture of rough and smooth. It can go from relaxing to nearly overwhelming. The tide comes in, pushing past his toes until the swells wash over him and the sun beats down so hot he feels like he’ll never stop sweating. It’s never too much though. Liam never puts too much on him to bear.

Zayn though, Zayn is a swirling mass of light and heat inside him. He pushes through Niall’s skin until it feels like he’s shining, radiating with it all. He feels like the entire universe marvels at his beauty when Zayn touches him. He finally feels like he belongs, like he can stand beside the other three because he’s as good as they are.

He tangles his fingers in Zayn’s hair and pulls him back up, pressing their bodies together as close as he can. He holds Zayn centimeters away and whispers “I love you.”

“I love you too.” Zayn whispers back, surging forward and kissing Niall like it’s the only thing left in the world. His lips are strong, unwavering, like he knows exactly what he wants, which is more than Niall can say at the moment. Different parts of him are fighting over exactly what he needs. One part screams that he just wants to stay like this, kissing until the Earth is swallowed by the sun. Another tells him that this is his chances to feel a part of Zayn inside him. He wants to be licked and sucked, to fuck himself down on Zayn’s fingers. Another one still reminds him that Zayn seems to have a primal urge to suck his cock and he should do the same for the darker man.

He doesn’t know what to listen to, so he lets Zayn make all the decisions. It seems like a sage choice as Zayn wraps his hand around Niall’s cock, smearing the precum around on his palm before stroking slowly. It sends shivers racing up Niall’s spine until his head snaps back and he moans his approval. “I’m going to take real good care of you, Love.” Zayn murmurs into his ear.

A choked “Please.” is all Niall can manage.

Zayn slides down Niall’s body, leaving burning kisses as he goes. “What do you want me to do Nialler?” Zayn asks heavily.

“I don’t- I can’t-” Niall mumbles. “You.”

“Me what?” Zayn asks with a smirk, never stopping the leisurely tugs on Niall’s prick.

“Decide.” Niall groans.
“Nialler, I want to do what you want me to do.” Zayn says calmly.

“Well I can’t think of what I want right now.” Niall mutters, bucking his hips up into Zayn’s hand. “My brain doesn’t work while your hand is on my cock.”

“Oh.” Zayn laughs, withdrawing his hand suddenly and cruelly. “What about now?”

Niall can’t make any other response than a long whine. Somehow the static in his brain got even worse the millisecond Zayn’s fingers left him. It’s like a snowstorm in his mind, blanking out any thought process. Zayn grabs ahold of his hand, stroking his thumb in circles and calming Niall’s mind back down. “Nialler, breathe. Tell me what you want. I’ll do anything you want.”

“I don’t know.” Niall sighs. “I don’t know what I want because all I want is you. Please just decide for me. All I need is you.”

“Nial-” Zayn starts.

“Zayn!” Niall snaps, cutting him off. “Please. Just stop asking me to think right now. Just- please. Please Zee, please please please, make the decision for me.”

He’s begging by the end, soft and pleading little whines. It’s desperate and pathetic, but he can’t even muster any self hatred for it. He just wants to be touched. He’s almost in tears because he wants to be touched so badly. “Please Zee.” he whispers.

“Okay.” Zayn says with a nod.

“I’m sorry.” Niall sighs. “I shouldn’t have yelled. I just-”

“You want to be touched.” Zayn says, finishing the thought. “It’s okay Nialler.”

“No it isn’t.” Niall insists. “I’m being a dick while you’re trying to do something for me.”

“Do you want to stop?” Zayn asks cautiously. “Because we can if you need or want to.”

“Can we just-” Niall starts. “I know this isn’t what you wanted, but can we start with you? That’s what I want right now.”

“Are you sure?” Zayn asks.

“Honestly? I’m not sure about anything right now.” Niall admits. “I’m nervous as all hell, because I had to think about things instead of just letting them happen.”

“Then we should stop.” Zayn says firmly. “If you’re getting nervous then-”

“Come here.” Niall says, cutting him off and patting the bed next to himself. Zayn crawls up the bed and sits next to him. Niall grabs his hand and brings it up to kiss each of his knuckles. “I’m not nervous about doing something with you. I’m nervous that it won’t be good enough. This may be the only chance we have to be together before we all do something. I just want this to be perfect. I want to give you everything you give me.”

“You already do Ni.” Zayn says with a soft smile. “So let’s not worry about this being perfect. Let’s just have fun with it. No pressure, no worries, just us finally getting to be together. Let me make you feel good.”

“Me first.” Niall says with a grin, flipping over and settling between Zayn’s legs. “Now take off your clothes. Let me finally put your stupidly gorgeous cock in my mouth. Just sucking you clean that
Zayn nods, pulling off Harry’s jumper and tossing it to the side of the bed. His hands undo the jeans and he slides them down until Niall takes them all the way off. His fingers slip under the waistband of Zayn’s underwear and he slips them off, letting the gorgeous prick he loves so much slap back against the darker man’s stomach. Niall actually feels his mouth start to water before he leans down. He runs soft kisses up the underside, planting his hands on Zayn’s hips to feel the way he spasms.

When he reaches the head he doesn’t hesitate to take it into his mouth. He swirls his tongue around, getting used to the weight of it on his tongue. It’s been so long, so bloody long, these damned five and a half months since he did this. Whenever he was with a prostitute it was just about getting off. Intimacy was never a part of the equation. He’s missed this, the feel of someone in his mouth, the way their hands twitch on his shoulders, the way he can pleasure someone he cares about.

He re-familiarizes himself with the act quickly, bobbing his head and sucking Zayn further down on every go. He’s no good at deep-throating, having a terrible gag reflex he’s always hated. That doesn’t stop him from trying though. Predictably he chokes a bit and has to pull off, coughing into his hand. “Did I do something wrong?” Zayn asks worriedly.

“Just tried to do more than I could handle.” Niall groans. “I suck at that. I’ll do better. Acknowledge my limits.”

He ducks back down, swallowing Zayn greedily. Zayn’s fingers tangle in Niall’s hair, not pushing, just feeling the movement. He hollows out his cheeks, sucking with vigor he didn’t know he had. His hand moves from Zayn’s hip, reaching down to play with his balls instead. “Oh fuck Niall!” Zayn hisses.

Niall fights a grin, knowing it could cause his lips to pull back. Teeth make for a bad blowjob and Niall does not give bad blowjobs. He presses his tongue flat, working it on the head when he pulls back each time. “Niall, I’m close.” Zayn warns.

Niall doesn’t stop, doesn’t change his rhythm in the slightest. He doesn’t flinch when Zayn shoots into his mouth, letting his hand do the work his mouth had been doing so he can swallow down the cum. He only pulls off once Zayn’s body relaxes. “Was that um- was it okay?” Niall asks nervously. “I haven’t done that in a long time.”

“It was fucking brilliant Nialler.” Zayn mumbles happily. “Give me a minute and then I’ll get started on you.”

“You don’t have to.” Niall says quietly, tucking himself into Zayn’s side.

“Yes I do.” Zayn says with a grin. “I have to touch you. I have to taste you. All of you. I’ve needed to taste you and touch you and feel you for so long that I can’t remember the last day that went by without me thinking about it.”

He flips Niall over onto his back, pinning him to the mattress and grinding their cocks together. “Gonna make you feel so good Nialler.” Zayn mumbles repeatedly while he sucks bruises into Niall’s neck. “Can your knee handle it if you get on all fours?”

“I’ll be fine.” Niall nods.

Zayn lifts up and sits back while Niall flips over. Zayn’s hands lift his arse up into the air, and then press his front half down into the mattress. “Better angle this way.” Zayn explains.

Niall, stupidly, is about to ask what he means, but then Zayn stops any thought process with his
tongue. He makes wide flat sweeps, lighting Niall on fire with every stroke. His hand was nothing compared to this. That just made his mind fuzzy. This obliterates anything except the sensation of Zayn licking him out. He switches up his technique every minute or so, going from flat swipes to quick circles to pressing through the ring of muscle.

Niall bites down on the pillow under his face, moaning so loudly his body vibrates with it. He can actually feel the press of Zayn’s cheek against his when he smirks, but as long as he doesn’t stop using his tongue Niall could not give less of a damn. He almost cums on the spot when Zayn wraps his fingers back around Niall’s prick, stroking quickly and deliberately. “Oh fuck Zee.” Niall grunts, turning his head away from the pillow so he can breathe.

“You like that Love?” Zayn asks, diving back in before Niall can answer.

“God yes!” Niall moans, trying to push back his orgasm. He’s in love with the sensation, but this isn’t how he wants this to finish. It takes every ounce of willpower he has to say “Zee, stop.”

“Did I do something wrong?” Zayn asks, pulling away from him completely.


Zayn shuffles forward and Niall mimics the position he told the darker man to get into. He feels Zayn’s erection poke up between the cheeks of his arse and grinds back on it. Zayn hisses, but doesn’t say anything. Niall reaches back behind himself and wraps one of Zayn’s hands around his waist, just above his hips. He laces his fingers through it and holds tight. He guides the other one to his prick, leading Zayn in slow strokes until he learns exactly how Niall wants it.

Once Zayn gets the rhythm down Niall moves his free arm back and turns his head so he can pull Zayn into a kiss. Their tongues glide together as Zayn tugs on him languidly. It’s perfect. Everything about the moment is exactly what Niall needs. His hips make slow circles, feeling Zayn pressed as close to him as they’re allowed to go right now. Zayn’s kisses, his strokes, the tightening of his fingers with Niall’s, his stuttered thrusts in between Niall’s cheeks, all of it combines in an effect that has Niall cumming so hard he can’t breathe.

Zayn stays true to his word and takes good care of Niall. The hand on his hips keeps Niall upright. He milks Niall until he gets oversensitive, never stopping the kiss that feels like it’s giving the Irish man life. They stay that way, pressed together and snogging over his shoulder until Niall’s knee begins to twinge. It takes a long time, but it’s the best Niall has felt in months. Panic never even crossed his mind.

“Is it awful if I never want to go back downstairs?” Zayn asks, a grin splitting his face so much it almost hurts.

“Don’t talk when you have fingers in my arse.” Niall groans, pushing down on the digits he had mentioned. He’s riding Zayn’s hand, and bucking up into the other one that the darker man has wrapped around his prick. It’s not the most comfortable of positions for Zayn’s wrists, but the sight is almost unbearably hot. Zayn is leaking so much that he’s just resigned himself to buying a new duvet because they’ll never get all the stains out of this one. “Don’t fucking ask questions like that right now.”

“Alright.” Zayn nods, crooking his fingers to rub more directly on Niall’s prostate. He tightens his grips by just a fraction, but it has Niall panting and moving faster until he explodes all over Zayn’s
The motion of his hips falters, so Zayn picks up the slack, milking him for all he’s worth. Once Niall relaxes completely Zayn pulls his fingers out slowly, trying his best not to hurt the Irish man. “Now that my fingers aren’t in your arse, what’s your answer?” Zayn asks with a self-satisfied smirk.

“I date awful men.” Niall sighs, pressing a pillow over his face. “Awful terrible men who can’t let me bask. You and Haz and Li all hate me.”

Zayn leans down, kissing his way up Niall’s body until he’s flush against the other man and nudging the pillow out of the way with his nose. “I definitely don’t hate you Nialler. Pretty sure it’s the opposite actually.”

“So you’re apathetic about me?” Niall asks without a pout. “The opposite of hate isn’t love, it’s apathy.”

“Not apathetic either.” Zayn laughs, kissing at the skin below Niall’s ear. “I am most assuredly not apathetic. Bad choice of words.”

“Yeah it was.” Niall giggles.

“I am mind-numbingly in love with you Niall Horan.” Zayn murmurs into his ear. “The kind of love people think only exists in movies and books. The kind people search for their entire lives and never find. I am perfectly, extraordinarily, unbelievably in love with you.”

“Much better.” Niall whispers, cupping Zayn’s jaw and pressing their mouths together. “I love you too. So so so god damned much.”

“Then answer my question.” Zayn says, smirking into the kiss he restarts.

“You’re a bloody monster.” Niall groans, dropping his head back. “Fine. No, it isn’t. Except it kind of is. I’m starving.”

“I’ve got something you can eat.” Zayn giggles, grinding down into Niall’s hip.

“That sounds brilliant, but I really need a shower. My whole body feels dirty and gross.” Niall admits.

“I could give you a tongue bath.” Zayn offers with a wicked grin.

“Zee, my love, get your mind out of the gutter for ten minutes. If you want to wank or some shit while I’m in the shower, then do it, but let me clean myself up please.” Niall begs.

“Oh I’m definitely joining you in the shower.” Zayn laughs.

“This is not a sexy shower Zee.” Niall says firmly. “It’s a cleaning shower. I am covered in cum and lube and sweat and arse juice. I need to be clean.”

“I do too.” Zayn says with a smile. “Just a cleaning shower.”

“Do you think they’d bring food up to us?” Niall asks. “Like room service or something?”

“I do not.” Zayn tells him. “They may be okay with us being up here, but I don’t think they’re going to cater it.”

“Damn.” Niall pouts. “Then I have to go eat after the shower. Crackers and water, a sandwich, something. Anything to get some energy back.”
“I’ll make you something.” Zayn offers. “What do you want?”

“Something in the pasta family would be great.” Niall shrugs. “Oh! I could show you how to make pasta, like from scratch. How do you feel about ravioli?”

“Sounds great.” Zayn grins. “Can you really do that?”

“I can.” Niall nods. “Angelo taught me lots of things. Ravioli was my favorite though.”

Zayn crawls sideways off the bed, holding his hand out for Niall, who takes it gladly. They walk into the bathroom, fingers laced together tightly, content to stand around kissing while the water heats up. They don’t talk while they shower, just enjoy soaping each other and giggling like teenagers. It’s ridiculous and childish, but Zayn wouldn’t rather be doing anything else. The not-quite-sex is mind-blowingly fantastic, but it’s quiet moments of affection like this that Zayn enjoys the most.

It’s something he hasn’t had in years. With Perrie things were all about sex or fighting. Nothing was ever calm or relaxed. They ran so hot and cold that they needed a plumber to fix things. Things with the boys are different though. There’s plenty of difficulties of course, trust issues, learning how to juggle multiple relationships and not letting anything fall by the wayside, finding his place in things. None of it worries him though, because in quiet moments like this all his fears fall away.

“What are you thinking about?” Niall asks, running a towel through his hair.

“This.” Zayn says simply.

“How did I fall in love with a guy who talks so little?” Niall laughs.

“Because I can listen really well.” Zayn says with a shrug.

“Let’s go make dinner.” Niall tells him. “I can talk your ear off and reward you with snogs when you get things right.”

“I’m sure you meant that as a joke, but that literally sounds like a perfect night to me.” Zayn admits, pressing a kiss to Niall’s grin. “How long does it take to do it?”

“That depends on whether you want to do an alfredo or a marinara with it.” Niall shrugs. “Alfredo is quick and easy, but Marinara takes longer.”

“Which do you want to do?” Zayn asks.

“The marinara.” Niall admits. “It pairs better and the ravioli takes a while anyways.”

“Then we’ll do the marinara.” Zayn smiles. “But we should get dressed first.”

“But I’m going to miss your pretty pretty cock while it’s hidden away.” Niall pouts.

“You can see it later.” Zayn laughs.

“I’m going to take a picture so I can look at it whenever I want.” Niall giggles.

“Later.” Zayn says again. “Now it’s time for food, because you aren’t the only one who needs energy.”

“Ooh, we can drink some wine to replenish our electrolytes.” Niall giggles.

“Anything you want, as long as we’re clothed and eating as soon as possible.” Zayn laughs.
“Then why are we standing around talking?” Niall asks, walking back into the bedroom. He rummages through the drawers, pulling out one of Zayn’s jumpers and a pair of boxer-briefs. Zayn’s stomach flares up with warmth at the sight of Niall wearing his clothes. He walks up behind the Irish lad and wraps his arms around Niall’s waist. “This is counterproductive to wine and ravioli Zee.”

“Couldn’t help myself.” Zayn admits, burying his face in Niall’s neck.

“You three are all the same.” Niall laughs. “You’re still starkers. Put on some clothes and meet me in the kitchen with the babies.”

“Kiss me first.” Zayn giggles.

Niall turns around and Zayn catches his eyes rolling before he closes them and presses his lips to the darker man’s. Zayn tangles his fingers in Niall’s hair, pulling him into more than just a peck. Niall’s hand slip around Zayn’s waist, gliding over the still naked skin, and he’s so tempted to just fall back into bed with the Irish man. “Stop it.” Niall mumbles. “I know what you’re thinking, but we can’t.”

“Why not?” Zayn asks against his mouth.

“Because- Because-” Niall groans. “I don’t know. I can’t think of a reason.”

Zayn’s stomach does it for them both, rumbling loudly and sending Niall into a fit of giggles. Zayn feels his cheeks heat up and looks down, silently chastising the organ because he could be going down on Niall, and instead his stomach is asking to be filled with something other than the Irish man’scum. It’s cruel really.

“I’ll meet you in the kitchen with the babies.” Zayn finally says with a sigh.

“Good lad.” Niall laughs, patting Zayn on the bum and walking out of the room.

Zayn curses to himself under his breath, pulling on a t-shirt and joggers so it’s easy to take off later. He definitely plans on continuing things later, because six times is not nearly enough after five and a half months. It’s been great, and he’s a bit exhausted, but it’s not nearly sufficient to make up for so long being unable to be this close to each other.

The twins are awake and peering up at him when he walks through the door and he silently wonders why Harry and Liam haven’t come to get them. Niall and he have been locked away for close to three hours, and the twins were put down for a nap before Harry and Liam even came downstairs. They both reach up for him and he gladly scoops them into his arms, smiling as they play with his shirt and hands.

Niall grins at him when he walks into the kitchen, making grabby hands at Gemma. “Hey baby girl, come to daddy.” he giggles. “It’s time you two had something to eat.”

Gemma squeals happily when Niall grabs her and lifts her over his head. Zayn readjusts Sam on his hip and carries him behind Niall over to the high chairs. Niall takes care of buckling them in while Zayn grabs their cereal out of the cabinet and pours it on the trays. They work like a well oiled machine after so many mornings doing the same. Sam and Gemma become immediately enamored with their food and go about eating it while Niall sits on the counter.

“Alright, I’ve gathered everything we need right now, so go wash your hands and get ready to learn some shit.” Niall laughs.

Zayn nods and crosses to the sink, washing his hands even after having just taken a shower. He dries his hands and turns around waiting for his next round of instructions. “I need you to get out the mixer
from the cabinet under me. It’s really heavy and I’m very small.” Niall giggles.

“You just want to tease me with your prick right in front of my face.” Zayn laughs. He saunters up to the counter, placing his hands on Niall’s thighs right below the hem of his underwear. He kneads lightly at the muscle, smirking at the way he can feel Niall’s erection start poking at his hand after so little contact. “You keep that under control mister. You’re the one who decided food was more important than me putting that in my mouth again.”

“Because a lion roared in your stomach.” Niall mumbles.

“Quick question; where are the other two adults in the house?” Zayn asks curiously.

“Haz is asleep on top of Li in the telly room.” Niall laughs. “And they’re both totally naked, so I don’t recommend going in there unless you want an eyeful. Not that I would blame you if you did.”

“I’m good. Mystified, but good.” Zayn says with a smile. “I’d rather learn to make ravioli with you than go be a complete perv.”

“Well since you made it sound oh so appealing-” Niall huffs. “Grab the stand mixer and make sure it has the dough hook.”

“You know what I meant.” Zayn sighs. When Niall doesn’t respond he gives up and crouches down so he can grab the mixer out of the counter. Niall wasn’t lying, it’s heavy as all hell. He puts it on the counter next to the Irish lad and asks “Which one is the dough hook?”

“It looks like a really big corkscrew.” Niall explains. “It should be in the basin.”

Zayn looks in the mixing bowl and does find a large corkscrew-like apparatus. Niall has to show him how to attach it, lifting back the head and pressing a button that pops off the whisk part that had been where he puts the dough hook. “Alright.” Niall tells him. “Now measure out six cups of flour.”

Zayn follows his instructions to the letter, mixing together an incredibly large ball of dough that he has to knead relentlessly until Niall approves. “Now wrap it up in the plastic wrap, because we have to wait for a little while.” Niall laughs. “We can get started on the sauce in the meantime.”

“This is a lot of work.” Zayn pouts. “And you haven’t been giving me my rewards.”

“I forgot.” Niall says sheepishly. “I’m still not used to being able to kiss you where anyone could walk in and see. I mean, it was never something I wasn’t allowed to do per se, but it was always easier on all four of us if we kept our stuff private.”

“I know what you mean.” Zayn laughs, planting himself between Niall’s legs. “But now we can snog and let the whole world see. Lord knows the other two have no problem with p.d.a.”

“That is a very accurate statement.” Niall giggles.

“So kiss me then.” Zayn tells him, leaning in close.

“No, you got everything wrong.” Niall says with a wicked grin.

“I so didn’t.” Zayn frowns.

“You’re right.” Niall shrugs. “But you made it sound like the only reason you’re in here is because it would be pervy to go stare at the other two, and I don’t feel like kissing you right now.”

“You’re actually upset about that?” Zayn asks with a sigh.
“I am.” Niall nods.

“I thought you didn’t get jealous.” Zayn smirks.

“I am not jealous you total arse!” Niall groans, pushing on Zayn’s shoulders lightly. “It’s just- you said this sounded like the perfect night, and then you make me feel like I’m your second choice.”

“You never have been, and never will be, my second choice Nialler. Never. I adore you. I am in pathetic puppy love with you. Teenage-giggly love, fairy-tale-true-fucking love, end-of-the-world I-never-want-to-be-apart-from-you love, every kind of love that ever has or will exist, I feel for you.” Zayn explains, cupping Niall’s cheek in his hand.

“Harry is going to be so pissed off at you for stealing his status as the soppy one.” Niall laughs, pressing his lips to Zayn’s.

“He’ll get over it, or he’ll have to fight harder, because you make me soppy Niall Horan. Soppy and a little bit stupid, but happier than I could have ever imagined being in my whole life.” Zayn says when they break apart.

“Well you should save it up, because you are extraordinarily good at making me stop being grumpy.” Niall giggles. “But if you keep giving me two speeches professing your undying love for me every day is going to build up an immunity.”

“You’re just bashful and get uncomfortable when people compliment you.” Zayn laughs.

“Shut up and kiss me Zayn.” Niall grumbles.

Zayn complies happily, surging forward and connecting their mouths. He feels Niall’s tongue begging to be let in, and he complies with that happily too. They kiss slowly until a cough snaps them out of things. Harry and Liam are standing in the door to the kitchen wearing underwear and sheepish smiles. “Well Nialler, look who finally woke up.” Zayn says with a smirk.

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“Well, kind of. I’m not sure if just pants count as putting on clothes.” Zayn giggles.

“It is the way they’ve been carrying on lately.” Niall points out. “Honestly, you’d think they were nineteen sometimes.”

“I’m twenty five Niall, hardly close to impotence.” Harry scoffs.

“Oh we’re well aware you aren’t impotent.” Zayn mumbles too quietly for Harry to hear.

Niall laughs at that, dropping his head onto Zayn’s shoulder and cackling like a lunatic. Harry looks confused and Liam gives Zayn a knowing look. Zayn shoots one back at him, trying to convey he’s knows exactly what they were doing on the couch. Liam obviously gets it because he flushes and looks down at his toes. “You know what? This is actually perfect timing. Zee and I are making dinner, but we got a bit distracted, so we could use some help.” Niall tells them once his laughing dies down.

“But- but- that’s our thing.” Zayn pouts.

“I know Love.” Niall says softly. “But we’re twenty minutes behind on the sauce already, and it takes over an hour to cook. Harry and Liam could help with that while you sit here and snog my face off for the last few minutes before we get started on pressing the dough.”
“That sounds fine.” Liam giggles.

“That’s not what I’m saying.” Harry grumbles. “I’m not playing bloody saucier while they make out on the counter.”

“We’ll make the ravioli stuffing Haz.” Zayn laughs. “The making out can wait until later.”

“Going back for another round then are you?” Harry asks, feigning nonchalance so poorly that Zayn is actually embarrassed for him.

“Well unlike some people, we haven’t been shagging a dozen times a day, leaving you two to watch the babies constantly.” Niall laughs, squeezing Zayn’s hand a little harder than usual.

“Which is why we gave you two our blessing to do more.” Liam says calmly.

Zayn isn’t sure if they’re all about to have a fight, but he doesn’t want to say anything in case that makes things worse. His foot-in-mouth disease has a tendency to flare up at the worst possible times, and this would be an opportune moment to ruin his chance to be happy. He’s not going to do that if he can help it, because these three are everything he wants. “So why is it a surprise that we want to go do some more before the night is up and I’m laid up for days?” Niall asks.

“It isn’t.” Harry sighs. “I’m sorry. I just thought we’d spend at least some time all together tonight. Especially since, according to Li, you want to be alone with just him tomorrow.”

“Well then don’t be passive-aggressive about it.” Niall huffs. “If you want us to stay down here with you two, then just ask.”

“Would you if I did, or would you just get mad at me?” Harry asks.

“Stop it both of you.” Zayn snaps. “It has been a good day for the most part. Just- just stop fighting over nothing. We’ll stay down here with you two, so please just stop.”

“Zee-” Niall starts.

“Please Nialler.” Zayn pleads softly.

“Alright.” Niall nods. “We’ll stay here.”

“Thank you.” Zayn breathes out in a sigh of relief.

Harry feels like he’s intruding on a private moment watching Zayn and Niall across the kitchen. Liam takes his hand, and leads him back out of the room. “What are you doing Haz?” he asks quietly.

“Being a complete prat apparently.” Harry sighs.

“That’s not what I’m saying.” Liam tells him. “We agreed to let them have some space. If you weren’t ready then we shouldn’t have done it yet.”

“I am.” Harry says firmly. “I am. I just- They were gone for hours, and so were we. Today is an important day for the three of us, but instead of spending it together we’re pairing off. We did it yesterday, and it’s going to happen again tomorrow. I don’t want that to be the precedent for our relationship.”

“Then pull Nialler aside and tell him that.” Liam smiles. “Because I’m pretty sure that’s not what any
“I know.” Harry admits. “I really do know that, but I have needs. Dirty, filthy, horny needs, and you’re the only one that’s allowed to help me with those needs, because we agreed not to do anything with Niall, and Zayn isn’t an option yet.”

“And I very much enjoy taking care of those needs.” Liam says with a laugh. “Maybe a little less often would be good though. Like, we could still shag in the mornings before we join them for the day, and at night after we’ve spent the day together. We should stop constantly going off to shag for hours at a time though.”

“Fine.” Harry pouts. “But if I go through sex withdrawal, then I’m going to blame you for it.”

“I’m ninety nine percent sure that isn’t a thing.” Liam laughs.

“We’ll see.” Harry says with a grin. “I may have to suck your dick for dear life. Who knows what the dangers of sex withdrawal could be.”

“Unless you plan on going completely cold turkey I don’t think it will be a problem.” Liam says with a big smile.

“You’ll see. I’ll be jonesing for cock by noon tomorrow.” Harry whines. “Begging on the streets.”

“You are such a freak sometimes.” Liam groans.

“You know you love it.” Harry grins.

“I really do.” Liam laughs, pulling Harry in for a kiss.

“Are you okay?” Liam asks quietly.

“I’m fine.” Zayn sighs. He’s still chopping vegetables instead of meeting Liam’s eyes, and that tells the muscular man all he needs to know. “Is he mad at me for yelling?”

“No.” Liam tells him softly. “No, he’s just realizing that we’ve been doing the wrong thing for a while. We’ve been pairing off to much for a new relationship, and even though we have good reasons for that, and we’ve been the main component in that, it’s not the way we want things to be all the time. He can be a bit slow and a bit passive-aggressive sometimes. He’s trying though.”

“I know.” Zayn whispers. “I know he’s trying. I just hate that he has to try. I had this fantasy in my head for years where he’d just- I don’t know-realize he was in love with me too. I’m smart enough to know that’s not what’s going to happen, but I just wish it could. I wish he didn’t have to try.”

“I’m sorry.” Liam sighs. “I am. I can’t imagine how hard this is for you. The only one in the house who could is Niall. Harry and I have the same capacity for being slow.”

“No wonder he fell for the both of you.” Zayn says with a smile. “You’re both terrifyingly similar sometimes.”

“I’m becoming aware of that more and more every day.” Liam chuckles. “Listen, I wish we didn’t have to try either, but that’s not how things work. You can’t just skip to the part where we’re all happy and in love. And honestly, I think when we’re older and looking back, you won’t want to
have skipped it. It’s a part of your story, and we’re going to have a brilliant story one day, bad parts and all.”

“You-” Zayn says softly. “You are an amazing man Leeyum Payne.”

“Hardly.” Liam scoffs.

“You are.” Zayn says firmly. “You have this spectacular propensity for saying the right thing, and more compassion than anyone I know. I’m sitting here whinging because Harry isn’t in love with me after what? Two days? And then you say something like that.”

“It hasn’t been two days for you, it’s been years. And you weren’t whinging. What I was doing this morning, was that whinging. You can vent to me if you need to. I may not always be able to keep up with the standard I just set for myself, but I’m a pretty decent listener.” Liam says with a smile. “I know Niall tends to be the one to talk in a relationship, so if you ever need someone to just listen, then you can come talk to me.”

“Thanks Leeyum.” Zayn chuckles.

“Are you two done whispering now?” Niall asks from the table. “Are the vegetables chopped?”

“Everything is done Nialler.” Zayn says with a roll of his eyes.

“Then quit standing around talking, and start adding things like I told you.” Niall huffs, standing up and walking over to the counter. “Haz, are the onions clear yet?”

“Just about.” Harry says, never taking his eyes off the pot.

“Okay, Li, you add the vegetables, and Zee, you come over here and we’ll get started on working the dough.”

“Holy shite this is good.” Harry moans around a mouthful of ravioli. “So so good.”

“I wish I could have made the tomato sauce myself instead of using canned, but I didn’t really have time to stew, peel, and all the other shite you have to do. It’s an all day affair.” Niall shrugs. “But overall I’d say you guys did excellently.”

“We had a good teacher.” Zayn tells him with a sweet smile.

“No, I had a good teacher. You three monkeys had me, which is why this took forty minutes longer than it should have.” Niall laughs. “But as far as last meals go, this isn’t a bad one.”

“It is not your last meal you overly dramatic twat.” Liam grumbles.

“It could be.” Niall says quietly.

“No it couldn’t.” Liam says with a glare. “You will be there for four hours so they can do some tests, then you’ll go under for half an hour, and be home in time for lunch. You have survived a nearly fatal car crash, falling off of a balcony and being landed on by another human being, and what happened to you in Rome. They’re twisting a screw in your knee, not fixing your lungs or something. There is no chance in hell that you aren’t coming out of this, so stop saying things like that.”

“I-” Niall starts. “I’m going to go to bed now. I have to be up early.”
He stands up and walks out of the room, wiping away tears with the back of his hand. He can hear the fighting start up as soon as he’s out the door, but he doesn’t turn back. He runs up the stairs as fast as his knee will let him, closing the door to Zayn’s room behind him before he crawls into the bed. The sun is still out, shining through the window so he pulls the covers over his head because he doesn’t want to get up again and close the curtains.

“I don’t want to talk Liam.” he sighs when he hears the door open and close again.

“I’m not Liam.” Zayn says, crawling under the covers with him. “They decided I was the best one to come talk to you.”

“I don’t want to talk.” Niall repeats.

“Then we won’t talk.” Zayn says softly, pressing a kiss to the back of Niall’s hair and settling down with an arm wrapped around his waist.

“Flip over. I want to be the big spoon.” Niall mumbles.

“Alright.” Zayn chuckles. They both turn over and Niall nuzzles into Zayn’s shoulder. Zayn plays with Niall’s fingers, kissing the tips and sending shivers running down his spine. “I don’t do this for just anyone you know. I’m always the big spoon.”

“And you’re excellent at it.” Niall giggles. “But this way I get to cop a feel whenever I want.”

He snakes his hand out of Zayn’s grip and shoves it inside the darker man’s joggers, gripping onto his prick and feeling it start to fill. Zayn groans, twisting his face so it’s covered by the pillow. His hips buck into Niall’s hand, probably unconsciously, because the next thing he does is pull off Niall’s hand and mutter “We can’t.”

“Why not?” Niall whines.

“Because you’re trying to use sex as a distraction. If you don’t want to talk, then that’s fine. But we aren’t going to sit here and hook up so you can ignore what happened.” Zayn sighs. “Eventually you’re going to have to go down there and talk to him.”

“I can’t.” Niall admits quietly. “He yelled at me because I’m scared.”

Zayn rolls over so that his forehead is pressed against Niall’s. “He yelled at you because he’s scared. He’s almost lost you so many times Nialler. You can’t joke about dying with Liam, with any of us actually, but especially him. Because to him, that’s the most devastating thing that could ever happen.” he explains, stroking his thumb over Niall’s cheek.

“It wasn’t a joke Zee.” Niall sighs. “I’ve already had four surgeries in the nearly seven years since I messed my knee. I almost died during two of them. The first time because my injuries were so severe, and the second time because I was allergic to the anesthesia they used. When I said it was my last meal, that’s because there’s a very real possibility to me that it could be. I’m terrified, and I don’t need to be yelled at. Especially by him.”

“He has been at your side through every one of those surgeries except the one you had two years ago Nialler.” Zayn says softly. “You wouldn’t have asked him to stay with you all day tomorrow if you honestly believed you could die. You’re not a cruel man. You wouldn’t give him false hope.”

“I didn’t realize how scared I am until the thought hit me.” Niall admits. “My life is finally perfect. I have you, and them, and the twins. I have a beautiful home, an amazing family, and a new adventure coming up. I have something to lose. I wasn’t with Liam for the first or second surgeries, and I had
broken up with him before the third. The fourth was just after me Da died. For the first time that I’m going under the knife, I really have something to lose. That’s when you lose everything. That’s when you die.”

“Look at me.” Zayn tells him softly. Niall looks up into Zayn’s eyes. Even under the darkness of the duvet he can see how soft they are, how pretty. “You’re not going to die. You aren’t. I promise you that.”

“You can’t promise that Zee. You aren’t God.” Niall mutters.

“No, but I believe in him. I believe that he brought us all together for a reason, and that wasn’t just so he could destroy us by taking you away.” Zayn whispers.

“You obviously aren’t Catholic.” Niall scoffs.

“Obviously.” Zayn chuckles.

“Promise me again.” Niall mumbles.

“I promise, you’re going to be fine.” Zayn smiles. “You’re going to sit on the couch for a week getting fat and making me watch footy until I’m dreaming of muscled men in shorts.”

“You should see Liam in a footy kit.” Niall giggles. “He looks like he was born to wear it, even if he’s not that good.”

“Leeyum would look great in anything. It’s because he walks that fine line between super cute and unbelievably hot.” Zayn laughs.

“It’s really not fair.” Niall pouts.

“Are you ready to go talk to him now?” Zayn asks.

“I’d rather stay here and suck your cock, but if that’s not an option then I guess I have to.” Niall sighs.

“You shouldn’t have come in here you know.” Zayn tells him. “You said you were going to bed, but you aren’t allowed to sleep in here with me.”

“I couldn’t sleep next to him right now.” Niall admits. “I needed you.”

“You’ll always have me.” Zayn says with a soft smile, pressing a kiss to the tip of Niall’s nose. “But right now you need Li and Haz.”

“Ugh, I hate polyamory sometimes.” Niall groans. “Things are so much easier when you can just lock yourself in a room and be mad at one person. Now I’m all needy because I always have someone else to turn to.”

“Just never manage to piss all three of us off at the same time.” Zayn chuckles. “Not that I can think of too much you could do that would ever make me so mad I wouldn’t just want to talk with you.”

“I find most problems can be fixed by a blowjob or two.” Niall shrugs.

“That may work with Haz, but it’s not going to work with me.” Zayn says firmly.

“I know. You’re infuriating that way.” Niall grumbles. “Always so grown up and shite. It’s annoying. No fun at all.”
“That’s rude.” Zayn says with a pout.

“Okay, fine, you’re a mind-blowingly good time, but not right now.” Niall groans. “Right now you’re the guy denying me an orgasm and making me talk against my will.”

“I’m not making you do anything.” Zayn says quietly.

“Sure you’re not.” Niall sighs with a roll of his eyes.

“Well I’m not trying to, and I don’t like the implication that I’m manipulating you into it.” Zayn huffs.

“Sorry.” Niall says quietly. “Do you want me to make it up to you?”

“Does making it up to me involve either one of our penises?” Zayn asks.

“It could.” Niall grins. “Both of them even, if you want.”

“We shouldn’t.” Zayn sighs.

“That’s not a no.” Niall giggles.

“I find I have a great deal of difficulty saying no to you.” Zayn laughs. “Especially when it involves your cock.”

“Are you going to talk to me or not?” Harry asks.

“Not if you’re going to yell at me again.” Liam huffs. He refocuses on Gemma who’s crawling across the floor towards him. Sam is trying his best to follow her, but he can’t make it very far before he falls on his stomach. Harry goes to grab him, but Liam puts a hand on his stomach to stop him. “Let him try again. He’s not crying. He’s fine.”

“You’re such a hardass.” Harry groans.

“No, I’m trying to teach him to crawl so he can play with Gems. She’s pulling ahead developmentally because all four of us let Sam sit around and lift him up whenever he asks for it. He’ll develop an inferiority complex.” Liam says firmly, never bothering to look at Harry.

“I know you’re right, but I want to hold him.” Harry pouts. “They’re growing up too fast.”

“You can pick him up if he falls again.” Liam bargains. “But let him try one more time.”

“Alright.” Harry grumbles.

Sam flops around for a moment, grasping at nothing before he manages to get his knees under himself again. He follows after Gemma until he gets distracted by his tiger. Liam can’t stop himself from laughing when Sam does this sort of flop/tackle on top of it, giggling when he traps it underneath his chest. “Vicious killer he is.” Harry laughs.

“And yet you want to keep him from being a rugger.” Niall laughs behind him. “He’s a born fullback.”

“In your dreams Niall.” Harry scoffs.
“We’ll see.” Niall hums, dropping down between Liam and Harry on the couch. “He’ll get Liam’s shoulders and he’ll be unstoppable on the field.”

“We’re not having this conversation until they can walk, remember?” Liam asks with a sigh.

“I’m buying him a rugby shirt tomorrow.” Niall giggles. “I’m going to do an obscene amount of internet shopping for rugby shirts for the entire family. Gemma could totally pull it off.”

“You will not.” Harry hisses. “I am hiding all of your technology until you forget about this.”

“That’s going to be a very long time.” Liam sighs again.

“Where’s Zee?” Harry asks suddenly.

“Getting dressed.” Niall shrugs. Liam sees Harry roll his eyes and is glad Niall is too distracted by the twins to notice. Harry is being petty about this and he still hasn’t talked to Niall. He’s normally the one that’s all gung-ho about talking, and yet he’s avoiding the conversation for some reason. He’s tempted to ask about it, but he’ll leave that until they’re alone. “Listen Li, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have been an arse about it.”

“I shouldn’t have yelled.” Liam sighs. “I’m sorry too.”

“Are we good?” Niall asks quietly.

“Oh course.” Liam says with a smile.

“That’s it?” Harry groans. “Just ‘I’m sorry’ ‘So am I’ and it’s done? That’s never how this goes. One of us always ends up crying and making some big confession and it goes on for days.”

“Yeah, that’s exhausting.” Niall laughs. “And we never did that before you came along. Not often anyways.”

“So you’re saying I’m overly dramatic?” Harry asks, his voice growing higher with every word.

“If the glass slipper fits.” Zayn laughs, dropping down on Harry’s lap.

“Don’t be a bitch.” Harry pouts.

Zayn rolls his eyes and surges forward to connect his mouth with Harry’s, surprising both Liam and the curly haired man, judging by the sound he makes. It’s hot though, watching the way Harry gives in to the snog, taking Zayn’s tongue into his mouth and gripping tight onto his waist. He has to look away once he feels himself growing hard, blushing deeply as he tries to focus on the twins instead.

“Embarrassed Li?” Niall asks in a whisper.

“That’s part of it.” Liam sighs.

“Then you should kiss him too.” Niall says with a grin. “It’s hard to be embarrassed when you’re getting your face snogged off.”

“I’m fine.” Liam mutters.

“How about with me then?” Niall asks, throwing his leg over Liam’s lap. His hands tighten on Liam’s shoulders and he leans in. He stops just short of Liam’s lips, flicking his eyes up to silently ask permission. Liam nods just a fraction of an inch and Niall closes the gap. It’s short lived, but intense, Niall moaning into his mouth and grinding down his hips. He pulls back after about a minute and asks “Was that okay?”
“Very.” Liam grins.

“And you aren’t embarrassed?” Niall asks.

“I might be if you get off my lap.” Liam admits sheepishly. “But I’m good for now.”

“You really should have put some clothes on.” Niall giggles.

“Just don’t get up then.” Liam groans, wrapping his hands around Niall’s hips.

“I have to. I never finished my dinner.” Niall explains, trying unsuccessfully to keep his face straight.

“Niall James.” Liam growls. “Do not get off my lap until it’s gone.”

“I’m hungry.” Niall pouts.

“You’ll survive.” Liam sighs.

“And you’d survive if Zee saw your cock, but I’m the one who can’t eat after midnight.” Niall grumbles.

“It’s seven.” Liam says with an unimpressed look.

“Which means if I eat now I can have the leftovers before I actually go to sleep.” Nial groans.

“Don’t make me pull the severely-underweight card.”

“Just give me a blanket or something then.” Liam sighs.

“Good lad.” Niall grins. He leans back and plucks the throw off the couch, dropping it on Liam’s lap as he stands up. “It’s just a cock Li. Nothing we haven’t all seen before. Nothing you won’t bury in his arse so deep it pokes him in the stomach.”

“It’s not Zee I have the problem with right now.” Liam hisses. “It’s our infant children.”

“Prude.” Niall laughs. “You made them with it.”


“I might be more willing to listen if you weren’t dry-humping Haz for the entirety of the conversation we had.” Nial scoffs. “It’s your fault he even has the erection.”

“Haz just looked so kissable.” Zayn shrugs. “Turns out he was.”

“Is!” Harry says with a pout. “I didn’t stop being kissable.”

“No you did not.” Zayn grins. “But I’m good for now.”

“And I thought Niall was supposed to be the fucking tease.” Harry grumbles, sitting up and knocking Zayn off onto the couch.

“Don’t listen to him.” Liam laughs. “He’s just going through his sex withdrawal.”

“Do you even sleep, or just shag really quietly at night?” Zayn asks.

“Depends on where Niall is sleeping.” Liam admits sheepishly.

“Jesus Christ.” Nial mutters. “Zee, I’m going to eat. Did you need to finish too, or do you want to
“I’ll come with you.” Zayn laughs. “I only had four raviolis before tonight’s dramatic storm-off, and somebody insisted on using up even more energy.”

“Stress relief is a calorie-burner.” Niall grins.

They walk out of the room towards the kitchen and Liam breathes a sigh of relief. “So what was that all about you think?” Harry wonders out loud.

“Which part?” Liam asks.

“The random snogfest.” Harry whispers. “Not that I minded, but it was kind of out of nowhere.”

“I think he was trying to see if you were any closer to being ready.” Liam shrugs.

“He keeps that up and I won’t be able to put it off much longer.” Harry sighs.

“You’re just trying to get a fix for your dick-addiction.” Liam scoffs. “After four and a half hours.”

“No!” Harry says with a glare. “I mean it’s not just that. He’s good here. I like him a lot more than I probably should at this stage. I’m holding back because I’m afraid he’ll leave, but I honestly don’t think he will.”

“Me either.” Liam admits, taking Harry’s hand in his own. “He wants this as much as any of us do.”

“Maybe when Niall is done recovering, we should think about taking the next step then.” Harry offers.

“Judging by the tent in your pants, I’m guessing you’re already thinking about it.” Liam teases.

“That was ridiculously hot.” Niall giggles.

“Was it?” Zayn asks, humming to himself as he reheats his dinner.

“I wasn’t sure you two weren’t going to end up shagging right there on the couch to be honest.” Niall laughs.

“Like I could get it up again right now.” Zayn scoffs. His prick is exhausted after Niall gave him two orgasms in a row, never giving him any time to cool down in between. His legs feel a bit like jelly and he needs the counter to keep himself standing right now. “Someone insisted on going for the gold medal in blowjobs.”

“Silver at best. You don’t have Liam’s stamina. I managed three in a row with him once.” Niall says with a grin.

“Good god.” Zayn moans, trying desperately to keep himself from picturing that. His penis might just fall off if it gets hard again right now. He hasn’t had this many orgasms in one day since he was a teenager who locked himself in his room. “You three are ridiculous sex addicts. And I have plenty of stamina. Pretty sure I proved that earlier.”

“Mm, yeah you did.” Niall giggles again. “Are you alright?”

“I’m fine.” Zayn shrugs.
“Zee, I know you. I know when you’re upset.” Niall says quietly.

“I’m just trying to process.” Zayn sighs. “I knew at the time that I wanted to kiss him, but it feels weird after having just been with you now that I have time to think about it. I’m still getting used to this kind of thing. It’s a big adjustment.”

“And you’re doing well at it.” Niall says reassuringly, wrapping his arms around Zayn’s waist from behind. “I know this isn’t easy for you.”

“You’re so patient with me.” Zayn smiles.

“You’ve been patient with me too.” Niall tells him. “You’ve been patient with all of us through all of our shit, but me most of all.”

“You’re worth it.” Zayn says with a grin. The microwave beeps letting him know his food is done, but he’d rather stay here in Niall’s arms. He slips his fingers between Niall’s and squeezes, pulling them tighter around himself. Niall giggles in between Zayn’s shoulder blades, making the darker man’s smile grow wider. “You’re always worth it.”

“Your food is going to get cold again.” Niall chuckles.

“You’re also worth that.” Zayn laughs, turning around so he can face Niall.

“I thought you were hungry.” Niall says with a soft smile.

“I can wait to eat.” Zayn shrugs.

“Well I can’t, so you should feed me.” Niall giggles.

“Go sit down then.” Zayn smiles.

Niall nods and runs over to the table while Zayn pulls their meal out of the microwave and grabs a fork. He takes a seat at the table and Niall scrambles onto his lap. “This is my seat.” Niall giggles again, nuzzling into Zayn’s neck.

“You two are sickening.” Harry laughs. They’re cuddled up in one chair and feeding each other ravioli one at a time. It’s ridiculously cute. “Like a movie or something.”

“Jealous?” Niall scoffs.

“Yeah.” Harry admits. “You’ve been hogging the hot one.”

“Fuck off.” Liam grumbles, planting a hard smack on Harry’s arse and making him yelp. “I’m the hot one.”

“I have to agree.” Zayn laughs. “I’m the gorgeous one.”

“No, I’m the gorgeous one.” Harry pouts. He rubs at the sore spot on his bum, wincing at the welt that he can already feel growing in the shape of Liam’s hand. “Niall said so this morning.”

“To soothe your ego.” Zayn smirks.

“Niall?” Harry asks.
“Stop asking me to do this.” Niall groans. “I’m not a tie breaker for your egos. Ask Payno. He’s good at being diplomatic.”

“Zayn is the gorgeous one.” Liam says from inside the fridge. “Haz is the sexy one.”

“But- But-” Harry sputters.

“Take it or leave it Haz. You’re sexy as all hell, but if that isn’t good enough for you then I can’t do anything about it.” Liam says with a shrug, pulling out a beer.

“Fine.” Harry pouts.

“You’re very pretty though Hazza.” Zayn smiles.

“It’s just the mouth.” Harry sighs, taking a seat with Gemma in his lap.

“Actually I think it’s the eyes.” Zayn tells him. “You’ve got great eyes.”

Harry blushes furiously at the compliment, nuzzling down into Gemma so nobody can see the way he still flushes at things like that. “He shoots, he scores!” Niall laughs. “International pop sensation Harry Styles, taken down with ten words and turned into a blushing schoolgirl.”

“Stop teasing him.” Liam laughs, dropping into the seat beside Harry with Sam clinging to his shoulder.

“I’ll trade you.” Zayn offers. “Gimme my boy.”

“You are such a dick.” Niall mumbles, slipping off of Zayn’s lap so he can hold the baby. “And you shouldn’t play favorites.”

“Every time I hold Gemma she tries to get away from me. Sam likes me better.” Zayn says with a shrug. “I’d totally take Gems if she actually liked me.”

“She does like you.” Niall laughs. “She just wants to be mobile. Even with Haz she’s over there trying to crawl onto the table.”

Harry looks down and Gemma is indeed attempting to free herself from his grip so she can play on the table. He pouts a little and then she’s gone, plucked out of his grasp by Niall who is dancing around the kitchen with her. “Be careful with your knee Nialler.” Liam says sternly.

“This is the last time I get to hold her for a few days, because I’ll be on pain meds.” Niall says over his shoulder. “We’ll be fine. I won’t drop her.”

He slows down his dancing anyways, sliding side to side in a mock-waltz just for the two of them. It’s slow and sweet, bringing a smile to Harry’s face. He loves watching Niall with the twins, the way his face lights up whenever they do something is beautiful. Liam may be hot, and Zayn may be gorgeous, but Niall is so beautiful Harry can barely stand it. “Keep it to yourself Haz.” Niall laughs.

“Your other daddies are idiots.” Niall groans to Gemma. “You gotta stick with me baby girl. You
and your rugger brother will be better for it.”

“I swear to god-” Harry growls.

“Your rugger brother.” Niall laughs again, cutting Harry off. “And you too. Gonna be the first woman anyone ever wants to actually watch play footy. We’re raising a dynasty of athletes.”

“Let him have his fun dreaming Haz.” Liam says quietly. “We both know he’ll be ecstatic no matter how they turn out, as long as they’re happy.”

“I just don’t want to think of my baby getting tackled.” Harry sighs. “He’s so little.”

“He won’t always be.” Liam points out.

“Exactly.” Niall says with a triumphant laugh. “They won’t be babies forever Hazza.”

“Don’t say that.” Harry whines, clapping his hands over his ears to block out the horrible statements.

“Haz, one day they’re going to grow up. I know you love this part, the cuddly squirmy baby part, but you’re going to love the other parts too. Their first steps, their first words, when they come home with an A on a test you helped them study for, when Sam tells you about his first crush, when Gems rides a horse for the first time. You’re going to love it all.” Niall says, handing him back their daughter. “So you’re allowed to love this part, but remember that the other parts will be just as good.”

“We’ll discuss rugby.” Harry sighs. “But only if he wants it, and not until he’s big enough to handle it.”

“I’m still buying the shirts.” Niall grins.

“If you must.” Harry laughs, rolling his eyes.

“Good, because I already ordered them while Zee and I were upstairs. They’ll be here in a few days.” Niall admits. “I expect family pictures in them.”

“Of course you do.” Liam groans.

“It will be cute and you will smile Liam.” Niall says firmly.

“So commanding.” Harry giggles.

“Don’t you even get started.” Niall mumbles. “You’re an addict, I swear.”

“That’s what I told Li, and I’m going through withdrawals.” Harry grins, reaching behind Niall to pinch his bum.

“Liam, go take care of this.” Niall sighs, nodding his head towards Harry.

“I don’t want to.” Liam says simply.

“You what?” Harry hisses.

“I’m not just a cock Haz.” Liam glares. “I am a person. I am not here to provide you with babies and fuck your dick-cravings away.”

“I know that.” Harry laughs. “And I’m not the one who asked you to do it, Nialler is.”
“Because he expects me to give you whatever you want, whenever you want it.” Liam sighs.
“Maybe I’m not in the mood.”

“Well maybe I’m not either.” Harry says harshly. “I didn’t ask for it, especially not from you.”

“Give it five minutes.” Liam says with a humorless laugh.

“You know what you can go fuck Liam? Yourself.” Harry yells, pushing Gemma back into Niall’s arms and storming out of the room.

He walks up the stairs fuming, still unsure of where the argument even came from. Everything was fun and slightly flirty, and then it wasn’t. Liam turned into a complete arse in two seconds flat, accusing Harry of shit he’s never done. He slams the door to their bedroom behind himself, petulantly enjoying the thundering boom that echoes off the walls. He tears his shirt off, not caring about the way the buttons go flying and scatter across the floor, or how he’ll have to pay the dry cleaner extra to sew them back on.

He shouldn’t have bothered putting the damn thing back on in the first place. Liam had insisted on them getting dressed after his little freak out on the couch earlier. Honestly Harry doesn’t understand why he’s being such a prude right now. The door opens and then slams again behind him, and Harry whirls around to find Liam looking pissed off. “Everyone needs to stop walking out on me when I’m talking.” he says angrily.

“You weren’t talking. You were being a cunt.” Harry snarks.

“It’s better than being a horny slut all the time.” Liam growls, stalking over to Harry.

“Go away.” Harry groans.

“No.” Liam grunts.

“Neanderthal.” Harry says harshly.

“Bitch.” Liam spits. And then his hands are grabbing Harry’s hips roughly, picking him up before he can even protest. Harry flies through the air and lands on the bed with a grunt. He’s about to yells but then Liam’s shirt smack him in the face and he has to pull the fabric away just so he can breathe.

“Take off your jeans.”

“No!” Harry says angrily.

“Take off the fucking trousers Harry.” Liam bites out, dropping his own to the ground and kicking them off harshly.

Harry scowls and takes off his jeans, chastising himself inside for how turned on he is right now. Liam grips the ends, tearing them off so roughly it hurts. Harry doesn’t have time to be angry though, because then Liam is in his lap and kissing him harder than he ever has. His hands press Harry down into the mattress and he growls “You’re infuriating sometimes.”

Harry bucks his hips at the same time he pushes Liam’s arm, flipping over on top of him. “You’re one to fucking talk.” Harry grumbles.

“And yet I’m here again, catering to your every desire.” Liam grunts, lifting up his hips to rub against Harry for friction. “Like the fucking trained sex-slave you think I am.”

“Just shut up.” Harry sighs with a roll of his eyes.
“Yes Master. Of course Master.” Liam grumbles.

Harry leans down and bites down on Liam’s neck hard, making the muscular man cry out at the same time he thrusts up again with his hips. Harry leaves bruises all over Liam’s neck, biting and sucking until he’s satisfied and moves on. His hands are pinning Liam’s wrists down to the mattress and he savors the way Liam squirms underneath him, panting and whining for more. “You act like you don’t enjoy this as much as I do.” Harry groans, sliding his cock against Liam’s.

“Of course I fucking enjoy it.” Liam mumbles. “I just resent being thought of as a sex toy.”

“Nobody in this house thinks of you that way.” Harry tells him. “Nobody. Li, I love having sex with you. I really really fucking love it. Like, you would not even believe how much I love it. But that’s not all there is between us and I need you to know that.”

“Fine.” Liam nods. “Yes, I know it. Now fucking fuck me already.”

“And you say I’m the slut.” Harry smirks.

Liam groans and places his hands on Harry’s rib-cage, tossing him to the side again. Harry rolls across the bed, but Liam’s hand reaches out and stops him from falling off the edge. He slings his leg over Harry’s hip, straddling over him, but not paying him any attention as he reaches for the bottle of lube on the nightstand. “For someone who enjoys being manhandled and told what to do, you follow instructions for shit.” Liam growls. “Just fucking lay there while I hate-fuck myself onto you and don’t fucking say anything.”

“You’re as bad as Nialler with the cursing right now.” Harry laughs.

“That’s it!” Liam roars. He leans over again and snatches one of Harry’s scarves. Harry feels his eyes go wide and then the scarf is being tied into his mouth. “Maybe now you’ll shut up.”

Harry tries to spit the scarf out, but every time he struggles against the fabric it somehow gets tighter. Fucking Liam with his knowledge of knots and other stupid shit. And then all hatred of Liam slides away when his lubed hand wraps around Harry’s prick. He works himself open with his other hand and then slips down onto Harry. “Oh fuck Haz.” he groans.

He plants his hands on Harry’s shoulders and begins to move his hips in slow circles. That in and of itself isn’t doing much for Harry, but his moans and muttered curses really are. His dick twitches wildly inside Liam, bringing a cocky smirk to the muscular man’s face. His rhythm switches after a bit and he slams his hips down hard onto Harry.

“Do you want me to take out the scarf?” Liam asks. Harry nods fervently and Liam asks “Will you shut up if I do it?”

Harry nods again and Liam lays down on top of him so his hands can undo the knots. His hips never stop moving, still fucking himself onto Harry as best as he can while he does his work. The fabric finally slips out from between his teeth and Harry bites down on Liam’s shoulder again. He wraps his arms around Liam’s torso and flips them over, thrusting into Liam with a vengeance. “If you ever do that again without asking me I will fuck you so hard your ass breaks.” he growls.

“That’s not a great threat at this second.” Liam moans. “Because that sounds fantastic.”

Harry adjusts his knees and hooks Liam’s legs over his shoulder so he can fuck in deeper. Liam’s eyes roll into the back of his head and he pulls Harry in for a deep kiss, clawing desperately at his back and leaving deep scratches that Harry knows will hurt tomorrow. Harry reaches his hands down, pulling Liam’s cheeks apart so he can thrust deeper and says “You should take care of
yourself, because when I finish I’m done.”

“Bastard.” Liam spits, reaching a hand down to tug at himself.

“Fuck off. You gagged me.” Harry grumbles, picking up speed with his hips so he can finish and deny Liam the pleasure.

Of course Liam shoots first anyway, dribbling down onto himself because he’s already had so many orgasms over the last few weeks he can’t even manage a proper stream anymore. Harry cum a few seconds later, his body going rigid and his lips crashing onto Liam’s because they always kiss when they finish. Liam bites down on his bottom lip and flips them over again. “We should have hate-sex more often.” he grins.

“Angry-sex, not hate-sex.” Harry pouts.

“Whatever.” Liam laughs. “It was great regardless.”

Niall is shaking next to Zayn on the way to the hospital. Harry is in the Range Rover with the twins and Liam is driving the other two in the truck because the six of them can’t all fit in any one of their cars. Zayn shudders when the thought of a people carrier crosses his mind. He’s good with his Jag for now. One day they might have to get a bigger car, but today is not that day. “Meri jaan, you’ll be fine.” Zayn mumbles, pressing a kiss into Niall’s hair.

“What does that mean?” Niall asks. “I know I’ve heard that before. It was- um- oh! It was when you were on the phone with Hazza while he was in London and having a panic attack. I’m not having a panic attack you know. I’m fine. I mean- I’m not fine, but I’m fine.”

“Niall.” Zayn says, taking the babbling boy’s face in his hands. “Breathe.”

Niall nods, sucking in a deep breath through his nose. He holds it for a few seconds and then lets it out shakily. He repeats that a few more times until Zayn can see the color come back in his cheeks. “Feel better?” Zayn asks.

“Yeah.” Niall sighs in relief. “You never told me what it means.”


“Sop.” Niall laughs quietly. “Thank you.”

“Just remember my promise.” Zayn reassures him.

“I will.” Niall says with a gulp and a nod.

“We’re here.” Liam says softly from behind the wheel.

“Alright. Time to go get butchered.” Niall laughs again. “Let’s hope they’re half as good with a screwdriver as you are Li.”

“I’m fairly certain they are.” Liam chuckles.

“Then let’s go. I have an arse-load of tests and shite to get done and then I have to let some quacks build a house in my knee.” Niall says with another laugh, squeezing Zayn’s hand and showing him just how scared he really is.
He doesn’t let go of Zayn’s fingers as they climb out, lacing them together tightly. Harry meets them up at the doors and they walk in, checking in at the desk and waiting quietly in the lobby. They get some weird looks when Niall climbs into Zayn’s lap, curling into him as close as he can. Harry gets more looks than the two of them do though, obviously getting recognized even with his sunglasses and beanie. Those things are actually probably drawing attention considering they’re inside.

“We were supposed to have a private waiting room.” Harry finally tells a nurse.

“I’ll look into that sir.” she nods and then shuffles off.

A few minutes later they’re led to another room that feels sterile and uninviting. They can relax a bit more in there though, the babies able to scoot around on the floor. Niall plays with them happily, his fears seeming to subside the longer he does. Eventually a different nurse comes and tells them it’s time to take Niall for his tests. He sighs wearily when he climbs into the wheelchair she insists is part of hospital policy. “I’ll see you guys in a few hours.” he says with a nervous smile.

“You’ll be fine.” Zayn says quietly, giving him a peck on the cheek.

She wheels Niall out but the door doesn’t close before Zayn hears a snippet of conversation. She tells Niall “Your boyfriend is cute.”

Niall laughs and says “You don’t know the half of it. Actually make that the third of it.”

Zayn smiles to himself, turning back to look at the other two. Harry is curled up with his knees tucked under him on the couch, giggling ridiculously. “What are you doing Haz?” Zayn sighs.

“This freaking room.” Harry cackles. “The- The first time I was here- Liam almost thr- threw me through the window! And then the second time- Niall and I- I- I wanked us off on this couch!”

“Oh my god.” Liam groans.

“I think he’s having a breakdown.” Zayn sighs.

“I am not.” Harry protests through another round of giggles. “It’s just- I’ve been in this same stupid room three times in a year. Three times with three very different experiences. Look how much our lives have changed.”

“I don’t know. I’m still tempted to throw you out a window.” Liam says with a grin.

“You got your angry-sex.” Harry laughs.

“I’m glad I didn’t take that bet.” Zayn mutters.

“What bet?” Liam asks curiously.

“Whether you two were going to have sex last night.” Zayn answers, taking a seat on the floor with the twins. “Niall bet yes and I wasn’t going to take that action. At least you two kept it down for once.”

“Fucker.” Harry grumbles, kicking out at Liam.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” Liam says innocently.

“I had to throw out that scarf because I bit holes in it.” Harry pouts. “That was an Alexander McQueen, Liam.”
“You what?” Zayn asks, choking on nothing.

“You have like eighty of them Haz. You’ll get over it.” Liam giggles, scooting away before Harry can kick him again. “He’s mad because I gagged him.”

“Against my will!” Harry hisses.

“Because you wouldn’t just shut up.” Liam teases. “Angry-sex has no talking.”

“I will never understand you two.” Zayn laughs. He scoops up Gemma when she surprises him by crawling straight into his lap. “Your daddies are horndogs.”

“I don’t want to hear it from you.” Harry scoffs. “We didn’t say anything last night, but you two got pretty loud yourselves.”

“No we didn’t.” Zayn smirks, calling Harry’s bluff. “Because I have self control and a tongue that had Niall biting down on a pillow half the night.”

“Jesus.” Liam mutters quietly.

“Don’t worry Li, you’ll get to feel it eventually.” Zayn says with a cheeky wink. “Apparently I haven’t lost any of my skill, which was a concern for about a minute and a half.”

“We’ll see.” Harry grins. “Niall is the easy one to please. He’s gone without for a long time. I on the other hand have been getting mind-blowing sex on the regular.”

“Eh, It’s not bad.” Liam says with a shrug. “Mind-blowing might be a little strong though. For me at least.”

“You- I-” Harry sputters.

“He can’t take a joke at all.” Liam says with a wicked grin.

“A rude lie is not a joke!” Harry squeaks out so high Zayn winces. “And you aren’t funny!”

“I’m going to go get some coffee before his head explodes. Will you come with me?” Liam asks Zayn, waving Harry off.

“I could go for some coffee.” Zayn smiles.

“Haz, you want anything?” Liam asks.

“A nicer boyfriend.” Harry pouts. “And a large chamomile tea with sugar.”

“I can get you the tea, but the nice boyfriend is getting x-rays, so you’ll have to wait on that for a while.” Liam giggles.

“Go on then.” Harry sighs, waving them off. “Just don’t get anything to eat. They’re bringing us a meal soon enough.”

“Alright then.” Zayn chuckles, following Liam out of the room. They walk to the lifts before Zayn asks “Are you sure we should be leaving him alone right now?”

“He’s fine.” Liam says with a shrug. “If I thought he needed us in there the whole time I would stay, but I’m pretty sure he’s fine. Hazza gets clingy when he’s really upset.”
“Believe me, I’m aware.” Zayn says with a fond smile stretching his lips.

The door opens and they step on, Liam hitting the button for the basement and then turning on Zayn with a wolfish grin. He stalks forward, pressing Zayn into the wall of the lift. “Now how about you show me a preview of how good you are with that tongue?” he whispers into Zayn’s ear.

“Now?” Zayn asks.

“Do you not want to?” Liam asks worriedly, taking a step back. “I- I’m sorry, I thought that you were flirting with me. I’m sorry.”

“Li-” Zayn starts.

“It was stupid of me.” Liam sighs.

“Leeyum.” Zayn says more firmly, making the other man’s head snap up. “I want it. I just wasn’t sure if you actually did too, or if you’re trying to ignore why we’re here. I don’t like being used as a distraction.”

“If I kiss you, Zayn, it’s because I want to.” Liam says with a smile. “I wouldn’t use you like that.”

“Then what are you waiting for?” Zayn asks, arching his eyebrow as a challenge.

“The return ride now.” Liam laughs. “Because we’ll stop in three, two, one, and-”

On cue the lift grinds to a halt, doors sliding open to reveal a bevvy of nurses waiting to go back up. Zayn flushes a bit, ducking his head and stepping off of the lift behind Liam. “How did you-” Zayn starts.

“Been here a lot over the years. For Niall’s stuff, Maura’s treatments, the babies’ appointments, my own family’s stuff.” Liam explains. “I know this place in and out. I know exactly how long it takes to get to any floor from any other in the lifts. They haven’t gotten new ones in years.”


“They’re a good hospital.” Liam tells him. “There was nothing they could have done for Maura except give her more time, and they did that. They gave her two years. They’ve gotten Niall through four surgeries already. Sophia was- she was a fluke. Nobody could have predicted that.”

“Except for her apparently.” Zayn says quietly. “Niall told me about the note.”

“Except for her.” Liam agrees.

“Are you okay?” Zayn asks the other man cautiously, touching his fingers to the strong arm beside him before pulling them back.

“Yeah.” Liam nods. “It’s just going to be a long day. I have a lot of memories of this hospital, but none of them are particularly good. Not even getting the twins because I was in such denial and being a total arsehole about it.”

“I remember.” Zayn chuckles. “I mean, mostly I remember Niall’s problems during that time, but that’s because I wasn’t the right person to be there for you. Funnily enough, I think it was probably Louis. You needed a hard edge, not a soft touch like me.”

“You’re hardly a soft touch.” Liam scoffs. “Your cheekbones alone could cut glass and you were like a lightning-strike to our relationship. You’re a hurricane Zayn Malik, not a soft touch.”
“That was not as flattering as you probably think it was.” Zayn sighs.

“I like the hurricane.” Liam says with a wink. “The hurricane is dark and powerful and sexy.”

“Okay, it’s a little flattering.” Zayn says, ducking his face down to cover a blush.

“Then again, hurricanes don’t have an adorable shy side like you.” Zayn laughs.

“I’m not shy.” Zayn grumbles.

“Yes you are.” Liam says in a sing-song voice that has Zayn wanting to jam his tongue into the other man’s mouth just to shut him up. “I like that too. Neither Haz or Nialler understand a thing about modesty most of the time. It’s refreshing.”

“I seem to recall being called a cocky son of a bitch a lot of times in my life.” Zayn admits.

“You can be vain and still be shy.” Liam says with a shrug. “I have a feeling you can be a lot of things. A lot of very interesting things.”

“You’re such a flirt.” Zayn scoffs.

“I’m still hoping for that snog in the lift on the way back up.” Liam winks. “The cafeteria is up here on the left.”

“How is the coffee?” Zayn asks. “Because I’m exhausted. I barely slept last night.”

“Was that because Niall was in there with you?” Liam asks.

“Yes, but not in the way you’re probably thinking.” Zayn explains. “He kept having nightmares. Eventually I just stopped trying to sleep because he needed me to hold him more than I needed to sleep. Now that he’s gone I’m just trying to keep my eyes open.”

“Go for the triple espresso infusion then.” Liam laughs, holding the door open for Zayn. “It works miracles.”

“Will do.” Zayn nods. “But I’m going to eat a muffin on the way back upstairs, because that will eat right through my stomach if I don’t. Keep that between us please.”

“It’ll be our little secret.” Liam grins conspiratorially. They walk up to the stand ordering their drinks and a muffin, and then standing off to the side while they’re made. Liam fidgets for a minute and then says “Can I ask you a question?”

“Sure.” Zayn shrugs.

“What was the promise you made to Nialler?” Liam asks quietly.

“I promised him he’d make it through this just fine.” Zayn tells him. “That I wouldn’t allow him to die.”

“You have lofty aspirations.” Liam chuckles. “Challenging the universe like that.”

“I’d fight the whole damn universe for him if that’s what it took.” Zayn says softly.

“Never stop feeling that way.” Liam says firmly, clapping a hand down on Zayn’s shoulder. “Never stop fighting for him, because he won’t always make things easy. He’ll fight you and try to run sometimes, but you have to keep showing him how much you love him.”
“I will.” Zayn agrees.

“Good lad.” Liam smiles. “Now eat your muffin, because that espresso will destroy you if you don’t have anything in your tummy.”

“I’m sorry- tummy?” Zayn asks, trying desperately to hold back a laugh.

“I mostly talk to two infants.” Liam explains with a shrug. “I forget adults use other vernacular sometimes.”

“I like how you go from baby words to adult ones like that.” Zayn giggles. He takes a bite out of the muffin, groaning at how awful it tastes and swallows it reluctantly. “That is like- so bad.”


“I’ll live.” Zayn laughs. “It’ll do it’s job well enough, even if it tastes like cardboard.”

“The coffee helps with that.” Liam says with a smile. “And if it’s really bad I have a trick. Take some of the cinnamon powder from the toppings area and sprinkle it on top. But not too much or it’s actually worse.”

“That’s strangely brilliant.” Zayn grins. He taps out some of the powder on top and takes another bite, smaller this time. He doesn’t even bother swallowing before mumbling “This is so much better.”

“Stick with me and you’ll learn all the tricks.” Liam smirks.

“I can teach you a few myself.” Zayn says with a wink.

The barista hands them their drinks and Liam lifts his coffee to his mouth to cover up his blush. Zayn turns around, hiding his smile and taking another bite of his muffin. He really needs it to all be gone by the time they get to the lift, because he’s looking forward to kissing Liam again. This time he’s prepared for it and every nerve in his body is tingling with anticipation.

He makes quick work of the rest of the pastry, forgoing conversation because the damn thing is huge. He finally manages to swallow the rest and drop the wrapper in a rubbish bin outside the lift. “You done?” Liam asks. Zayn nods and Liam grins and says “Then hold this.”

He pushes Harry’s tea into Zayn’s hand and then gently guides him backwards onto the open, and thankfully, empty, lift. His eyes look for approval in Zayn’s and the darker man licks his lips and nods just a fraction. Liam surges forward, pressing his body into Zayn’s and curling the now-free hand around his neck. His lips hover just over Zayn’s before he presses them the last little bit. He’s still a really good snog. Proper amazing actually. This time though, Zayn doesn’t just stand there and let everything happen to him. He wants to be an active participant, so his is the first tongue that asks for entrance. Liam lets him in easily, showing a surprising mix of dominance and submissiveness that has Zayn very interested in the things they could do together.

The doors spring open too soon, leaving Zayn whining when Liam takes a step back. He presses another quick peck to Zayn lips. Then he grins dopily and steps off the lift. Zayn follows behind him, unable to hide the erection throbbing in his too-tight-jeans as they make their way back, because Liam never took back Harry’s tea. He has a smug look on his face when he opens the door, and then it splits into a wide grin because the babies squeal. “Hey guys! Did you miss us?” he asks excitedly.

“Very much so.” Harry laughs. “Longest wait I’ve ever had for a cuppa.”
“Here you go Haz.” Zayn says with a smile, handing off the chamomile tea.

“Proper lifesaver you are.” Harry mutters, desperately tipping the cup back and taking a deep pull. “So what’s got Zayn so happy in his pants?”

“I- what?” Zayn sputters.

“Oh, come on.” Harry scoffs, glancing down and then back up. “That thing could only be more obvious if it was actually in my mouth.”

“You’re terrible.” Liam giggles. “Don’t tease him just because I snogged him in the lift.”

“I’m never going to survive this relationship.” Zayn groans.

“Yeah, but that’s like, the goal of a relationship, isn’t it?” Liam asks. “’Til death do us part’ and all that.”

“Excellent point Leeyum.” Harry giggles, mimicking the way Zayn says Liam’s name.

“That threat didn’t go away just because we’ve added him in.” Liam says in a warning tone.

“What threat?” Zayn asks.

“He gets off on the way you say his name, so I’m not allowed to say it like that.” Harry explains with a cheeky grin. “Or else he’ll fuck me through a wall. Like that’s a threat.”

“Oh really Leeyum?” Zayn asks with a smirk.

“Go back to teasing Zee.” Liam pouts at Harry.

“You’re so much more fun to tease though.” Zayn says, crossing the space between them and dropping down onto Liam’s lap. “Isn’t that right Haz? Leeyum is fun to tease.”

“Oh, definitely.” Harry grins, following Zayn’s lead and sidles up next to Liam. “I think we should tease him even more.”

Harry glances down at Zayn’s lips and then back up with a wink. Zayn gets the idea and leans in at the same time Harry does, making it look like they’re about to kiss Liam. His breathing comes out in short pants, anticipatory of what is about to happen. Instead, Zayn tangles his hand in Harry’s hair and pulls the two of them together. Harry mirrors his actions, pushing Zayn backwards until they’re pressed together, kissing roughly right on top of Liam.

“Now that was mean.” Liam whines.

“Oi! Get off each other. There are children present!” A shrill voice shrieks from the door.

Harry scrambles backwards, falling off of Zayn and the couch in one fell swoop, thankfully missing Sam and Gemma when he hits the floor. Zayn’s neck snaps back and he groans “What are you doing here Tomlinson?”

“Unlike any of you arse-holes, Niall let me know he was going under today.” Louis grumbles, walking in with two of the triplets in carriers. “He was there for us with the boys while they were here. We want to be here for him.”

“But how did you find us?” Liam asks with a sigh.
“I work here, you butt-plug.” Louis laughs. “I know where the V.I.P. Lounge is.”

“Did you just-” Liam growls.

“I did, in fact, call you a butt-plug.” Louis says with a grin.

“Is this bitchy-Louis-from-the-other-night talking, or just regularly-bitchy-Louis?” Harry asks, standing up and rubbing his head.

“Regularly-bitchy.” Louis says with a shrug. “I’ll be on my best behavior.”

“You have good behavior?” Liam asks with a pout.

“He does not.” Eleanor sighs, joining them and carrying the other triplet. Zayn still can’t tell them apart. “He has slightly better than usual behavior.”

“You loved it last night.” Louis says cheekily.

“How are you doing El?” Harry asks, trying desperately to steer the conversation to a good place.

“Excited for this weekend.” Eleanor tells them with a sweet smile. “Zayn, Love, Liam texted and said you’d be joining us?”

“Just for the financial aspect of things.” Zayn shrugs.

“I think the three of us will make a good team.” Liam grins wickedly. “What about you Louis? Don’t you think we make a good team? Zayn, your wife, and myself.”

“Listen here you butt-plug-” Louis hisses with his eyebrows furrowed.

“Louis!” Eleanor scolds, smacking his arm. “He. Is. My. Boss. We talked about this, and if you can’t behave yourself you know the punishments.”

“He’s goading me!” Louis whines.

“I don’t care.” Eleanor says firmly.

“He’ll stop, won’t you Leeyum?” Zayn asks, pushing his hips down a little into Liam’s lap. “He has much more important things on his mind than taking the piss out of Tomlinson.”

“Don’t- uh don’t do that.” Liam moans quietly. “I’ll stop.”

“Good lad.” Zayn whispers in his ear. “I’ll reward you next time we’re in the lift.”

He feels something twitch around the area of his bum and smirks. His fingers brush lightly over Liam’s upper arm and he’s tempted to lean in and nibble at the man’s earlobe. Propriety gets the better of him though and he decides against it. “Oi.” Louis groans again. “I got three kids here. I don’t care if all three of them end up liking blokes, but it would be great if you’d stop grinding on each other in front of them. Please.”

“Only because you said please.” Zayn laughs. “You probably don’t want me to stand up off his lap yet though.”

“Damn it.” Liam mutters. “After all that yesterday.”

“You know I already felt it on the bench right?” Zayn asks. “Right up on my thigh. I can’t gauge like
approximate size or anything, but I am fully aware that you have a penis.”

“I know.” Liam sighs. “I just-”

“I know Leeyum.” Zayn says gently, carding his fingers through the other man’s hair. “I understand exactly why. Don’t worry. Things will still be fresh and exciting when we finally go there. Your modesty is intact.”

“Thank you.” Liam mumbles.

“Let me know when the swelling goes down and I’ll move.” Zayn smiles.

“Don’t.” Liam whispers, wrapping his arms around Zayn’s waist. “You can stay here without it being naughty.”

“Alright Li.” Zayn laughs softly. “I’ll stay right here.”

Four hours in and Liam is getting antsier by the second. He clings to Harry, Zayn, and the twins in alternating cycles to try and calm himself down. It works for about fifteen minutes at a time, and then it stops alleviating his fears and he has to switch it up again. They’ve been given periodic updates, which Louis translates for them into general English. Now it’s a waiting game.

“Li, stop bouncing your knee or my arse is going to be bruised.” Harry mumbles sleepily into his neck.

“Sorry.” Liam says, stopping the nervous tic as best as he can. He has to stretch it out in front of him to get it to quit completely. “Better?”

“Much.” Harry says with a small nod.

“You need to wake up Hazza.” Zayn says quietly. “Once he’s out of surgery you’re going to have to drive him home.”

“Get me another coffee then.” Harry whines. “I need coffee.”

“I have no idea why you insisted on tea this morning.” Liam chuckles. “You’re such a coffee addict.”

“I needed something soothing.” Harry pouts. “Now I need a kick in the arse.”

“You just complained about being kicked in your arse.” Louis scoffs.

“Here.” Zayn says, pulling several notes out of his wallet and handing them to Louis. “Get something for yourselves and a coffee for Haz. We’ll watch the boys.”

“Oh thank god.” Louis laughs. “I’m starving. That breakfast was for shite.”

“That’s because they only expected three adults, not five.” Liam points out. He wasn’t really satisfied either honestly, but he also wasn’t that hungry. His stomach is in knots, the way it always is when he’s here. “Haz likes soy lattes.”

“Will do.” Louis nods, taking Eleanor by the hand and walking out giddily.

“They’re totally going to have sex now, aren’t they?” Liam grumbles.
“That is very likely.” Zayn laughs.

“How long before I get my coffee do you think?” Harry asks.

“Not very long if I were to guess.” Zayn snickers. “Tomlinson looks like a premature ejaculator if I’ve ever seen one.”

“You two have to stop being mean to him in front of his kids.” Harry sighs. “He’ll end up hating us if they grow up all snarky and mean to him.”

“So?” Liam scoffs. He could care less about Louis Tomlinson’s feelings. “What does that matter?”

“He’s our family Li.” Harry says firmly. “They’re our family. Stop being petulant and actually notice what he’s been doing. He packed three newborns into a car and drove across town to sit and wait with us for Nialler. They could have just waited for a call. Louis could have come by himself so he didn’t have to do all that work, but they came because they’re our family and that’s what family does.”

“Fine.” Liam groans. “Why did it have to be him though?”

“Because he’s who we have.” Harry shrugs.

“At least he comes with cute babies.” Zayn laughs. He’s got Tanner, or maybe Jonathan, in his lap. Liam isn’t sure. “So many cute little babies.”

“We have our own cute little babies.” Liam grumbles. “Better babies.”

“You are such a daddy Li.” Harry giggles. “I think I’m starting to wake up a little more.”

“Which part of you?” Liam asks, already knowing the answer.

“This part.” Harry grins, placing Liam’s hand over his growing erection.

“Haz.” Liam groans.

“You two can sneak off for some alone time if you need it.” Zayn offers. “I’m good here. Edmund and Tanner are asleep, and so is Sam. I can handle this.”

“We’re not going anywhere.” Liam says firmly. “Niall will be out of surgery soon and I’m not missing him waking up.”

“Me either.” Harry nods. “It’s going to be a very long day though, considering I’m basically being forced into celibacy again.”

“For one day Haz.” Zayn chuckles. “You can go upstairs and use your treasure trove if you really need to.”

“You know about Harry’s Little Shop of Horrors?” Liam asks with a laugh.

“My what?” Harry asks, his face completely offended.

“That’s the name Niall came up with for it.” Liam giggles.

“You three are so not allowed to use my things anymore.” Harry groans.

“I have never used your things.” Zayn points out.
“And until you used that one on me, neither had I.” Liam says. “It’s not really that much of a loss for us.”

“That’s not how you reacted the other night.” Harry says with a wicked grin. “You were right desperate for more.”

“And you enjoyed using it on me too much to actually ban me from using it.” Liam shrugs. “So I’m not worried.”

“Stop calling my bluffs.” Harry pouts.

“You’re too easy to read.” Liam laughs, pressing a kiss to Harry’s cheek. “When Nialler falls asleep we can find some time together if you need to.”

“I’ll stay with him.” Zayn says. “Just don’t shag for hours at a time, because it’s Li he really wants there today.”

“Once or twice should be fine.” Harry grins.

“And I used to think it was Niall who was never satisfied.” Liam laughs.

“Oh I’m fully satisfied.” Harry giggles. “I’m just a sex-glutton. I want more than I need.”

“You would never have worked out with just one man.” Zayn says with a soft smile. “Maybe Clark Kent, but other than him I don’t know anyone who has your level of stamina.”

“Who’s Clark Kent?” Harry asks.

Liam and Zayn turn to each other in unison, smiles stretching their faces and laugh. Liam laughs so hard he can’t breathe and tears sting at his eyes. Zayn holds onto Liam’s knee to keep upright. Harry is trying to hush them up, complaining that they’ll wake the babies, but Liam can’t seem to get himself under control for more than a few seconds before him and Zayn both start up again. “Look at my boyfriends. They’re stupid, but I love them.” a familiar Irish lilt says from the door.

Niall is sitting there in a wheelchair, a blanket laid over his lap and a dopey look on his face, probably from pain medication. The nurse has a vaguely disgusted look on her face, but she stays quiet. Liam only realizes the room has gone quiet when Niall asks “Payno, did you have more babies while I was gone?”

“It’s Tanner, Edmund, and Jonathan.” Zayn says with a wide grin.

“Haz, did you kill Tommo and El just so you could have more kids?” Niall asks with a giggle.

“No. There were too many witnesses and not enough places to hide the bodies.” Harry laughs.

“How are you?” Liam asks, moving Harry off of his lap and walking over to crouch in front of Niall.

“High and very talkative.” Niall grins. “You been worried about me Li? You look like you have been.”

“Of course I have been you bodalán.” Liam says, wiping a tear out of his eyes.

“This is Liam. He has a really big prick.” Niall says, looking up at the nurse. “Huge.”

“Oh good god.” Liam groans. “Zee, can you go take care of the paperwork? I can never spell anything right.”
“Sure.” Zayn says, obviously stifling a laugh.

“Zee is the one I was telling you about on the way here.” Niall giggles. “With the pretty brown-.”

“Nialler!” Liam hisses. “Let the poor woman go, and stop talking about our genitalia.”

“Okay.” Niall says with a very serious nod. “Mission accepted.”

“How much did you give him?” Harry asks from the couch.

“Not enough apparently.” The nurse mumbles. “He should come down soon. I’ll take, Zee was it?”

“Zayn actually, Zee is just a nickname.” he explains.

“I’ll take Zayn down to the pharmacy for some pain pills that won’t mix badly with the other medications he’s on. I’ll also give him a post-operative check list for you three to make sure things go smoothly. He should be up and around in a few days, and hopefully saying a lot less.” she says rudely before stepping out into the hall.

Zayn gives the wheelchair-bound man a peck on the cheek and then follows behind her after whispering in Niall’s ear “I always keep my promises meri jaan.”

Niall smiles into his hands, covering up an embarrassed blush that’s highly out of place on the Irish lad. “He’s an idiot.” he giggles. “They took me pants.”

“They brought us all your stuff, but I think it’s best if we wait to put on your pants and trousers until we get home and can put on something looser.” Harry explains. “Jeans were not an optimal choice for today.”

“Probably not.” Liam agrees.

“Yeah, maybe not, but in the gown I can do this.” Niall laughs, lifting up his blanket and spreading his knees to show off his cock, red and leaking. “I need one of these gowns at home.”

“You are never getting drugs again.” Liam sighs, pushing Niall’s hands back down so the blanket covers his lap, but not his knees. There’s a large bandage covering his left leg. Liam runs his finger lightly along the edge, away from where he knows the scar will be. “They make you weird.”

“I’m horny, not weird.” Niall pouts. “Where’s Louis?”

“I really don’t want to know how you bridged the gap between those two sentences.” Harry laughs.

“He’d understand that I’m not weird.” Niall says with a shrug.

“We’re pretty sure he’s nailing El in a bathroom somewhere.” Liam tells him.

“Typical.” Niall groans. “I go under the knife, and he leaves you to babysit while he munches some rug. Did he at least agree to live in our old house for a bit?”

“We didn’t talk about it.” Liam tells him. He’d actually been wondering about that himself, seeing as he’d brought it up. He may not like Louis that much, but he’d meant it that they could move in there. It’s a perfect use of the property. “I’ll discuss it with El this weekend.”

“I want them to do it.” Niall says firmly. “They should be close to us. We’ve been terrible friends to them.”
“You’ve been nothing but kind to them Niall.” Liam sighs. “You’re using the last of the money you got for your family’s farm keeping them afloat. You were here at the hospital with them nearly every day while the triplets were in the NICU, even though you should have been focusing on your own recovery. You’re even trying to book them a vacation so they can have some time to themselves. You have made them a part of this family, and if they can’t accept that Zayn is a part of it too now, then that’s on them.”

“Remember Lilo and Stitch?” Niall asks. “Ohana means family, and family means no one gets left behind. We’ve left them behind Li. They probably would have been fine with things, but I hid it from them. I hid it because I was afraid he’d say something and change my mind. I was a coward.”

“We had our first date with him twenty four hours before they came over. We weren’t even sure he’d agree to try things with us before that. There was nothing to talk about with them.” Liam tells him.

“Li, I know you have a thing about family, but I need all the people in my life I can manage. You may have noticed that people tend to drop like flies around me. I need spare people.” Niall says calmly.

“I hear our patient is back.” Louis says, walking through the door with Eleanor close behind. “Harold, your soy latte.”

“Oh thank god.” Harry mumbles, springing up off the couch and drinking deeply from the cup Louis hands him. “Oh sweet caffeinated love.”

“Hey Tommo! Look what I can do!” Niall cackles, lifting up his blanket again before Liam can stop him.

Everything is warm and kind of pornographic to Niall right now. Liam is asleep underneath him, his strong arms wrapped around Niall even in his state of unconsciousness. Niall briefly considers molesting him in his sleep, but then his knee screams unkind things at him when he tries to adjust. It’s a very rude knee. Even still though, he’s incredibly turned on by just about everything. Thor has never looked so good. “Haz!” he calls loudly.

“What’s wrong?” Harry asks worriedly, running into the room a few minutes later.

“I’m horny.” Niall says seriously. It’s a very serious matter. Completely urgent. “I’m horny and Li is asleep and my knee won’t let me flip over so I can wake him up with my mouth.”

“You called me in here because you need a wank?” Harry asks. He may sound incredulous, but Niall is having trouble deciding if it’s that or lustiness. At least he understands the situation. “Are you serious? I thought your stitches had torn or something else important.”

“This is important.” Niall whines.

“No, it bloody well is not.” Harry scolds him. “And you know full well Liam and I aren’t having sex with you yet.”

“Get Zee then.” Niall grins victoriously when the idea pops into his head. It’s a perfect solution. “He can do it.”

“I am not your pimp Niall. Call for him yourself.” Harry says grumpily, walking away and leaving Niall alone.
“Zee!” Niall cries, elongating the e for as long as his lungs will let him.

“You rang?” Zayn asks with a smile, walking in with much less urgency than Niall feels is necessary.

“I need you to do something very important for me.” Niall tells him.


“I’m glad you feel that way.” Niall grins. “I need an orgasm.”

“You can’t be serious.” Zayn sighs.

“Li is asleep.” Niall explains.

“I see that, but I don’t follow your thought process.” Zayn mumbles, sitting next to them on the couch. He is nowhere near Niall’s penis, and that’s just rude. Ruder than his knee even. “Care to try that again?”

“I was going to play with him, but he’s asleep. I need someone else to do it though, because my hands are all weird right now.” Niall tells him, holding up his hands to show how they’re all wiggly.

“I’m not getting you off Nialler.” Zayn says meanly. “You didn’t want me in here today, so I’m going to go now.”

“Oh I did too and you know it.” Niall huffs. “I just don’t want to be babied today. I would love to have you two in here, but Hazza gets all mother-hen on me and you two would follow his lead until I yelled. Then you’d resent me because I would say something mean just to get you all off of me. It’s better this way until I can come down off of the pain meds a bit.”

“You sound pretty lucid to me.” Zayn grumbles.

“Well I’m not. My body is all tingly and everything is really erotic to me right now. Everything.” Niall sighs.

“Then you should go to sleep.” Zayn tells him softly.

“I don’t want to.” Niall says with a shrug. “I want to cum.”

“Well I’m not going to do it for you right now.” Zayn repeats, still meanly. “Later. Maybe.”

“Why not?” Niall pouts.

“Because that would be me taking advantage of you while you’re mentally impaired.” Zayn explains. “I can’t. I’d feel like- like I was-”

“Raping me?” Niall asks. “Zayn, I’ve been raped. This is not that. I am asking you for this.”

“Niall, I can’t. I can’t.” Zayn whispers.


“Is there anything else you want?” Zayn asks.

“A beer.” Niall groans. “But I can’t. Can you make me some food?”
“Yeah. I can do that.” Zayn nods. “Anything in particular?”

“Just food.” Niall shrugs. “Anything sounds good.”

“We’ll figure something out then.” Zayn says with a smile that doesn’t reach his eyes.

“He get off that quick, then?” Harry asks nonchalantly when he sees Zayn walk into the kitchen.

“I didn’t do that.” Zayn says quietly. “I would never do that.”

“It’s a wank Zee.” Harry laughs.

“It’s rape Harry!” Zayn snaps.

“Zee-” Harry starts.

“You of all people should know that after Nick. I know you were in denial for a long time, but you got past that.” Zayn says, cutting him off. His breathing is ragged and he’s using the counter just to keep himself standing. “He’s not in his right mind right now. If I touched him I could never forgive myself. I can’t believe you think I’d do something like that to him.”

“Zayn. Stop.” Harry says softly, crossing the kitchen and taking the darker man into his arms. “I’m sorry. I didn’t think of it that way, and I don’t think Nialler did either.”

“How could you two not?” Zayn asks, gripping tighter into Harry’s side. “You’ve both been through that. You’ve both had someone do that to you.”

“You would never hurt him. We all know that.” Harry tells him, carding his fingers through Zayn’s hair. “You’re not like them. You’re nothing like Nick or the man who attacked Niall.”

“Thank you.” Zayn whispers.

“Don’t thank me for stating the obvious.” Harry smiles. “That would be like thanking me for saying that you’re gorgeous or have a heart too big for your own good.”

“Niall wants food.” Zayn mumbles. “What do we have?”

“Next to nothing apparently.” Harry sighs. “We need to go to the market. I’ll see what I can whip up. He shouldn’t eat too much though. According to the packet he’ll probably puke it all back up if he’s not adjusting well to the medication.”

“He’s fine. Horny and a little weird, but fine overall.” Zayn laughs softly.

“So he’s back to normal then.” Harry giggles.

“You’d know better than I would I guess. I haven’t seen too much of Nialler when he’s not at his worst.” Zayn says softly. “You know him better than I do.”

“I don’t think so. I think you might know him better than I do, or even Liam in some ways.” Harry admits. “He lets down his walls around you more than he does with us.”

“He let you see him when he was grieving.” Zayn sighs. “He took you to see his parents.”

“Maybe he just lets us all see different parts of him then.” Harry tells him.
“We should work on that with him, because that’s really not healthy.” Zayn says dejectedly.

“For now, how about we just work on making some food?” Harry offers. “It’s a much less demanding task. Also I like my part of him. I get the giggly-horny-weirdo part.”

“I think we all get some version of that.” Zayn laughs.

“Yeah, but mine focuses on the horny part.” Harry says with a wide grin.

“Your unquenchable lust is insane.” Zayn giggles.

“Maybe you can quench it.” Harry whispers into his ear. “Think you can satisfy me Zee?”

“I think our boyfriend is laid up in the other room, and therefore this is completely inappropriate.” Zayn huffs. “Also, stop making me horny. I just got to start touching him yesterday, and now we have to wait for days. I really need to not be horny right now.”

“I have some ideas on that, but you’re right.” Harry admits, formulating a plan. “Go check the fridge and let me know what we have.”

“You want to do what?” Liam asks, halting the slow march of his mouth down Harry’s torso.

“Don’t make me explain the whole thing again.” Harry groans. “And don’t stop what you’re doing.”

“Well excuse me if I’m a little offended that you’re talking about touching Zayn while I’m doing this.” Liam pouts.

“Actually, I’m talking about you touching Zee, and I would get Niall.” Harry corrects him.

“Same bloody difference.” Liam grunts, resuming his previous activities.

“It was just a suggestion.” Harry moans. “If you’re uncomfortable with it, then we don’t have to do it.”

“I’ll think about it. Later.” Liam says, effectively ending the conversation. Harry is very okay with that at the moment. “Now roll over. I’m hungry and you have a very edible arse.”

“Hey gorgeous.” Niall mumbles sleepily.

“You haven’t opened your eyes. How did you know it was me?” Zayn asks, pressing a kiss to Niall’s forehead.

“You three have very different body types.” Niall laughs. The motion hurts his knee and he groans.

“Oh, fuck, where are my drugs?”

“The kitchen. Do you want me to go get them?” Zayn asks quietly.

“Not yet.” Niall sighs, nuzzling deeper into Zayn’s side. “You stay here with me since Li has apparently abandoned me.”

“Harry got all needy and desperate.” Zayn explains.
“They’re banned from the room now.” Niall pouts. “If they can’t wait until they go to bed to shag, then they don’t get to see me any more today.”

“Nialler-” Zayn starts.

“No. It’s not fair to me or you.” Niall says firmly. “You shouldn’t be stuck taking care of my useless arse by yourself just because they can’t keep their cocks to themselves for twelve hours.”

“I like taking care of you.” Zayn tells him. “I really like it. I even volunteered for it back at the hospital if they needed to sneak off and do this. I’ve been hoping all day that they would.”

“Why would you like me like this?” Niall asks.

“I like feeling like you need me.” Zayn admits.

“I always need you.” Niall mutters. “I’ve needed you my whole life, only I didn’t know it for a long time.”

“The drugs are still making you loopy.” Zayn chuckles.

“This isn’t pain meds talking Zee. It’s me.” Niall pouts. “Did I do or say anything really stupid? I don’t remember almost anything after my scans.”

“We’ll leave that for another time.” Zayn says, obviously biting back a laugh. “When you’re stronger.”

“Rip off the plaster Zee.” Niall groans.

“The nurse said to leave the bandage on for at least another day.” Zayn tells him.

“The metaphorical plaster Zee.” Niall grumbles. “Just tell me what happened. It’s better to just get it over with.”

“Okay, but you have to understand that I wasn’t there for some of this.” Zayn says calmly. “I went to go fill out your paperwork, so some of this is just what I’ve heard from the other four and the nurse. You were insistent on describing the more private areas of Li, Haz, and myself. In great and graphic detail. You also kept flashing people while you were- um- I guess we can say excited. That’s a good word for it. Apparently you tried to make it say hello to Eleanor until Liam tucked the blanket under you so tight you couldn’t move.

“You also asked both Haz and I to molest you, which we’ll talk about later. You punched Leeyum at one point because he stole some of the salad we made for you, even though you didn’t like it. Don’t worry, it was his arm, not his face. You keep trying to pick up the babies, but you can’t even hold a glass of milk properly so he distracts you with footy matches. Overall, you’ve kind of been a terror.”

“Well that was to be expected. At least I didn’t try to dance. I usually try to dance.” Niall sighs.

“Oh you did.” Zayn chuckles. “Except Leeyum wouldn’t let you get up, so you just kind of flailed your upper body around like a windsock.”

“Damn it.” Nial groans. “Anything else?”

“A few. Nothing too terrible though. You haven’t, like, shit your pants or anything that bad.” Zayn says with a soft smile. “You did say I would make a pretty girl at one point. You picked a name out for me and everything. Veronica. Not bad in my opinion, but you also said you wouldn’t want to
“Have sex with me anymore if I was a woman.”

“It’s true.” Niall laughs. “I’d still love you of course, but I can’t poke the clam.”

“That’s fine. I’m pretty satisfied with my penis.” Zayn tells him with a remarkably straight face.

“You should be. It’s bloody gorgeous.” Niall giggles. “In fact-”

“That is still not going to happen until I know you’re not impaired anymore.” Zayn sighs.

“Fine.” Niall says, holding back the whine he knows is building in his throat. “Can you help me up into a sitting position?”

Zayn nods and sits up first, settling behind Niall as he slowly navigates the Irish man into a sitting position. His arms wrap around Niall’s waist and he presses his face between Niall’s shoulder blades. “I love you.” he says quietly.

“I love you too.” Niall says, hiding his smile. He doesn’t think he’ll ever get tired of hearing Zayn say those three words. They tingle across his skin and stretch his lips no matter how many times Zayn says them. “I really do.”

“I love you.” Zayn says again, pressing a kiss to the back of his neck.

“What’s wrong Zee?” Niall asks, lacing his fingers in between Zayn’s.

“I don’t know really. I’m just feeling clingy right now.” Zayn sighs. “Is it a problem if I say ‘I love you’ more than once?”

“Of course not.” Niall giggles. “Say it a million times and I’ll still always say it back. You just normally don’t say something if you can express it any other way. You hold my hand and kiss my cheek if you want to tell me you love me. You trace my tattoos when you’re bored with what we’re watching. You nuzzle into my neck when you’re sleepy. You like to show me rather than tell me when you feel something.”

“Do you prefer it that way?” Zayn asks.

“Zee, I like it however you want to do it. I could never not love hearing you say it, but I also know when you’re saying it without saying anything. I shouldn’t have asked you about it though, because now you’re getting all self conscious.” Niall sighs.

“That’s not your fault. Not really anyways.” Zayn mumbles, tightening his grip around Niall’s waist.

“What do you mean by that?” Niall asks curiously.

“It’s nothing. Don’t worry about it Nialler.” Zayn says quietly, his tone begging Niall to leave it alone.

“Alright. Then I really need to get up and take a wee.” Niall admits.

“Oh shite.” Zayn grumbles. He grabs something off the floor and hands it to Niall. It’s a large pink basin and Niall looks at it curiously until his eyebrows spring into his hairline with the realization.

“Do you need any help getting off your shorts?”

“I am not using a bedpan Zayn!” Niall screeches.

“Nialler-” Zayn starts.

“Well, I can’t carry you to the bathroom like the other two, because I may drop you. You weren’t even supposed to wake up.” Zayn argues. “So you can either hold it, or you can use the bedpan.”

“Can’t you go get one of them?” Niall begs.

“You want me to walk in there in the middle of what they’re doing and ask them to stop so you don’t have to use a bedpan?” Zayn asks flatly.

“If you have ever really loved me, then you won’t ask me to use this thing.” Niall says, resorting to guilt tactics to preserve his dignity.

“At this moment, my love for you is bittersweet.” Zayn sighs. “I’ll be right back, but you are so making this up to me when you’re better.”

“Thank you.” Niall says with a small smile.

Zayn rolls his eyes and crawls out from behind Niall, scurrying out of the room with one last look thrown over his shoulder, begging Niall for a reprieve. Niall is not merciful enough to do that. The bedpan is absolutely not an option. A few minutes and, some muffled yelling, later Harry walks into the room completely starkers with an annoyed look on his face. “Your ride is here your majesty.” he groans.

“I’m not out of line here!” Niall whines. “Would you ask Zayn to take off your shorts so you could piss in a container in front of him, and then ask him to clean it?”

“No, I guess I wouldn’t.” Harry grumbles. “You could have waited until I finished though. Li fell off the bed and hurt his arse when Zayn walked in. Now he’s up there nursing his pride and his bum, trying to hide his junk from Zee.”

“I will never get that.” Niall groans. “And I suppose you’re still in the buff because you plan on going back up to finish?”

“You can damn well bet I do.” Harry laughs, walking over and scooping Niall up with far less effort than the Irish man feels should be necessary. He carries Niall to the loo and drops him onto his arse unceremoniously. “Let me know when you’re finished, yeah?”

“I can’t get my shorts off by myself.” Niall admits quietly. “I can’t get the leverage to get them off my left side.”

“Shit, of course. Sorry.” Harry mumbles, kneeling down to help Niall wiggle the fabric down to his ankles.

“It’s fine. Thanks Haz.” Niall sighs in relief, holding his bladder until Harry finally ducks out the door.

He feels like he’s about to explode by the time he can actually wee, groaning contentedly as he finishes up. The entire process takes an embarrassingly long time and Niall makes a note to tell Liam not to give him water every time he asks for it, or else they’ll have to repeat this way too many times. He doesn’t relish the thought of dealing with this embarrassment over and over again. He waits a moment, trying to pull the shorts back up until he decides he’s better off without them, and then calls “Haz!”

“You all good? Don’t need to do anything else?” Harry asks cautiously, peaking his head in.
“I’m good.” Niall laughs at the worried look on Harry’s face. Harry nods and comes to pick him up again, winking cheekily when he notices Niall has no intention of putting back on his shorts. He carries Niall back out to the couch and delivers him right to Zayn, who is sitting there and twiddling his thumbs. Literally twiddling his thumbs. “Hey Zee! I’m back!”

“Did you dose him while I was upstairs?” Harry asks.

“No. He’s just being Nialler.” Zayn laughs.

“How come you never get that excited to see me?” Harry whines, jutting out his bottom lip.

“I used to, remember? Now whenever I see you we spend five seconds together and then you go bang Liam.” Niall answers. “There’s no time to be excited.”

“We aren’t that bad.” Harry groans, rolling his eyes.

“You kind of are.” Zayn giggles. “You two have generally sequestered yourselves off for most of the day the last few weeks.”

“It is not most of the day.” Harry argues.

“You two spent five hours locked away yesterday. So no, it’s not technically most of the day, but it is way too much considering we’re dating someone now.” Niall says flatly, irritation rising in his gut.

“Well you’re the one who didn’t want me around today, so how about we go with that plan if you’re going to be a bitch about it?” Harry spits, storming out of the room before either Niall or Zayn can say anything.

“Why did you have to antagonize him?” Zayn asks with a sigh.

“Because I’ve barely seen them over the last couple weeks it feels like, and I’m tired of that.” Niall explains. “We’ve basically become two different relationships in one house because neither of them wants to spend any time with either of us. That’s not what this is supposed to be.”

“Have you ever thought that they might be trying to ease us into things?” Zayn asks. “How about the possibility that Haz might be letting me adjust to dating all three of you at once by letting us spend time together until I’m more comfortable? Or That Leeyum is terrified of making things worse for you, because the one thing he can’t protect you from is his face? Or maybe, just maybe, that Haz is really upset that you didn’t want him around today, because he feels left behind in this relationship, so he needs Leeyum to show him that somebody still loves him?”

“Are you mad at me too?” Niall asks softly.

“Of course not Nialler.” Zayn tells him with a gentle touch to his cheek. “But you’re not the only person in this relationship. Haz and Li need intimacy as much as you did. They didn’t mean to hurt you by going upstairs. You were supposed to stay asleep and never even know Leeyum left for a little while. As far as the last couple weeks, you have to remember we’ve only been dating for less than forty-eight hours. They were giving us space so I could help you with your recovery.”

“You are infuriatingly rational.” Niall grumbles.

“And you’re allowed to be upset, but you need to vent to me instead of getting mad at them.” Zayn says with a sweet smile. “And you should apologize to Haz next time they come down here.”

“I know.” Niall admits reluctantly. “You’re annoyingly good at this whole relationship thing.”
“I spent five years fighting or ignoring problems in a bad relationship.” Zayn smiles. “I want to spend the rest of my life with you three, and I want it to be happy. I’m more than willing to referee between you and Haz if it helps achieve that end.”

“I’ll try not to keep putting you in this position so much.” Niall sighs, laying his head down on Zayn’s shoulder. “I’m sorry.”

“You don’t need to be sorry Nialler.” Zayn reassures him. “Not with me anyways.”

“If I had known things would go this way I would have kept my shorts on.” Niall groans. “This is not a pantsless conversation.”

“To be honest, it’s been really hard to focus on anything with you like this.” Zayn chuckles.

“Does that mean that-” Niall starts.

“Still no Nialler. Not yet.” Zayn answers before Niall can even ask the question. “I don’t feel comfortable with it Nialler.”

“Because you think it would be taking advantage of me?” Niall asks, remembering a foggy snippet of something from earlier.

“Yeah.” Zayn says with a nod.

“Alright.” Niall agrees. “I’ll stop asking now. I promise.”

“Thank you.” Zayn breathes out as a sigh of relief. “You have no idea how hard it is resisting you when you ask.”

“Sorry about that too.” Niall says quietly. “Me and anesthesia are really not a good mix. My painkillers should just be a stronger version of paracetamol, so I won’t be so annoying.”

“You haven’t been annoying per se.” Zayn smiles. “Just really weird. Horny and weird. I like it though. You seemed like you were having fun.”

“I could not tell you honestly.” Niall admits. “I still don’t remember almost anything except you getting upset when I propositioned you.”

“You know I wasn’t upset with you right?” Zayn asks. “I was upset with myself for even considering it when you were in that state, let alone literally on top of Leeyum. I was upset that I could be that awful of a person.”

“Zee, you didn’t do it though.” Niall tells him quietly.

“I considered it though. I was so tempted to let myself use you while you were impaired.” Zayn mumbles. His eyes aren’t meeting Niall’s and that’s worrisome in more ways than one. Niall refuses to let Zayn spiral into some infinite loop of self hatred over something he didn’t even do. He’s already seen how Zayn reacts when he feels deeply guilty. He had fallen apart by the time Niall had seen him in Bradford. “That makes me no better than the man who hurt you.”

“Zayn Javadd Malik, you stop that right now!” Niall scolds the darker man. “You are nothing like him. You would never hurt me, and we both know that. I can understand the train of thought, but you’re smart enough to know that there’s a difference. You controlled yourself, even when I was literally begging you to do it. You looked out for me, just like you always have. You don’t share one iota of your personality with him.”
“I should go get you your pills.” Zayn whispers.

“Don’t go anywhere. Please.” Niall urges softly. “I’ll live without the meds. I’d rather have you right here next to me than have a couple of really strong aspirin. Cover me up if you need to, but please don’t go anywhere, unless you really just don’t want to be around me. I’d like you to stay with me for the rest of the day.”

“Leeyum will be disappointed. He was so happy you asked for him.” Zayn sighs. “He misses you so much.”

“I want you both in here.” Niall tells him. “Haz too if he’ll forgive me. I wouldn’t mind being babied anymore if it means I get to be with the three of you.”

After three days Niall is starting to drive Liam crazy. He’s constantly trying to do everything himself, ignoring the fact that three people are trying to help him. Harry had found Niall’s old crutches in the garage, and Liam has never wanted to strangle someone so badly for doing something nice. Ever since he got them he’s been pushing himself way too hard, hobbling around the house like he isn’t recovering from surgery.

They take shifts watching him, trying to make sure he doesn’t go overboard. Liam’s shift today is going particularly slowly. Niall is insisting on trying his luck and full-on-walking, swinging his crutches at Liam whenever the muscular man tries to stop him. “Get away and stop trying to ruin my progress!” he shouts, narrowly missing Liam’s arm with his makeshift weapon.

“I’m trying to make sure you don’t fall you arse!” Liam growls, catching the faux-club and wrenching it from Niall’s grasp. It knocks him off balance, but Liam catches him easily and keeps him standing. “Now stop being an idiot, and follow the doctor’s instructions.”

“I’ll start walking when I feel like walking, you recteam!” Niall grumbles.

“I am trying to keep you safe, so there’s no reason to call me a rectum.” Liam hisses.

“Well right now, you seem remarkably similar to one from my point of view.” Niall pouts. “I just want to be ambulatory.”

“Then wait until the swelling goes down.” Liam says, taking charge of the situation by hoisting Niall over his shoulder like a potato sack. “You could do more damage than good if you keep this up.”

“I know my limits! Stop being mean to me!” Niall squeals.

“Leeyum stop!” Zayn calls from the doorway. He stalks over to Liam, his face unreadable. Niall’s bum goes still next to Liam’s face, the product of him believing he’s about to be rescued. “What do you think you’re doing?”

“Being a butt-face!” Niall says loudly.

“I was-” Liam starts.

“Hold him still.” Zayn says, his face splitting into a wide grin.

His hands slip under the waistband of Niall’s shorts, pulling them down to expose his bum. Liam only realizes what’s going on a split second before Niall does. The Irish lad starts wriggling and screaming over Liam’s shoulder until he clamps down on Niall’s legs to keep him steady. Zayn’s
hands come down swiftly, bouncing off Niall’s arse and coming back down like a bongo drum. “You’re horrible!” Niall screams, doing his best to kick out at Zayn.

The darker man dances around, avoiding the lashing feet and diving back in to strike again. Liam giggles, enjoying the playful mischievous side of the darker man. Zayn stops after Niall gives up, letting his body go limp and cursing quietly in Gaelic. He sidles up close and plants a firm kiss on each of the bright red cheeks. “I’m sorry Nialler. I couldn’t resist.” Zayn says through a smile.

“Fuck off.” Niall grumbles.

“Aww, don’t be that way.” Zayn pouts, dropping to his back and sliding between Liam’s legs so he can look up at Niall.

“Liam, I will pay you to drop me onto Zee.” Niall offers.

“No can do.” Liam giggles. “I have to find some rope and tie you to a chair so you stay down.”

“I will murder you!” Niall growls, resuming his beating of Liam’s back. “I am not getting tied down unless someone is fucking me, and I don’t see that happening, because I am going to murder you!”

“Li, I think that Nialler may be slightly displeased with this situation.” Zayn laughs.

“Haz!” Niall screams loudly, causing Liam to wince at the pitch. “Harry! Help me!”

Liam’s eyes go wide and he turns around, stepping over Zayn so he doesn’t kick him in the face. Harry’s voice comes from the door, cold and tired. “Put him down.”

Liam sighs and slowly lowers Niall to the ground, handing him back his crutch. Niall hitches up his shorts and hobbles over to Harry, glaring at Liam and Zayn over his shoulder. “What the hell do you two think you’re doing?” Harry asks angrily, wrapping an arm over Niall’s shoulder.

“Trying to stop him from pushing his knee too hard.” Liam explains. “He was-”

“I know what he was doing. Louis said after three days he could get back up and start working on his knee. It’s was his business for years, and he knows Nialler’s limits, so I trust his opinion on this, and so should you” Harry says firmly. “His scar isn’t inflamed anymore either and the stitches came out.”

“But-” Liam starts.

“No buts!” Niall hisses. “If the overbearing mother-hen says I should be allowed to walk, then why can’t you just let me?”

“I’m defending you here Niall. Maybe try not to insult me while I do it?” Harry asks quietly.

“You know what I meant.” Niall says with a roll of his eyes. “You’re normally the one who jumps on me if I try to do anything like this. For some reason Li has decided to completely ignore the fact that I’ve already done this four times. I know what I can take. And Zayn was just being mean.”

“Why are you two even still here?” Harry asks suddenly. “Aren’t you supposed to be picking up El any minute?”

“Change in plans. She’s coming with Louis and the triplets, and we’re going to leave from here.” Zayn tells him.

“Oh good God.” Harry groans. “Was anyone planning on telling me that we’re having the boys
over?”

“I was.” Liam says sheepishly. “Then I spent all morning trying to chase down Nialler and keep him from hurting himself.”

“I’m fine.” Niall says flatly.

“I’ve had to stop you from falling on three separate occasions.” Liam points out.

“One of those was because you basically knocked me off my feet.” Niall hisses.

“You were assaulting me with a crutch.” Liam argues.

“You deserved it.” Niall says, narrowing his eyes into slits. “Stop acting like my mother, and start acting like the man who supported me the first time I went through this.”

“I’m allowed to be worried about you.” Liam pouts.

“And I love that you’re worried about me. What I don’t love is that you’re treating me like an invalid.” Niall sighs. “And you Zee. You’re supposed to be the one that isn’t mean to me.”

“It was right there.” Zayn shrugs. “You wouldn’t have been able to resist either.”

“I don’t have your, frankly staggering, level of self control.” Niall grumbles. “You guys need to get ready to go, because now I need to go lay on my stomach. My arse is sore and not in a good way.”

“Go lay down. I’ll get you when the boys get here.” Harry smiles, pecking Niall on the cheek and helping him out the door. He waits patiently while Niall ambles away and then turns on the other two with a look that Liam fears might melt their faces off. “You two need to get your shite together. He needs our support, not us hovering over him.”

“That’s hilarious coming from you.” Liam scoffs. “You cluck and coo after him, just like the mother-hen he accused you of being. You just wanted to play good cop.”

“No, what I wanted is for him to feel like one person in this house is on his side. That’s supposed to be you.” Harry says with a pointed glare at Zayn. “Now I have to fight my every instinct, and stop being the caretaker I’m naturally inclined to be. I’d have much preferred to be the one he was all pissy with, because then I’d get to indulge my ‘overbearing mother-hen’ side. So thanks a lot for that.”

“So you agree with me?” Liam asks.

“Of bloody course I agree with you, but I also believe what I said. Louis believes he can be up and around today, so if he wants to do it, we can’t stop him.” Harry sighs. “I’d prefer if he was down for another week or so, but that’s not our decision to make. Besides, there are clear benefits to him getting back on his feet faster.”

He looks at Zayn again, sending a cheeky wink his way, and then turns around and leaves. “Has he talked to you about-” Liam starts.

“Yeah.” Zayn says with a deep blush. “Are you okay with that?”

“I am very okay with it.” Liam grins. “As long as you are.”

“It seems like a good way to get things started.” Zayn laughs. “It’s not exactly what I pictured, but it’s a good first step. It’ll help ease him into things.”
“Him and you.” Liam agrees. “Are you going to get off the floor anytime soon?”

“I guess I should.” Zayn sighs.

Liam sticks out his hand, helping Zayn up to his feet and then pulls him in for a kiss. It’s fleeting, but it leaves him grinning afterwards. “How does tonight sound?” he asks.

“So good.” Zayn groans. “The last three days have been brutal.”

“I’ll give you a hand with that later.” Liam says cheekily.

“You beat him with a crutch?” Louis cackles.

“Of course I did. He was being a knob.” Niall grumbles. “And then feckin Batman picked me up over his shoulder like a sack of flour.”

“How does that end up with your arse being all red and angry?” Louis giggles.

“Because Zayn saw an opportunity and took it.” Niall sighs. “He won’t have sex with me because he thinks my pain medication may slightly impair my judgment, but he’ll take advantage of me being left exposed and spank me.”

“I always get the best stories in this house.” Louis grins.

“Shut up and apply the cream.” Niall groans.

“Why can’t Harold do this?” Louis asks.

“Because you didn’t want to watch five kids all at once so Haz could play with my arse.” Niall laughs. “And because I’m pretty sure he was lying when he said he supported me walking around.”

“Why would he do that?” Louis questions, dropping another dollop of overly-cool lotion onto his bum.

“Because he’s trying to play devil’s advocate for me.” Niall shrugs. “Li has been overbearing, and I’m mad at Zee for the moment. He’s the only one left, so he feels obligated to be on my side. It’s probably driving him crazy because he’s such a mum.”

“That is the truth.” Louis laughs, pulling Niall’s underwear back up. “You realize you have Malik’s hand basically imprinted on your arse?”

“Which I so wouldn’t mind if it had happened any other way.” Niall admits. “I want it even. I’m so ready to just get laid. I just need some dick Tommo. I want to shag my boyfriends.”

“Then do it. If you honestly think you’re ready, then take the first step.” Louis offers. “Make sure they understand that you’re ready and then just take control. You’re totally the top dog in this house.”

“No I’m not.” Niall scoffs. “You don’t hoist the top dog over your shoulder or try to make him piss in a bedpan. And there isn’t a top dog in a good relationship. We’re equals.”

“You’re so preciously naive Niall.” Louis giggles. “There’s always a top dog. You may be a submissive little bottom bitch, but you’re still the magnet that drew these three together. You have the biggest personality I’ve ever seen. You’re the top dog.”
“You know El is the top dog in your relationship, right?” Niall asks with a shit eating grin.

“I’m vividly aware of that fact.” Louis laughs. “I also have no problems with that, because I’m a mature adult.”

“In what world could you possibly believe that?” Niall giggles. Louis prefers to answer with a firm smack brought down across Niall’s bum, laid directly over Zayn’s hand-print. “Oi! You little bitch!”

“Don’t be rude Nialler. You already tried to shag my wife yesterday. She didn’t stop blushing the whole way home.” Louis hisses.

“Don’t blame me for the aftereffects of surgical anesthesia.” Niall pouts. “I don’t even remember showing her my prick.”

“Do you remember having an argument with it, because you thought it was rude that it wouldn’t say hello to her?” Louis asks. “You actually yelled at your dick while you were waving it at my family.”

“I will never get surgery again.” Niall groans. “Never.”

“Unfortunately, you probably will actually. You’ll still need the full femur replacement one day.” Louis sighs. “This is a fix for a few years, maybe a decade if you’re good to it, but it isn’t all you need.”

“Maybe in a decade they’ll have cool robot legs or something.” Niall giggles. “That would be so cool.”

“You’d have to get your leg cut off for that.” Louis scoffs. “Let’s try and keep you with the leg you were born with.”

“Yeah, robot legs probably wouldn’t be very sexy.” Niall sighs.

“Probably not.” Louis agrees. “Alright, let’s go deal with the kiddos. Haz is probably drowning in babies right now.”

“That’s his dream. I’m pretty sure he already wants more babies.” Niall admits.

“Is that something you want?” Louis asks, helping Niall to his feet and handing him his crutches.

“Okay, I’m not sure how to say this without sounding awful, so I need you to understand that I’m not. I didn’t want the kids I have. I love Sam and Gems with all my heart, but I wasn’t ready for them, and I wasn’t sure I even wanted any children in the first place. I couldn’t be happier with my life now, but no, I really don’t want any more. Sam and Gems are all I need.” Niall explains.

“That doesn’t make you sound awful.” Louis smiles. “It’s not a bad thing not to want more kids, or any kids at all.”

“It isn’t?” Niall asks cautiously.

“Of course not.” Louis says with a smile. “You were thrust into a situation you were in no way prepared for. We all know you love your kids, but we also all know you didn’t adjust well at first. You don’t have to feel bad if you don’t want more children. Especially since you may end up changing your mind some day. Right now I know I don’t want any more, but ten years from now I’ll probably miss the squishy little baby thing and want more. It may be the same way for you one day.”

“Maybe.” Niall shrugs. “I don’t think so though. And as for you, that’s a terrible idea. We can’t keep
buying you a new house every time you have more kids. We’d have to combine two houses if you had another multiple birth, because I don’t think there are too many six-plus bedroom houses in Mullingar. Besides ours, that is.”

“The chances that all my current children survive to ten is very low.” Louis grins. “They’re right terrors, and I am not well known for my ability to control my temper.”

“That’s true.” Niall laughs. “Not to mention, they’ll probably have your complete lack of a self preservation instinct.”

“I have a self preservation instinct Niall.” Louis says, faking an offended look. “I just choose not to listen to it.”

“You do realize-” Niall starts.

“How foolish that is? Of course.” Louis grins. “But I have three kids and an Alpha-wife. Ignoring my self preservation instinct may be my only way out of this mess.”

“If that’s what you want, then go tell Haz that you think Sam should play rugby.” Niall snickers. Their personalized rugby shirts came yesterday and Niall is pretty sure everyone but him was fed up around the fiftieth picture. It was difficult to get the babies to sit still long enough, or to stand up and show the backs of the shirts to reveal the Styles, Horan, Malik, and three ‘Payne’s. Niall really wants that one blown up and framed for over the sectional. “Say it a lot and very loudly.”

“He’ll know that’s you talking.” Louis points out. “Is he making lunch today?”

“No. I am.” Niall tells him, slowly walking out of the room. Keeping his crutches tucked under his arm in case it ends up being too much. “He’ll be helping because he wants me to teach him to make gnocchi from scratch, but I’ll be doing the actual cooking.”

“You have got to tell me everything you did while you were away.” Louis laughs. “Because that was definitely not in your skill range the last time I saw you cook.”

“Look, your daddy is back from fondling another man’s bum!” Harry squeals, pointing Edmund in their direction when they enter the kitchen. “He does that a lot.”

“I hear you’re one to talk lately.” Louis says innocently. “It’s basically half of what you do now, innit?”

“God dammit Tommo!” Niall groans, lashing out a crutch and hitting Louis in the shin. “What part of ‘cone of silence’ do you not understand?”

“Oh shite, that’s right. Sorry Nialler.” Louis says sheepishly, rubbing at his leg.

“Whatever. From what I hear from El, you haven’t been able to get it up for the last few days.” Harry laughs with a wicked grin.

“She literally spent all of yesterday picking out what dress to wear for her official first day on the job.” Louis whines. “And the day before that she was out getting massages and facials and shite. I’ve been too exhausted raising the boys to even think of getting an erection.”

“There’s a solution to that you know.” Niall points out. “Right down the hill in fact.”

“Still don’t see why we’d have to stay in the guest house.” Louis grumbles. “We all lived here just fine before.”
“You’ve added three babies since then. And honestly, I never need to walk in on you and El shagging again.” Niall giggles. “Nor do you need to walk in on one of us sucking one of the other’s dicks. We had no sex life last time you lived here, but now we do. Some of us more than others.”

“And I am not shy about making it loud.” Harry grins.

“That is in no way a joke.” Niall agrees. “Zayn always looks like he’s two minutes away from either his brain or his prick exploding. Personally I’m just worried about the years of therapy our kids will go through once they understand what their daddy means when he screams ‘fuck me like you mean it!’ so loud that you can hear it downstairs. Liam may have to make gagging you a permanent thing.”

“Over my dead body.” Harry growls. “He ruined a perfectly good scarf doing that.”

“Then get some self control.” Niall grins.

“Or we could just get Zee some earplugs and let me get as loud as I want.” Harry argues.

“I’m more concerned about the kids actually.” Niall laughs.

“I’ll keep it down once they start understanding words.” Harry sighs. “Until then I’m going to have my fun, and loudly at that.”

“The conversations in this house are the best.” Louis giggles. “I have seriously considering bugging the place like MI-5 just so I can listen in on the crazy shite you guys say.”

“You never said what you think of moving in.” Niall says, turning on Louis in an instant.

“We’ll do it, alright?” Louis asks. “I’m going to miss my house, but things will be much easier if we move in up here for a little while. I need adult human interaction, and El needs to be immediately available if anything happens.”

“I’ll talk to El later about the logistics of it. For now though, the potatoes are going to be ready any minute which means that it’s time Niall finally teaches me his secret gnocchi recipe.” Harry says with an excited grin.

“It’s not my secret recipe. It’s Angelo’s. And I don’t know why I’m teaching you, because you’ll just end up making it better than I do.” Niall grumbles.

“That’s highly unlikely.” Harry tells him.

“Modesty doesn’t suit you Haz.” Niall laughs.

“I can be modest.” Harry pouts.

“Yeah, but you shouldn’t be. Cocky is a much better fit on you. Humility is a waste. That’s what Angelo told me told me when he taught me to make this. Embrace yourself in all your glory.” Niall says with a smile, remembering Angelo’s cheeky remark afterwards.

“I’d never stop talking if I had no humility.” Harry giggles. “I’m kind of amazing. I have a lot to brag about. I’m rich, talented, beautiful, and fucking fantastic in bed. Also you may not know this, but I’m kind of famous.”

“Amazing. Your head is that big, and stuck up your own arse, and yet your stomach is still only slightly pudgy.” Louis laughs.

“You bitch!” Harry screeches, throwing a rag at Louis that flutters impotently to the ground halfway
to its intended target. “My stomach is not pudgy!”

“It’s true.” Niall agrees. “He’s in fantastic shape. He just has really wide childbearing hips. His abs are still ridiculous.”

“Thank you Babes.” Harry grins, planting a kiss on the corner of Niall’s mouth before turning to glower at Louis. “I do a lot of physical activity. That’s why I don’t have bags under my eyes and breakouts like you do right now.”

“I have three newborns and only one spouse-type-person.” Louis says with a sigh. “Sleep is hard to come by in my house.”

“And yet El has perfect skin and doesn’t insult me.” Harry scoffs.

“Because she has something to look forward to. She has this whole new job coming up for her, and I’m on indefinite leave because I want my kids to know their parents.” Louis explains sadly. “My life is the same thing every day for the next four years minimum.”

“Why don’t you work part time while we watch the kids?” Harry offers over his shoulder while he walks deeper into the kitchen.

“Because I’ve been a shit lately and asking you to do that is too much.” Louis groans. “Even if it were the four of you, five kids is too much.”

“We can handle five kids for a few hours a week.” Niall laughs. “Especially if it helps keep your bitch-levels down in a manageable range. Haz is probably planning everything out in his head.”

Harry nods and walks over to pull the potatoes out of the oven. Louis pulls Niall in and quietly asks “I thought you didn’t want more kids? Literally five minutes ago you said two was enough. Why would you do this for me?”

“Because you’re my best mate, and they’d still be your kids. Twelve hours a week isn’t going to change that, but it would help you.” Niall says with a shrug. “I want to help you guys. You’re my family. Harry has his mother and step-father, Zayn has a big family, and Li has the twins and Ruth. I mean, we all have the twins, but they’re related to him specifically. I have nobody except for you five, so get on board, because this is what family does for one another.”

“When did you become so assertive?” Louis laughs.

“It’s new and apparently an aphrodisiac for my weird boyfriends.” Niall giggles.

“It’s bloody brilliant.” Harry grins, sneaking up behind Niall and nibbling at his earlobe.

“See what I mean? I wasn’t even talking to him and he’s dripping. Zee is just as bad as this one.” Niall says with a cocky smile. “Are you good to watch the babies while we cook? Because the potatoes need to be started as soon as they cool a little bit or else they harden back up and we have to start all over.”

“I’ll ask for help if I need it, but of course the twins are well behaved. They got their father’s stoicism. Mine are the ones that’ll start freaking out sooner or later.” Louis shrugs. “You just go make lunch and try to keep Harold from sucking your dick while you do it..”

“Thank you.” Harry giggles, picking Niall up bridal-style and whisking him over to the counter.

“Eager are you?” Niall asks.
“I’ve been waiting to learn this recipe for weeks. It’s driving me insane not knowing how you make these little potato pillows.” Harry groans.

“Well then feel the potatoes, but be careful not to burn yourself. Once they’re cool enough to hold we can get started.” Niall orders, lifting himself up onto the counter. “And get everything I tell you to.”

“They’re so big.” Liam giggles to Zayn.

“Horses are big, yes.” Zayn says with a fond smile.

“No, you don’t understand. I’ve worked with sheep and small cows my entire life, so these are really big.” Liam grins, admiring the chestnut-brown Draught standing in front of him. She’s a beautiful horse, probably Zayn’s favorite of the lot they’re being shown at this farm. El is talking with the seller, taking notes and measurements a few yards from them. “I hope they’re all good to go, because we still have three other places to visit today.”

“I’m aware of our itinerary.” Zayn laughs. “I set these all up, remember?”

“Oh yeah.” Liam says with a dopey grin. “Thanks for that.”

“You needed to focus on the barn. You realize you have interviews starting on Monday, right?” Zayn asks.

“Yeah, I do.” Liam nods. “I hate the idea of doing that though. Who am I to interview people? I was an odd-jobs man a year ago. I worked as a barback-slash-plumber-slash-sheep-farmer.”

“El, Niall, Haz, and I will all be there with you on alternating cycles. You’re the head of this farm now, though. You’ve got this.” Zayn reassures him, linking their fingers together loosely. “We all have faith in you.”

“Thanks.” Liam murmurs, gripping tighter onto Zayn’s fingers. “Thank you for calming me down.”

“That was hardly a freak out Leeyum.” Zayn smiles.

“I mean this whole time.” Liam says quietly. “You’ve helped me through all of this, keeping my head clear. You’re the one that got us all talking about the farm in the first place. You’ve been helping me every step of the way since you got here. I don’t know what I’d be doing without you beside me.”

“You don’t have to worry about that.” Zayn tells him. “Because I plan on sticking around.”

“Good.” Liam grins.

“They’re in fantastic condition.” Eleanor squeals, bouncing over to them. “I’ll need to do ultrasounds on the two pregnant mares, but overall I’d say they’re perfect.”

“So you’re recommending all four of them?” Zayn asks.

“We only have room for twelve right now.” Liam sighs. “This would take up half our stable by the end of summer.”

“Liam, this is an extraordinary offer.” Eleanor says firmly. “They’re healthy, comfortable with us, and you’re still planning an extension next year, aren’t you?”
“Yes, but-” Liam starts.

“I’m not saying buy them right this second, but he wants an answer by the end of the day. I’m just giving my official thumbs up on these three mares and the stallion. I figured you’d want to see all the others offered before you made a decision.” Eleanor continues, cutting Liam off at the pass. “I’ll be another twenty minutes on the ultrasounds, and then we can go up north to the next place.”

She walks off before either of them can say anything. Zayn grins, taking a look at the shocked expression on Liam’s face. “I see why Tomlinson married her.” Zayn chuckles. “She’s going to be good for the farm.”

“Is it weird that she scares me?” Liam asks.

“Not in the slightest.” Zayn tells him. “She scares me too. Let’s try not to piss her off too much.”

“You have it easy.” Liam scoffs. “I’m the one that’ll have to be around her all day, every day. You can hide away in the office, but I’m out on the factory floor, so to speak. She’s basically my second in command for the day-to-day operations.”

“The trials of leadership.” Zayn snickers. “I’m sure she’ll be less intense over time. Probably.”

“Here’s hoping.” Liam sighs.

“Maybe we should let Haz deal with her.” Zayn offers. “She likes him the best.”

“That would be a wonderful plan, if he wasn’t just terrible at farming. He’s so not cut out for this side of things. I think we should probably leave him to be the main parent.” Liam says. “He’s well suited for that role.”

“So what about Nialler?” Zayn asks.

“To be completely honest, I have no idea what Niall wants.” Liam admits. “He hasn’t said anything about helping me run things. He never really wanted to be a farmer, and he has no real love for horses. I think he’s still trying to figure out what he wants to do with his life.”

“He should work with the Church.” Zayn says offhandedly. “Helping them with charities and things.”

“That’s- That’s actually really brilliant.” Liam laughs excitedly.

“Maybe. He’d have to decide if that’s a good fit for himself though.” Zayn shrugs. “Personally, I kind of want him to be a trophy husband. I don’t like the idea of him not being around the house all the time. I’m becoming extraordinarily codependent.”

“It’s a side-effect of being in this kind of relationship.” Liam explains. “It wouldn’t be such a problem, but Haz draws attention. In a few years, when the babies are grown up a bit and Harry has fallen out of the public mind maybe we can push the boundaries outside of the farm, but for now we’re mostly shut off up there. I love our life, but the next few years can’t go by fast enough sometimes.”

“You know we can go out sometimes if you need to decompress.” Zayn offers. “Haz does draw attention, but that doesn’t mean we can’t just go out occasionally.”

“I know, but we still have so many things to work out at home before we can do that sort of thing.” Liam sighs.
“Like me?” Zayn asks quietly.

“Like all of us.” Liam says firmly. “I have the farm to get up and running. Niall still needs to finish his recovery. Haz needs to calm his libido down so he doesn’t need to be serviced every ten minutes. You’re a portion of it, yes, but not all of it.”

“I’m not sure if that makes me feel better, or worse.” Zayn admits.

“You’re the main focus though, if that helps. You’re definitely the thing that has most of our focus.” Liam smiles. “Lord knows you pull plenty of mine.”

“Flirt.” Zayn scoffs. “You’re as bad as the other two sometimes.”

“You like the attention.” Liam smirks.

“I’ll like it more when I’m finally allowed to get off with something other than my hand again. I really wish you two had given us more than twelve hours to get our jollies.” Zayn laughs.


“You are so fucking hot right now.” Harry groans, closing the pantry door behind him when he tugs Niall inside.

“My hands are covered in potato.” Niall says, his face completely confused.

“You know what it does to me when you take charge like this.” Harry mumbles.

“We are not going to shag right now.” Niall says, rolling his eyes.

“Of course not.” Harry scoffs. “I just want to snog a little.”

“You’re insatiable.” Niall laughs.

“When is the last time we kissed?” Harry asks. “Not a peck, but a real kiss? When is the last time we connected in any way that didn’t have us arguing by the end of it?”

“I don’t-” Niall starts.

“I miss you Nialler. We spend every day together, but we’re not us anymore. We’ve been focused on different things. You and Zee, me and Liam. I need you and me to be you and me though. You’ve never stopped being my favorite person, even if we’ve fallen apart a bit.” Harry admits. “I love you so much. I love you, and I miss you.”

“You talk too much.” Niall laughs, grabbing Harry by the back of the neck and pulling him in. Their lips crash together, thrumming with an energy that’s been lacking from Harry’s life for far too long. He melts into it, relaxing and releasing stress that he didn’t even know he’d been holding onto. It’s like his world makes sense again. Niall pulls back just a hair’s breath and says “Hey stranger.”

“Hey.” Harry breathes.

“Is that enough for now, or do you need more?” Niall asks. “Because the dough is going to get starchy, but we can wait another minute or so.”

“More please.” Harry begs, pushing forward through the gap between them.
Niall giggles into the kiss for a moment and then takes back control. His fingers squeeze just a bit at the back of Harry’s neck, dragging him down deeper into things. His tongue works against Harry’s, easily taking the dominant role. Harry only stops once he feels himself swelling in his shorts. Niall laughs and says “Just for the record, the last time we really kissed was less than a week ago, right out on that counter.”

“That was different.” Harry shrugs.

“How?” Niall asks, cocking an eyebrow.

“I kissed you then because you needed it, not because we wanted it.” Harry explains. “You needed something to pull you out of your head. It was a marvelous snog-session, but it wasn’t for both of us.”

“Are you saying I’m selfish?” Niall asks, destroying the mood in an instant.

“Nialler, no.” Harry sighs. “That didn’t come out right. What I mean is that it wasn’t about us reconnecting. It was just about forgetting for a moment how hard things have been for us. I’m just trying to be with you right now. I’m trying to find my way back to the us we used to be. I need to know that we can do that.”

“Of course we can do that.” Niall groans. “I’m not any less in love with you than I was before everything happened. The reason we’re having so much trouble getting back to what we were is because I’m not who I was anymore. The target has moved, and that’s my fault.”

“I don’t expect things to be exactly the same Nialler.” Harry admits. “I just need to know our relationship isn’t going to fall by the wayside. I need to know we’ll still have that special something, even if it’s slightly different from what it was before.”

“We’ll always have something special Haz.” Niall says with a soft smile. “You and me? We’re going to just fine. It would help if we could finally do more than snog, but we’ll get there once you’re ready with Zee. Assuming I don’t have a total meltdown that is. I don’t think I will though. I think I’m over that hump.”

“Now that your surgery is done, and Zayn is taking an active role in things around here, I feel good about it.” Harry tells him. “I think we may be ready.”

“Oh thank god.” Niall laughs. “I really need this Haz. I need it so bad. I was telling Louis-”

“You were telling me that you were going to cook dinner, not that you were going to sneak off and snog in a closet.” Louis yells through the door.

“How did you-” Harry starts, opening the door with a sheepish grin.

“It’s a pantry, not a bank vault.” Louis answers before Harry can even finish the question. His face is completely unimpressed when he says “I don’t mind letting you two do what you need to do, but the long talks about ‘What are we?’ or ‘Where are we going?’ are too much to listen to on an empty stomach.”

“Alright Tommo.” Niall giggles. “Haz, can you start heating one of the jars of sauce from the fridge while I finish up on cutting the gnocchi?”

“I guess.” Harry shrugs.

“You want to cut the pasta, don’t you?” Niall asks.
“So so bad Nialller.” Harry pleads. “Please please please let me do it.”

“Have at it Haz.” Niall laughs, pushing him gently towards the counter.

Harry watches Niall carefully as he makes his way to the fridge. The Irish lad tugs a bit too hard on the door and stumbles backwards. Harry scrambles towards him instinctively, barely managing to catch him under the armpits before he hits the floor. A jar of sauce flies forward, shattering on the ground and spreading everywhere. Niall’s leg is bleeding profusely, probably the product of a shard of glass and Harry begins to panic. He picks Niall up and places him gently on the counter.

He can hear someone screaming something, but he’s too focused on finding the source of Niall’s bleeding to listen to it. He grabs a rag out of the drawer and starts wiping gingerly around the leg, feeling for any shard of glass sticking out of the skin as he goes. Something grips him by the shoulder and tears him backwards, spinning him in place. “Harold! Stop!” Louis shouts. “Stop yelling!”

“I’m not-” Harry stutters.

“Yes, you were. Clean up the sauce and let me take care of this.” Louis says forcefully.

“He’s bleeding!” Harry cries.

“He’s covered in marinara you twat!” Louis groans. “Niall, are you in any pain?”

“My arse is a bit sore, and my knee hurts, but otherwise I’m fine.” Niall explains softly, shooting Harry a grateful smile. “I promise Haz, this isn’t blood.”

“You’re okay?” Harry asks, the question feeling heavy and loaded in his mouth.

“Yeah.” Niall nods.

“So I freaked out like an idiot then.” Harry sighs.

“You freaked out because you love him.” Louis smiles. “Panic is natural, not idiotic. The high pitched screaming may have been a bit much, but it’s okay. I’m going to love watching your reactions when Sam starts playing rugby.”

“You little shit.” Harry growls at Niall. “That conversation is over. He’s never playing rugby. My heart can’t take it.”

“Just give me the files.” Liam sighs.

Eleanor carries over a stack of folders about a foot thick and drops them on the table in front of him. Zayn grumbles something in Urdu and takes several files from off the top. “I’ve put notes in all of the files, right at the front, and a check mark in the corner of the ones I think would be viable candidates.” Eleanor explains. “I’ve also made notes of which mares are pregnant so they’d count as two.”

“And prices?” Zayn asks.

“Upper left hand corner of the second sheet.” Eleanor says, flipping the page in front of Zayn over so he can see.

“Pages four and six respectively.” Eleanor huffs. “Just read the file.”

“Alright.” Zayn agrees, settling down into Liam’s side.

Liam flips through several, immediately setting aside any that don’t have Eleanor’s stamp of approval. He tries not to pass out when he sees the price tag on some of them, but makes sure to take note of their breeding potential and bloodlines. He and Zayn finish their stacks around the same time and swap the ones they’re considering.

In the end they have to decide between fourteen horses, nine of whom are pregnant. Zayn has a favorite that Liam lets him set aside automatically. She’s pregnant, so that takes up two slots, making Liam’s job that much easier. Eleanor points out that studs important to a burgeoning enterprise because they need genetic diversity to keep from inbreeding, so he picks three males from separate farms who don’t share blood for at least two generations.

The last seven stables are filled by four mares, three of whom are pregnant. All in all it’s going to cost far more than Liam would like, but that’s his fiscally conservative side for the most part. He’s still unused to the idea that he has more money than he could ever need. He still thinks of it as being Harry’s money rather than their money. He’ll probably never be completely comfortable with the fact that two of his boyfriends are wealthy.

He and Zayn field the calls, setting up dates for the horses to be transported to the farm. Zayn will have checks made out by the time they arrive in three days. “It’s done.” Zayn grins. “For better or worse, everything is set up now. How does it feel?”

“Terrifying and exhilarating.” Liam admits. “I kind of wish that Haz and Nialler had wanted to be involved with this part. What if they don’t like our choices?”

“They trust you.” Zayn says quietly. “I trust you. El trusts you. The only person who doubts you, is you Leeyum. You made excellent, well informed choices on this.”

“Are you always this unflappable?” Liam asks. “I just made several major decisions that will affect how the rest of our lives play out, and you’re still completely level headed.”

“It’s a learned trait of my job.” Zayn shrugs.

“Well it’s a little irksome to be honest.” Liam sighs. “You’re on a totally different level than the rest of us are. I feel a physical need to see you even the tiniest bit unhinged.”

“Yeah, there’s pretty much only one way that ever happens.” Zayn laughs.

“And how is that?” Liam asks.

“Ask Nialler.” Zayn replies with a wicked grin.

“Oh!” Liam sputters. “That’s not what I- I wasn’t-”

“I know what you meant Leeyum.” Zayn whispers in Liam’s ear, making his face light up like a Christmas tree. “But sex is the only time I let myself lose control even the tiniest bit. Are you going to make me lose control?”

“If it’s the last thing I ever do.” Liam responds, doing his best not to let his voice waver. “I need to see that.”

“You realize I’m going to take that as a challenge.” Zayn smirks. “You’re going to have to work
“I am very okay with that.” Liam grins. “I love a good challenge, and this sounds like a particularly good one.”

“I don’t know if you’re up to it.” Zayn says casually, sitting back on the bench and refocusing his attention on Eleanor who is coming back from the loo. “I can be incredibly stubborn. I like to win.”

“Oh you’ll be winning either way.” Liam says with a smile. “I’m very good at what I do.”

“I’ve heard.” Zayn responds nonchalantly. “I heard before I even met you. Haz wouldn’t shut up about it for the longest time. It’s part of why I’m going to be stubborn about this. I want to see everything you’ve got.”

“You can’t handle everything I’ve got.” Liam says quietly, smiling innocently when Eleanor takes her seat.

“Everyone in this restaurant can tell you two are flirting.” Eleanor giggles.

“That’s because Leeyum keeps alternating between blushing and grinning.” Zayn shrugs. “He’s precious, isn’t he?”

“Quite.” Eleanor agrees.

“Stop.” Liam whines, covering the blush glowing on his cheeks with his hands.

“Oh Leeyum, where’s that big talk from a moment ago?” Zayn asks, his face still innocent but his voice wicked and teasing. “You can’t get all flustered now.”

“A moment ago I wasn’t aware that we had an audience.” Liam sighs.

“Like you two wouldn’t have an audience wherever you go.” Eleanor scoffs.

“We’re not the famous ones in our relationship.” Zayn shrugs. “You should see the looks Hazza gets whenever he goes out. I’m pretty sure they think Leeyum is his bodyguard, and that’s the only reason he doesn’t get mobbed.”

“He’s certainly big enough.” Eleanor replies.

“He’s also a lot better looking than any of the bodyguards Haz has ever hired.” Zayn laughs.

“I am right here!” Liam groans.

“I believe we’re both vividly aware of that.” Zayn grins.

“Then stop talking about me like I’m not.” Liam pouts.

“You get all shy and quiet if we talk to you about it directly.” Zayn points out. “It’s easier to just talk about you if we want to say something that involves you.”

“It’s still rude.” Liam sighs.

“You’re such an interesting subject of conversation though.” Zayn says with a sly smile. “You’re like a living breathing piece of art.”

“Nialler was right. You are incredibly soppy.” Liam laughs.
“Don’t tell Hazza. He might feel threatened.” Zayn replies.

“He should.” Liam says simply. “You definitely give him a run for his money.”

“Hey boys!” Niall giggles when Liam and Zayn find him in the telly room. All of the other people in the house are asleep on him or around him. Louis is curled up with Edmund and Tanner, snoring with his head in Niall’s lap. Harry has Jonathan resting on his chest, slumped over onto Niall’s shoulder. Gemma is on Harry’s lap, held in place by a strategically wrapped blanket that is tied over the tall man’s shoulders. Sam is in Niall’s arms, his face a miniature clone of Liam’s when he sleeps.

“Be super extra quiet okay? They had a long day.”

Liam pulls out his mobile, the flash nearly blinding Niall for a moment. He blinks through the dancing lights in his eyes, trying not to yelp and end up waking everyone on the couch. Louis startles awake sometimes, and that could cause a domino effect that ends with several injured babies. “Eleanor is going to love that picture.” Liam says quietly, a triumphant smile stretching his lips.

“Come pick up as many babies as you can.” Niall orders. “These two have been napping for long enough.”

“Yes!” Zayn says, his voice excited but quiet.

They cross over the distance between the door and the couch, Liam taking the two off of Harry and Zayn taking Louis’. Zayn walks out, squealing at getting his hands on more babies than usual. He’s probably going to hide away somewhere and try to keep Eleanor from getting them back. Liam gives Niall a kiss on the cheek and then wanders off behind Zayn. Niall leans over, peppering Harry’s face with kisses until he stirs, mumbling something that Niall can’t understand. “Hazza, Love, it’s time to wake up.” Niall whispers. “Liam and Zayn took off with all the babies.”

“My babies!” Harry blurts, patting his chest to try and find the comforting bundles of warmth he’d fallen asleep with.

“Go find them Haz.” Niall encourages.

Harry stumbles onto his feet, scurrying out to try and locate an infant to hold. Niall stifles a laugh at how Harry looks almost drunk. He’s at best half awake and Niall almost worries that he may hurt himself, but then he hears Harry roar “Give me one!” and he knows the taller man will be okay.

Niall reaches down a hand and shakes lightly at Louis’ shoulder, gently bringing him out of his sleep. His eyes flutter open, taking a few moments to adjust to not being asleep anymore. “You’re not El.” he mutters.

“I know.” Niall says with a small smile.

“Why are we sleeping together?” Louis asks.

“You finally gave in to your hidden urges to have me inside of you.” Niall giggles. “You were so good baby. So tight.”

“Well then let me sleep.” Louis grumbles, turning over and closing his eyes again. “We can go for round two later as long as I can sleep. Maybe I’ll actually remember that one.”

“If you’re sleeping with my husband, I’m going to do it with yours.” Eleanor laughs from the doorway.
"Hey now!" Louis yelps, springing up into a sitting position.

"I’m not married El.” Niall laughs. “And I have three to pick from. Any one in particular you want to trade for?"

"I’ll give it some thought and get back to you.” Eleanor says with a wicked grin.

"Have you two quite finished?” Louis huffs, his eyebrows crinkling together and a frown starting to bend his lips.

“Oh we haven’t even gotten started yet.” Niall laughs, snaking a hand around Louis’ waist and tugging him close. “Gonna make you feel so good.”

“You’re awful.” Louis scoffs.

“How would you feel about trading Liam and Zayn both? I’ll give you Louis and two of the triplets.” Eleanor says with a contemplative look.

“One less parent and two more babies? That sounds like a handful.” Niall grins. “But the arse may be worth it.”

“I hate you both so much right now.” Louis whines.

“Wait until I’ve got my tongue on you. You’ll forget all about that.” Niall murmurs in his ear.

“I’m telling on you.” Louis replies. “Harold! Harold, Niall is trying to add me into your cult!”

“It’s not a cult!” Harry yells back from somewhere else in the house.

“You’re such a shit.” Niall laughs, pushing Louis towards his wife. “You can keep him El. I can handle Zayn and Liam’s types of being high maintenance. This one is a different story though.”

“Damn.” Eleanor sighs. “I had so many plans.”

“Sod off the both of you.” Louis grumbles. “Evil twats you are.”

“And yet, tonight you’ll be begging for it.” Eleanor says with a smirk.

“Gotta remind you why you’re with me instead of the Super Twins.” Louis grins.

Niall gets up and cradles Sam gently in his arms. It takes a bit to get a crutch under his arm, but he manages while Eleanor and Louis swap fluidly between flirting and arguing and then back to flirting. He hobbles out of the room, listening for the sounds of his boyfriends until he finds them in the office. “I don’t think I’ve ever been in here before.” Niall admits with a laugh.

“Give me Sam before you drop him.” Harry hisses, snatching Sam away from Niall gently.

“Haz!” Zayn scolds.

“It’s fine Zee. I took a spill earlier and Hazza had an adverse reaction.” Niall explains. “He was scared and he has every right to be a prat.”

“That doesn’t sound at all genuine.” Liam scoffs.

“He kind of assaulted me with a rag.” Niall shrugs.
“I thought you were bleeding.” Harry huffs.

“You nearly burst my eardrum.” Niall adds.

“Because I thought you were bleeding!” Harry groans. “Don’t act like I’m the bad guy here. There is no bad guy. I’m just looking out for our son because you aren’t exactly back up to one hundred percent yet.”

“I know.” Niall says with a smile, pecking a kiss over Harry’s surprised lips. “You’re a good da. A bit condescending as far as lovers go, but a good da. I don’t mind the condescension if it’s for our kids.”

“I’ll work on that.” Harry says with a sheepish grin.

“Don’t. I like it when you’re overprotective.” Niall whispers in his ear. “Makes me want your big strong arms around me while you fuck me.”

Harry sucks air in through his teeth and then chokes on nothing. Niall pulls back to see how red his face has gotten. He’s planting the seeds, because he’s not sure he can handle too much more of the no-sex thing. He’s not just going to blurt it out of course, because he’s not an addict or something, but he’s putting a stop to the slow buildup that could take weeks until they finally shag. “I am holding our baby.” Harry sputters quietly.

“You won’t be later.” Niall responds with a cheeky wink. He turns to Liam and Zayn and asks “How did everything go? Do we have horses?”

“We will in three days.” Zayn beams. “Haz, I’m going to need your approval on the checks. Just a few quick signatures.”

“I want to see the horses!” Harry squeals.

“The files are on the desk.” Liam tells him, nodding his head towards a stack of manila envelopes. “El did a pretty thorough job of explaining everything in there.”

“Holy shite!” Harry grins. “I’m going to be a farmer again!”

“Um- yeah.” Liam says with a look on his face that Niall could read with his eyes closed. Liam doesn’t think Harry is cut out to actually take a managing role on the farm, and honestly Niall agrees. Harry is a wonderful person with a strong drive and a big heart, but he’s absolutely not suited to mucking out stables or grooming horses. He’ll probably pass out the first time he sees a birth. “You should uh- you should check them out. Zayn probably wants to show you his favorite.”

“Her name is Meg, and I love her.” Zayn giggles. “She’s gorgeous.”

“Don’t fall in love with a horse Zee.” Niall laughs. “Our relationship is weird enough to the world at large.”

“You’re a sick fuck.” Zayn scowls. “I love your twisted mind most of the time, but now is definitely not one of those times.”

Niall walks around the desk, dragging his fingertips across the surface, and sits right in front of Zayn, spreading his legs wide and leaning back a bit so his shirt rides up. “Is that so?” he asks. “Li, Haz, what do you two think of my twisted mind?”

“At the moment, I’m personally enjoying it.” Harry says heavily.
“I’ve always liked it.” Liam grins.

“Looks like you’re on your own Zee. Such a shame.” Niall giggles. “My twisted mind has some very interesting ideas.”

“I really need Louis to come get his kids. Like right now.” Zayn mutters.

“Interested?” Niall asks, teasing his foot up the inside of Zayn’s leg.

“Painfully so.” Zayn sighs.

“Good.” Niall says with a smirk. “Tommo! It’s time to come get your kids and go home!”

“Why?” Louis asks, sticking his head through the door and pouting exaggeratedly.

“Because.” Niall tells him with a firm stare.

“Oh!” Louis chuckles. “Give us a few minutes to get everyone packed up.”

“We’ll do a celebration dinner tomorrow, yeah?” Niall asks.

“That seems wildly inappropriate.” Louis says with a shocked look.

“For the horses!” Niall groans. “And for you guys moving in down the hill!”

“Oh my god.” Liam giggles.

“Well he said—” Louis sputters.

“I said ‘because’ Tommo. That’s it.” Niall laughs. “Just get the triplets and tell El about our offer.”

“Alright.” Louis sighs. He walks in and grabs Jonathan from Liam and then says “Malik, you follow me.”

Zayn rolls his eyes and starts to stand up, but Niall presses down on his inner thigh and whispers “Don’t take too long Love. Gonna need you for this.”

“I’ll meet you upstairs.” Zayn tells him, a soft look gleaming in his eyes.

“Haz, Li, go put the twins in the nursery.” Niall orders.

“Fuuuuuck” Harry groans.

He practically sprints out of the room and Liam follows behind. Niall doesn’t miss the bounce in his step, taking note that even Liam seems to like this side of him. Louis rolls his eyes and walks out with Zayn practically pushing him out the door. Niall blushes when he hears Louis crow “Alpha Dog!”

He crawls off the desk slowly, making sure not to do anything that could make his knee sore. He pushed his knee too far sometimes with Harry and Liam last year when he got the cast off, and that isn’t something he wants this time. He takes the stairs slowly, but still manages to make it into the bedroom before any of the other lads. He’s contemplating whether or not to take off his clothes preemptively when arms wrap around his waist. “Hey Alpha Dog.” Zayn whispers in his ear.

“Don’t call me that.” Niall giggles. “He’s just taking the piss.”
“Maybe, but he isn’t wrong.” Zayn breathes out, nipping at the skin of his earlobe. “You’re so fucking sexy when you take charge.”

“You’re just all secretly submissive.” Niall laughs.

“These two maybe.” Liam says, walking in through the door with Harry in tow. “You know full well I’m hardly submissive.”

“You have literally begged me to fuck you Li.” Niall grins. “Now get over here, and take off my clothes.”

“I’ll-” Harry starts, taking a step forward.

“I told Liam to do it.” Niall says, just this side of harsh. “Haz, you take care of Zayn’s clothes.”

“Actually-” Liam says, holding out an arm to stop Harry from moving. “We’ve all already come up with something we want to do.”

“Oh yeah.” Harry says sheepishly.

“How did you forget Haz? It was your idea.” Zayn scoffs.

“And what is that?” Niall asks.

“Haz, go take Niall’s clothes off and then take your position. Zayn, you come here.” Liam orders.

Harry glances back and forth between Niall and Liam, his face torn and nervous. He finally takes a step towards Niall, looking at him for approval. Niall nods, inviting Harry to follow Liam’s commands. He doesn’t care so much how this goes down, as that it just does. Harry smiles, walking over and trading places with Zayn who saunters over to Liam.

Niall immediately becomes distracted when Harry’s fingers trace over the skin on his hips. “Do you want me to put you on the bed to take off your clothes?” Harry asks.

“Sounds good.” Niall nods.

Harry’s hands grip him around his lower back, lifting him easily and carrying him over to the bed. He sits Niall right on the edge and then slowly hitches his shirt up and off his head before laying him down slowly. He kisses a trail down Niall’s torso and it hits the Irish lad how much he missed this. What he has with Zayn is amazing, but he misses Liam and Harry too. The way they all feel so different, so extraordinary. “I’m going to take off your shorts now, okay?” Harry asks.

“Please.” Niall whines.

Harry smiles at him sweetly and then hooks his fingers under Niall’s waistband. He drags them down slowly, almost excruciatingly so. He springs free after what feels like hours, hard and leaking from anticipation. Harry stands up straight and then tugs off his own clothes quickly. Niall almost drools seeing him this way. He’d been too embarrassed to properly appreciate it the other day, but he hasn’t been around Harry naked in so long before that. Not since that time they fell asleep in front of the fireplace.

Liam clears his throat across the room, pulling Niall out of his head immediately. Zayn is completely stripped down, looking sheepish in front of the audience in the room. Liam is still wearing his jeans though. Niall is about to ask why, but then Liam sternly asks “Haz, why aren’t you in position?”
“I was taking things slow for Niall.” Harry explains.

“Alright, just get into your spot.” Liam tells him.

“Can you sit up?” Harry asks Niall. He nods and pushes himself up into a sitting position. Harry climbs onto the bed and then settles behind Niall, his body framing around the Irish lad’s. “Is this okay?”

“Hazza, I pushed for this. If anyone should be asking that question, it’s me.” Niall says gently. “Are you sure you’re ready?”

“I am so incredibly ready.” Harry whispers into his ear. “For you, for Zee, for everything we can all four be together. I’m not holding back anymore. I’m too excited to be scared.”

“Me too.” Niall admits.

“Now face forward and let me know if you need me to stop.” Harry tells him, mouthing at his neck.

Niall almost gasps when he sees Liam’s hand wrapped around Zayn’s cock. They’re standing so that Liam has an arm wrapped around Zayn’s torso, pulling him tight against his own chest. Zayn’s hand is tangled in Liam’s hair and they’re kissing so furiously Niall feels almost envious. Harry’s fingers grip Niall, tugging experimentally and pulling a moan from Niall’s lips. “I’d kiss you too, but that whole show is for you.” Harry explains, never stopping his deliberate strokes.

“Why is he still clothed?” Niall asks quietly, bucking up into the touch.

“He doesn’t want to do anything that would make you- that could-” Harry attempts to put it into kind words.

“That’ll make me panic?” Niall asks.

“Yeah.” Harry sighs.

His strokes are still going, picking up speed and distracting Niall from the conversation. Harry is a master with his hands, twisting and tugging in a way that nobody else can quite mimic. He pairs that with gentle bites on the back of Niall’s shoulder and it’s making his orgasm build too quickly. “H-Haz.” Niall stutters out, grasping at Harry’s wrist.

“Cum for me Nialler.” Harry whispers in his ear.

That’s all it takes. Niall relaxes backwards into Harry’s chest and lets himself go. His whole body rocks with the way his orgasm ripples through him. Harry holds him tightly and milks him through it, knowing exactly when to stop before he becomes oversensitive. “Now watch.” Harry says quietly.

Niall turns his attention back to Zayn and Liam. Zayn is panting now, barely able to stand without Liam’s arm wrapped around his waist. Niall knows that expression he’s wearing. He’s fighting his orgasm. He’s pushing it down because he wants it to last as long as possible. Zayn’s self control is startling sometimes. It doesn’t last much longer though. Liam breaks through it when he grinds up against Zayn, pressing the tight bulge in his jeans into the darker man’s arse.

Zayn cums with a choked moan, spurting up onto his own stomach and Liam’s arm. Liam pulls him back in for another kiss while he helps Zayn finish. “Fuck Leeyum.” Zayn gasps.

“Just wait until I use more than a hand.” Liam says with a grin.
“Zee, come here.” Niall tells him.

Zayn immediately breaks from Liam’s hold, crossing the room and leaning down in front of Niall. “Are you okay?” he asks worriedly.

“I’m fine.” Niall assures him quietly. “I just need you to do something for me.”

“Anything.” Zayn nods.

Niall leans forward and whispers “Switch me.”

“What?” Zayn asks.

“Please Zee.” Niall asks softly. “I need Li to know I’m not scared of him. And we both know how much you want to get your hands on Hazza.”

“What’s that about me?” Harry asks.

“Meet your new dance partner.” Niall tells him. Zayn stands all the way up and makes a dramatic flourish, bowing down in front of them and sending Niall into a fit of giggles. Zayn offers a hand to Niall, who takes it gladly and stands up. He gives Zayn a quick kiss and then walks over to Liam, who’s fidgeting and trying to look anywhere but at Niall. “Is this okay with you?”

“I don’t know if I’m ready to know that we can never be together like this again.” Liam admits in a whisper. “I’m scared you’ll panic and that’ll be the end of things between us. I don’t know if I can handle that.”

“Li.” Niall says softly. “Give me your hand.”

Liam reaches out slowly and Niall can feel the silence in the room. Nobody except for Niall is breathing and he wishes it was just him and Liam right now. Not because he’s afraid he’ll panic, but because all eyes are on him and that means there will be an audience for what should be a private moment between Niall and Liam. He gently closes his fingers around Liam’s wrist, pulling the other man’s palm flat against his chest. “Do you feel that?” Niall asks. “My heartbeat is completely steady. I trust you Li. I’m not afraid.”

“But-” Liam starts, trying to take back his wrist.

“No buts Li.” Niall says firmly, holding tight onto Liam’s hand until he can make his point. “If you don’t want me, fine, that’s your choice, but don’t reject me because you’re afraid that I don’t want this. I do.”

“You’re sure?” Liam asks.

“I’m positive Li.” Niall says softly, tugging on Liam’s wrist so he falls forward against the shorter man’s chest. Liam catches himself easily, standing back up and relieving the pressure Niall had unintentionally placed on his knee when he’d done it. “I’ve missed you. All of you. Don’t push me away unless you just don’t want me anymore.”

“Of course I want you.” Liam breathes out, wrapping his hand around Niall’s neck and pulling him until their lips crash against each other. He’s gentle, never pushing or taking charge the way he normally would, so Niall decides to do it for him. He turns their bodies and directs Liam to the bed, pushing him down next to where Harry and Zayn are kissing passionately, grinding against each other with desperation that can actually be felt in the air. He lands with a grunt and then scrambles back up the bed a bit, giving Niall some room. “Should I take off my trousers now?”
“Yes Li, you should.” Niall giggles. He nods solemnly, pulling at his belt and then sliding his jeans down his legs. He still has his pants on and he’s looking at Niall cautiously. He rolls his eyes and says “It’s hard to do what I’m planning on if you keep those on.”

“Just checking to make sure you still want to do this.” Liam mumbles.

“I do.” Niall nods.

He once again decides to take things into his own hands and tears off Liam’s underwear himself. Liam’s cock smacks back against his stomach, fat, heavy, and leaking. His mouth waters a bit in anticipation and he leans down, dragging his tongue along the underside of Liam’s prick. It feels familiar in a way that only Liam could feel, after five years of imagining it and nearly four of doing it every chance he could get. Being with Liam was always easy and perfect, until it wasn’t. Until some monster stole away his first love’s face and destroyed him with it.

And Niall’s gut still twists with a dull echo of fear. He’s far from being over what that man did to him, if he even can ever truly get over it. He’s getting past it though. He’s taken his life, his body, into his own hands and he will decide what happens to him from here on out. He’s choosing not to let what happened define him for the rest of his life, and the first, most important, step in his autonomy is being with Liam. He loves this man more than anything and he won’t let a doppelganger get in the way any more.

He takes Liam’s head into his mouth, curling his fingers around the weight of it to give himself a better angle. Liam strangles a moan in his throat, tossing his head back against the mattress so hard that Niall can feel it ripple out across the bed. His hands find Niall’s shoulders, rubbing circles into the space above the clavicles with his thumbs. Niall sinks down as far as he can without choking and then starts massaging Liam’s balls with the other hand. It’s not something he feels too practiced at anymore, but Liam’s moans let him know he still has some idea of what he was doing.

It’s not as easy, as natural, as it was with Zayn. He has to keep his eyes screwed shut, to focus on the feeling rather than the act itself. Fear keeps trying to dig it’s way up through his mind, but he forces it back, not letting it get the better of him. Liam’s fingers slowly work their way up to the back of Niall’s head. He doesn’t apply any pressure, but Niall isn’t ready for that sort of thing. He grabs Liam’s wrists without breaking the rhythm he’s set with his mouth, and pins them down at his side.

Niall’s arms are nowhere near strong enough to actually hold Liam down, but he seems to get the idea and clamps them tight against his thighs. Niall moves his hands back up, stroking one in tandem with his mouth while the other fondles Liam’s balls. The muscular man has always liked that. Even back before they were ever together Niall knew that, because they traded stories like any best mates would.

His eyes snap open when he hears a low groan that vibrates through his bones. His hand keeps moving, but he pulls his mouth away to twist his neck and stare at the show Harry and Zayn are putting on. The curly haired man has been flipped onto his stomach, rutting statically against the mattress while he fucks himself back onto Zayn’s tongue. It’s desperate and filthy, but also insanely hot in a way that has Niall’s prick filling back up to an almost painful hardness.

“Niall.” Liam whines, bucking his hips up into the hand which the Irish man has accidentally let go slack. “Please.”

Niall doesn’t say anything, just smirks and swallows Liam back down with vigor. He does his best not to choke when he takes Liam all the way to the back of his throat, willing the muscles to relax for as long as he can until he has to come back up or risk his gag reflex triggering something very non-erotic. It’s a fucking travesty that as the bottom, and as the only one in the house who has never slept
with a woman, he can’t give head like the other three can.

He knows how to work around it though, swirling and flicking his tongue around the head expertly. Liam’s fingers tighten in the duvet and he moans loudly with his whole body giving a shiver. “Feels so bloody good Ni. ’M so close.” Liam mumbles.

Niall takes the encouragement, picking up speed with his hand while at the same time doubling down on the efforts his tongue is making. “Fuck! Ni I’m-” Liam moans, pushing lightly at Niall’s shoulders.

He swallows the load down easily, noting the taste hasn’t changed in the five years since he started doing this. It’s a strange thought to have, but it’s also grounding in a way. It brings back a sense of the familiar in something that felt like he’s having to relearn again. It’s like PT, but for sucking Liam’s dick. The thought makes Niall snort, covering his face and trying desperately not to laugh or to shoot the small amount of jizz still in his mouth out his nose like a drink. “Do I want to know?” Liam asks, rubbing at his temple.

Niall shakes his head and then swallows what’s left of Liam on his tongue. “My brain just went to a really weird place.” Niall says, straining to keep his face straight.

“Go on.” Liam says with a small flourish of his hand. “I know you’re dying to tell me.”

“Later.” Niall grins. “For now let’s just watch these two.”

He crawls up the bed and lays down next to Liam, absentmindedly palming at himself while he watches Harry and Zayn acting out a fantasy that Zayn had confided in Niall he’d played host to for years. Niall knows from experience that Zayn’s tongue is spectacular, and he’s fairly certain that Harry is getting even better treatment than he had had a few nights ago.

An idea pops into his head and he flops onto his stomach, mirroring Harry’s position. His fingers wind their way through the curls and he pulls Harry’s head up, connecting their lips and swallowing down the moans that Harry can’t, or more likely, doesn’t want to, hold back. Harry cups Niall’s face, putting everything he has into the snog like it’s the last thing he’ll ever do.

Niall can tell that Harry is having trouble focusing enough to keep up a good rhythm. He can feel Harry’s hips falter a few times, so he reaches a helping hand down and grasps at Harry’s cock, giving him a more steady source of friction to center his actions on. Harry moans gratefully and starts thrusting Niall’s grip.

His brain nearly short circuits when he feels Liam lick at him tentatively. His mouth breaks from Harry’s and his head snaps around. Liam looks at him worriedly and asks “Is that alright?”

“If you bloody stop, then I’ll kick you in the throat.” Niall growls.

“Be nice.” Harry grunts before pulling Niall’s mouth back to his own.

Niall gets lost in the sensation, fear completely replaced by lust as he’s worked open at both ends by his lover’s tongues. Liam took Niall’s threat very seriously and has apparently decided to prove that he’s still by far the best at this that there ever has been or will be. Zayn and Harry are both excellent of course. First class in every way. Liam though, Liam has always been on another level when it comes to eating ass. Even though he came not that long ago, Niall can already feel himself leaking all over the duvet as he grinds into the mattress. He’s not chasing another orgasm though, just pleasuring himself while they wait on Harry to finish.

It happens soon enough, his body stiffening as he coats Niall’s hand, leaving the Irish man and Zayn
to work him through it. His kiss becomes more desperate than Niall has ever seen him be. His fingers tighten in Niall’s hair and he kisses the smaller man until they’re both left gasping for air. “You cannot imagine now much I missed having contact on both ends during a shag.” Harry whispers in Niall’s ear.

“And you can’t imagine how much I missed Liam’s tongue back there.” Niall returns, just as hushed and excited as Harry is. “Or your bloody hands on me.”

“You okay Love?” Niall asks quietly, wrapping his arms loosely around Zayn’s waist. It immediately makes things calmer inside Zayn’s mind, forcing the storm to quiet. “You’ve barely said a word in a long while.”

“Promise not to hate me?” Zayn asks, trying his hardest not to look desperate.

“I would never hate you. Not even if you’re deciding to leave again.” Niall says, his voice getting watery with the last part. “I couldn’t.”

“It’s nothing like that Nialler.” Zayn tells him, pressing a hand over Niall’s. “I’m just- I’m jealous.”

“Of what?” Niall asks, his voice neutral.

“Of them.” Zayn admits. “I know we’re all in this together, and I have feelings for the both of them. I do. I just don’t like seeing anyone else touch you like that. It’s stupid and petty, but I can’t help it. It’s hard keeping my emotions in check when it comes to you. My mind is still trying to wrap itself around this kind of thing, and even though I was with both of them too, a part of me wanted you all to myself.”

“Can I tell you something I’ve never told anyone?” Niall asks, walking around so that he’s in front of Zayn.

“Always.” Zayn says with a nod, reaching out instinctively to lace his fingers through Niall’s.

“The first time for Haz, Li, and I was a bit different. I wasn’t actually involved so much as I watched while they shagged. It was hot, like really bloody hot.” Niall says with a chuckle. “And then it was over. We took a shower together and I stayed behind for a few minutes while they went and got things set up in the bedroom. Once they left me alone I cried so hard I threw up.

“I hated it, seeing them together like that. Parts of me never ever wanted to see them together, because I wanted everything to stay the way it was. I wanted Liam all to myself and I wanted the same from Haz. I was so jealous and angry that my body literally couldn’t handle it. It took days for me to actually feel okay with it, but I got past it because I knew that the relationship was what I really wanted.

“So it’s okay if you’re jealous or something, as long as you’re sure that this is what you really want. It may take time, but we have plenty of that. You just need to remember that you’ll always have a piece of me that they’ll never have, just like they’ll each have a piece of you that I never will. It’s how this works. It takes a while to get used to seeing someone you love be touched like that by someone else.” Niall explains.

“Is that true, or are you just trying to make me feel better?” Zayn asks.

“I don’t lie to you Zee.” Niall tells him, brushing his thumb over the back of Zayn’s hand. “I never have, and I never will.”
“So it’s okay?” Zayn questions. His stomach has been in knots ever since they finished. It’s been eating at him that maybe he isn’t cut out for this after all, that he may not be compatible with them if seeing them be together makes him feel this upset. If it’s just a natural process though, then that makes him feel a bit better. “I- I’m not in the wrong?”

“Of course not Love.” Niall says with that soft private smile he reserves just for Zayn. “What do you want to do right now?”

“I don’t really care as long as I’m with you.” Zayn breathes out. “Just wanna be with you right now.”

“You’re so clingy.” Niall teases.

“Don’t be mean to me.” Zayn whines.

“I love it when you’re like this though.” Niall explains. “Makes me feel like I can finally give you what you give me. It’s incredibly difficult for me not to be clingy with you all the time. I wanna just crawl onto you and cover you like ivy on a building.”

“I’d love that.” Zayn says with a grin.

“Yeah, but the other two would pout.” Niall laughs. “Li always did when I’d do that with Haz.”

“Now you’re just trying to make me jealous.” Zayn grunts, pulling Niall flush against his body.

“Not at all.” Niall tells him, wrapping his arms around Zayn’s neck. “Though I will say Haz is great to climb on. He’s very broad. You’re so little I feel like I’d break you.”

“I’m the same size as you are.” Zayn pouts. “And I’m stronger than I look.”

“Yet Haz had to come down and carry me to the loo.” Niall smirks.

“Because you were all energetic and wiggly.” Zayn sighs. “I’m sure I would have dropped you if I tried to carry you. I’d be fine now though if you could stay still.”

“Prove it.” Niall says, his voice tinged with a challenge. “Carry me to the couch.”

“How about the bed?” Zayn asks, whispering the question into Niall’s ear.

“Only for a kip.” Niall sighs. “I can’t take another Lyrica tonight, so I can’t risk another go, even if I feel comfortable with you.”

“Oh- I didn’t know you’d taken that. Did you take one the other day?” Zayn asks.

“Yeah, but mostly because I’d been feeling antsy about surgery. I had no idea we’d actually be allowed to do anything for sure until it happened.” Niall admits with a shrug. “I don’t really feel like I need them with you, but I don’t want to push my luck. It’s been pretty damn good lately.”

“I have to agree.” Zayn smiles.

“You still want to go to the bed, or-” Niall questions.

“Couch is fine.” Zayn sighs. “S long as I can cuddle you I don’t care where it is, and the couch is closer.”

“We have several couches. Which one suits your fancy?” Niall asks with a giggle.
“The sitting room one is too thin, but if we go to the library nobody will find us when dinner is ready.” Zayn says, mostly to himself.

“I could be okay with that if it’s what you want.” Niall offers.

“I knew you lied to me.” Zayn grins. “You’d never really be okay with missing a meal, even if it was for cuddling.”

“Don’t be an arse, or I’ll go cuddle with Haz instead.” Niall says with a smirk.

“Fine.” Zayn pouts. He moves his hands under Niall’s bum and then hoists the Irish lad up to straddle around his waist. “Library it is.”

“Good choice.” Nial grins.

“I thought so.” Zayn chuckles, making his way through the foyer towards the french doors that lead into the library.

Niall giggles gleefully when Zayn falls backwards onto the sofa, dropping the Irish lad to the side as he does so that they don’t hurt his knee. He budges up, creating a hollow next to him for Niall to curl into. He does so giddily, slinging an arm and a leg over Zayn and nuzzling into his neck. “Perfect.” he sighs contentedly.

“Eh, it could be better.” Zayn teases, feigning nonchalance.

“How?” Niall asks, pulling back with an offended look.

“We could be on a private beach. We could be wearing nothing and working on a tan. Your knee could be healed and we wouldn’t have any responsibilities for a few days.” Zayn answers.

“I’ve done enough traveling for a bit, but that does sound better.” Niall laughs. “I definitely would not object to going on holiday with you someday.”

“It’ll be a while before we can ever do that.” Zayn sighs. “We need the kids to grow up a bit, and someone we can trust to run the farm, and of course Hazza will have to basically be forgotten about by the public.”

“We’ll have our time sooner than you think Zee.” Niall says gently. “Time will start moving more quickly and then we’ll wish it would slow down. We’ll be old and gray before you know it, so savor this.”

“I’ve treasured every second I’ve ever spent with you Nialler. I will for the rest of my life.” Zayn admits.

“If you keep getting all soppy I’m going to have a kip. I don’t have the energy to keep myself from blushing if you start doing that.” Nial groans.

“Then blush.” Zayn says simply. “I like it when you get all red. It pretty much always means I’ve done something right. Either said something sweet, or I’m doing something to your body.”

“So that’s what it is.” Nial says with a huff.

“Have I?” Zayn asks, running his fingers lightly down Niall’s spine.

“No.” Nial sighs.
“Then what’s wrong?” Zayn questions.

“I just- I mean, I understand why we did what we did, but I was hoping for more.” Niall admits. “I wanted you inside me. It was supposed to be you and me the first time we did something with them, but we basically never touched.”

“Are you angry with me for that?” Zayn asks nervously.

“No.” Niall answers, shaking his head. “I’m actually happy that I was able to keep myself in control. I just hate that I have to struggle to do something like that, with him of all people. It would have been easier though if I had been with you at any point during it. You keep me calm.”

“Was it difficult?” Zayn asks him.

“Not incredibly. I chose not to let it get to me, and it didn’t.” Niall shrugs. “That’s not really the point of what I’m saying though.”

“You’re saying that I broke my promise.” Zayn sighs.

“No. I mean, we didn’t do that yet, so you didn’t really.” Niall groans. “I’m not saying any of this right.”

“Then explain it to me as best as you can.” Zayn says softly.

“I wanted to fuck. I want it so bad it’s almost a physical ache.” Niall says, his face screwed up in frustration. “I need to feel you inside me, and I need it sooner rather than later. I finally got tired of waiting, and Harry said he was ready, so I decided to take charge and just demand it or something. But then you guys had this whole other plan behind my back, which was great, but also didn’t give me everything I wanted.

“I’m so glad we did anything at all, because I know I’m being impatient expecting Hazza and Li to be ready already, but I feel like I’m dying a little while I’m waiting. And then Li made me feel like I wasn’t ready to make my own choices the way he kept asking if I was okay with everything, which was just him being sweet, but it was also frustrating. So I feel like an arse for being frustrated with him for being considerate. And on top of that I feel awful for wanting to take you away from something you’ve wanted for years, just because I wanted you close. Especially when I’m the one that encouraged it in the first place.”

“Is that everything?” Zayn asks.

“Yeah.” Niall says weakly. “I probably sound mad.”

“You don’t sound mad.” Zayn smiles. “You sound tired. And frustrated, both sexually and emotionally.”

“I am.” Niall groans. “But I’m also crazy.”

“Well I don’t think so.” Zayn tells him.

“You told me earlier you didn’t like my twisted mind.” Niall pouts.

“Because you implied I wanted to fuck a horse.” Zayn scoffs.

“I was teasing.” Niall shrugs.

“And it was gross.” Zayn laughs.
“You’re gross.” Niall pouts again. “Horse fucker.”

“Don’t be mean to me or I’ll push you on the floor.” Zayn threatens casually.

“I’m practically attached to you. You’d fall with me.” Niall points out, squeezing at Zayn’s side to prove his point.

“Don’t tempt me.” Zayn grins. “I’m not allowed to ravish you right now, so- you know.”

“Oh I have faith in your self control.” Niall giggles. “If you could reject me all those other times, you could do it now.”

“Oh but I didn’t know what I was missing for most of it, and you’re sober now.” Zayn says with a wolfish smile.

“I’m also saying no.” Niall tells him gently. “You would not believe how much I want it, but there’s no way I would let you get away without sticking that gorgeous cock in me right now. I’m at the all or nothing point, and since all isn’t allowed, then it has to be nothing.”

“I can’t wait until we’re over this hump and can just do whatever we want.” Zayn admits.

“Don’t say hump.” Niall groans.

“You’re a little on the pathetic side right now.” Zayn laughs.

“I know.” Niall whines. “But you cannot imagine how bad I want to be fucked right now.”

“I can actually.” Zayn tells him, nudging Niall’s face out of the way so he can nip at the skin of the Irish man’s neck. “It’s probably almost as much as I want to fuck you.”

“So much more.” Niall moans, gripping his fingers tighter in the fabric of Zayn’s shirt.

“I don’t believe that.” Zayn mumbles, slipping his hand up Niall’s shorts to hold onto the curve of his bum.

“Whether or not you believe it, it’s true.” Niall says firmly, flipping Zayn onto his back and straddling over his waist. “It feels like I’ve never wanted anything more in my entire life than I want this right now. I mean, I might have at some point, but I can’t think of anything right now. I haven’t been able to since the night you showed back up and kissed me against the door.”

“I haven’t been able to since you handed me that coffee.” Zayn groans, bucking up into the friction Niall is causing.

“I thought it would sound slutty if I said that, but me too.” Niall admits, dropping down onto Zayn’s chest so he can connect their lips. It’s desperate and heavy, his hands lacing through Zayn’s hair to pull him closer until there’s no space left to do anything besides melt into each other. Zayn doesn’t even care that he can’t breathe anymore by the time Niall pulls back a hair and says “You were so fucking hot in that suit. I wanted to ride you on that stupid fucking conference table and throw your ring into the heating vent.”

“We’ve wasted way too much time.” Zayn mumbles, fistng his free hand into Niall’s hair and pulling him back down.

“Do you two need a moment?” Harry’s voice comes floating across the room. Zayn can actually feel the cocky smirk in it, which is equal parts annoying and hot. “Some lube maybe?”
“How about dinner instead?” Liam asks, his voice a bit tighter.

“You said they wouldn’t find us.” Niall hisses.

“Apparently they’re smarter than I gave them credit for.” Zayn sighs.

“I can’t tell if this interruption is a good thing or not.” Niall groans.

“Me either.” Zayn tells him. “Because right now I want to fold you in half and-”

“Don’t finish that sentence or I will brutally murder the other two just so we can shag.” Niall whispers, cupping his hand over Zayn’s mouth. “It won’t be worth it in the long run.”

“You realize we can hear you both, yeah?” Harry asks.

“And we should care because?” Niall asks, his voice growing increasingly irritated.

“Because if we know you’re going to attempt to kill us, it will be considerably harder.” Harry giggles. “I’m not going quietly.”

“Dying the way you lived huh?” Zayn asks, pulling Niall’s palm off of his mouth. “Loud and difficult.”

“Don’t be rude.” Harry scolds, walking out of the library and dragging Liam behind him. “Dinner is ready, and it won’t be good cold, so I recommend you two hurry up. You can shag whenever, but supper has a time limit.”

“Yeah, yeah, we’re coming.” Niall grumbles, climbing off of Zayn with a huff. “I vote bedroom next time. The door locks.”

“You’re the one who said no in the first place.” Zayn points out as he stands up.

“Well I didn’t think that through apparently.” Niall sighs.

“We shouldn’t have gotten carried away.” Zayn admits out loud, though mostly to himself. “I shouldn’t have let it get that far.”

“You weren’t the only one involved Zee.” Niall says softly, lacing his fingers through Zayn’s. “I’m the one who got carried away.”

“Yeah, but that’s in your personality. I’m not supposed to let myself do that.” Zayn mumbles.

“Nobody expects you to be a monk.” Niall chuckles. “It’s kind of hard to do when I’m dry humping you on the sofa.”

“Point taken.” Zayn smiles.

“Come on. I’m starving, even if I would rather be bent over the back of the sofa and taken so hard I can’t sit down.” Niall tells him, pointedly raking his eyes down Zayn’s body to the bulge in his trousers.

“Oh look Gems, they actually decided to join us.” Harry giggles, spooning another mouthful of strained sweet potatoes into her.
“What’d you make Li?” Niall asks, sneaking up behind the muscular man and making him jump.

“Tried my hand at Hazza’s pot roast stew.” Liam tells him. “Figured today is probably one of the last cold days until winter comes back round, so it sounded good.”

“It smells even better.” Zayn smiles, taking a seat next to Harry.

“Don’t flatter me Zee.” Liam laughs, flushing a deep scarlet that Harry hasn’t seen in some time.

“Flattery implies a hyperbole of the truth. I’m not exaggerating, so therefore I’m not flattering you.” Zayn says simply, picking up Sam’s spoon and helping feed him.

“Roko, meri jaan.” Niall says across the kitchen.

Harry isn’t sure what it means, nor what Zayn means when he says “Kya ap Urdu bolte hain?”

“You’re not the only one who can learn another language in their spare time.” Niall laughs.

“Mein ap say mubhabat karta hoon.” Zayn says back with a smile.

“I love you too.” Niall laughs. “So leave Li alone. He can’t take compliments to save his life.”

Harry keeps to himself how sickeningly cute that whole exchange was, even if he couldn’t understand a word. He’s getting less jealous over time of the bond these two share, but it isn’t gone entirely. He misses the private moments he shared with each of them. Then again his relationship with Liam has never been stronger. They barely need to talk to understand each other anymore. It’s difficult, because Harry is naturally inclined to want it all, but keeping up a perfect relationship with three men at once is something you can’t really learn about from other people. He’s having a very hard time trying to do it.

“I can take a compliment.” Liam pouts.

“Not without somehow being self-deprecating.” Niall tells him. “The blushing is cute, but you always get down on yourself too. That’s not cute at all.”

“I’m not a cutesy person.” Liam grumbles.

“I have a video of you on my phone singing lullabies to the twins that would beg to differ.” Zayn laughs.

“You have to send that to me.” Harry tells him, grabbing his arm desperately.

“It’s too big to send, but I can copy it over for you later.” Zayn smiles.

“Perfect!” Harry squeals, planting a sloppy kiss on Zayn’s cheek.

“Food’s up, so shut up.” Liam says flatly, placing bowls of soup and mashed potatoes in front of them. “Or at least stop talking about me.”

“Oh, but I have some very wonderful compliments to pay you after earlier.” Zayn says with a wicked grin. “About various parts of your anatomy.”

“You’re relentless.” Liam groans, tossing a napkin into Zayn’s face.

“I’ve been called that a time or too, yeah.” Zayn chuckles. “Just like I’m sure you’ve been told your cock is amazing. Gotta have me a try on that thing soon.”
“It’s life-changing.” Harry giggles.

“Alters your perception of sex all together.” Niall adds.

“You’re all horrid. Our kids are right there.” Liam whines.

“They won’t remember any of this.” Niall shrugs.

“You hope.” Liam grumbles.

“According to every child psychologist I’ve ever read they won’t retain any kind of specific information until they’re well over a year.” Harry offers. “Basic things like faces can even be wiped out completely if it’s this early. They won’t know about your massive cock unless we let it slip much later in their lives.”

“Well you three should work on keeping it out of their brains now.” Liam says sternly.

“You’re just getting embarrassed again.” Niall laughs.

“A little modesty wouldn’t hurt Nialler.” Liam huffs.

“Haz?” Niall asks.

“Humility is a waste.” Harry grins proudly, copying Niall’s words from earlier.

“Exactly.” Niall says with a smile.

“Not completely.” Zayn pipes up. “Arrogance can be just as bad as being self-deprecating.”

“Do I seem arrogant to you?” Niall asks with a giggle.

“Not really.” Zayn shrugs. “Arrogance isn’t a trait I normally associate with any of you except Hazza.”

“Hey.” Harry whines. He’s never really thought of himself as arrogant in any way. He’s not shy about his good qualities, but as far as celebrities go he’s relatively down to earth. “I am not.”

“I’m not saying you still are arrogant.” Zayn supplies. “You’ve had your moments though, in the past.”

“That’s because he’s perfect.” Niall says sweetly, leaning over and pressing a kiss to Harry’s hand.

“Thank you Nialler.” Harry smiles.

“No problem Babes.” he laughs back, crawling into Harry’s lap. “You should feed me, because I’m feeling particularly needy today.”

“I noticed that.” Harry giggles.

“All for you Babes.” Niall whispers in his ear.

“Haz, didn’t we have something to ask Zee?” Liam asks loudly.

“I believe we did Darling.” Harry says with an obnoxious amount of enthusiasm. He actually is excited about it, but Liam seems particularly annoyed tonight, so Harry wants to rile him up. “Should you, or should I?”
“I’ll do it you knob.” Liam grumbles. “Zayn-”

“What if I want to do it?” Harry asks, cutting him off at the pass.

“Then do it already.” Liam groans.

“But obviously you want to do it too.” Harry points out, doing his best to keep a straight face as he takes the piss out of Liam. “We should play rock, paper, scissors for it.”

“You’ll just throw fire and claim you won.” Liam huffs.

“Damn.” Harry pouts. “You already know my secret tactics.”

“It’s not a secret tactic if you do it every time, and I indulge you every time.” Liam says flatly. “Just do it Haz.”

“No, it’s fine. You can do it.” Harry says graciously.

“Alright.” Liam finally says, eyeing Harry warily. “Zayn-”

“We wanted to know if you want to sleep in our bed tonight!” Harry blurts out, sending Niall into a fit of snorting giggles.

“Haz.” Liam groans. “Are you trying to make me have a strop?”

“Little bit, yeah.” Harry grins.

“You’re getting dangerously close.” Liam says darkly. “As far as that goes Zee, we’re just talking about sleeping, and it’s up to you whether or-”

“I’d love to.” Zayn smiles.

“I don’t recommend wearing your full pajama suit. It can get a little warm with the human space heaters here.” Niall laughs.

“You just want to feel him up.” Harry scoffs.

“Well you’re giving me nothing to work with here.” Niall huffs, squirming around trying to get off of Harry’s lap. His arms are locked tightly around the smaller boy’s waist, holding him tight. “Lemme go! Liam will feed me!”

“No I won’t.” Liam says, ignoring everyone and focusing on his dinner.

“Zayn?” Niall asks.

“I’m not sharing any of mine.” Zayn giggles, pulling his bowl closer.

“You’re all mean to me.” Niall pouts.

“I could be nice.” Harry whispers against the back of Niall’s neck, enjoying the shiver that runs down the smaller man’s spine. “I could be really nice.”

“I’m sure.” Niall grins, pushing his hips down quickly.

Harry snakes a hand up Niall’s shirt, tweaking his nipple while he pulls him closer with the other arm. He mouths at the back of Niall’s neck, swirling his tongue around the nub of bone that sticks
out at the top of his spine. “Haz.” Niall moans. “You gotta stop.”

“Why?” Harry asks, nipping his teeth at the junction between Niall’s neck and shoulder.

“Because Liam is edging closer to that strop every second, and I don’t want to know what happens when he finally loses it after twenty six years.” Niall hisses. “The carnage it could cause is terrifying.”

“I won’t do anything in front of the children.” Liam says with a smirk. “Might need to take Haz upstairs for a good spanking though.”

“Don’t make promises you don’t plan on keeping.” Harry grins.

“Oh just go shag already.” Zayn laughs.

“I’m good waiting for now.” Liam shrugs.

“Li.” Harry whines until he’s out of breath.

“Patience Haz. You’ll get what you have coming soon enough.” Liam grins.

“I think he’s going to murder you.” Niall whispers. “I’m not cleaning up that mess.”

“Zee, if you hear screaming then I want you to take Niall and the twins and run as far away as you can with them.” Harry says gravely.

“You’re always kind of loud.” Zayn smiles. “How would I know the difference?”

“You’d know.” Liam says simply.

“Oh good god. He’s actually going to kill me.” Harry says under his breath.

“Don’t go upstairs Haz.” Niall says quietly.

“If I don’t then I’ll never know if I could have gotten laid or not.” Harry sighs, already resigned to the fact that curiosity may have gotten the better of this cat. Or lust. Whatever. “Can’t take that chance.”

“You can’t miss out on the possibility of sex for the probability of being slaughtered?” Zayn scoffs.

“I’m not going to murder him!” Liam groans. “There’s a high likelihood he won’t be able to sit for about a week, but other than that he’ll be fine.”

“Sounds like a good trade-off to me.” Harry shrugs.

“You say that now.” Niall warns. “But you have to sit in on interviews on day after tomorrow just like the rest of us.”

“Are we doing it like a panel, or just Li and one other person at a time?” Harry asks.

“A panel would be best, but that means leaving Tomlinson with all five kids for however long it takes to do this.” Zayn explains. “What I figured we’d do is Leeyum and El, since they’ll be working with them most often, and then one of us at a time. It’s up to you guys though, because this isn’t really my farm.”

“You do realize that us asking you to sleep in our bed from now on, and talking about renovating the
space over the garage was us basically us officially asking you to move in, right?” Liam huffs.

“Of course he does. Zayn isn’t stupid.” Harry grins.

“Well I didn’t realize it.” Niall pouts. “Does that make me stupid?”

“They’re just taking the piss Nialler.” Zayn grumbles.

“Kind of, but we really are asking you officially to move in.” Harry smiles, unwrapping one of his hands from around Niall’s waist to cup it over Zayn’s. “I know it’s fast, but we’re all pretty sure about this. We hope you are too.”

“I’ve been sure of this from the moment Nialler blurted out the question.” Zayn says gently, curling his fingers through Harry’s.

“I liked the couple.” Niall offers. “They were funny and I could actually see getting along with them.”

“Yeah, I’m sure that’s all it was.” Liam grumbles.

“What’s he talking about?” Harry asks.

“I got no bloody idea.” Niall returns, his eyes fixed on Liam.

“Here’s their file. You figure it out.” Liam huffs, passing the folder over to Harry.

“They’re Australian?” Harry asks curiously. “That’s a big move for a job like this.”

“They’re also bidding low.” Zayn points out, scooting in closer. “Like much lower than I expected.”

“Plus it’s a two in one with one being a breeder and the other being a trainer. They have plenty of experience. I really don’t see the problem here.” Harry says, setting down the folder.

“Flip to the pictures.” Liam tells them, doing it for them because maybe then they’ll understand.

“I’m still not seeing the problem here.” Zayn says, flipping through several of the photos they’ve taken with race winners they’ve helped produce over the years.

“Li, what’s the problem?” Niall asks.

“You really need me to say it?” Liam sighs. “Fine. They’re bloody gorgeous.”

“Eh.” Harry says noncommittally.

“They’re hot, sure.” Zayn shrugs. “Neither of them is really my type, but I can see it.”

“Liam, get into another room. Now.” Niall says harshly, passing Sam off to Zayn and pulling Liam out of his chair by the ear. It hurts really badly with Niall’s bony little fingers trying to rip a portion of his skull off, but he can’t get a good enough angle to tear away the hand until he’s practically thrown through the door to the office. Niall slams it behind himself and then pushes Liam into a chair with far more strength than usual. “What the fuck Li?”

“Don’t you ‘what the fuck’ me. Every time a hot guy comes around this farm, you fall madly in love with him and disrupt our lives.” Liam hisses. “It happened with Haz, and it happened with Zee. I’m
not letting Asher and Lucas from Bumfuck, Australia get a fucking chance to screw everything up for us.”

“It’s Ashton and Luke, and I’m not even remotely interested in them.” Niall growls.

“Just like you weren’t remotely interested in Hazza?” Liam snaps. “The day he came you told me that nothing would come of it, and it did. You promised me that nothing was going on between you and Zayn when you begged to let him move in here the first time, and-”

“And nothing was going on!” Niall shouts. “He was our friend, and he needed help. I didn’t even know I had feelings for him when we let him move in. Sure, I knew I was attracted to him, but so is pretty much everyone who sees his face!”

“So why would this time be any different?” Liam asks harshly.

“Because, until you said something I didn’t even notice that, objectively, they are attractive.” Niall groans. “And I am not the only cheater in this room Liam.”

“A kiss versus two whole relationships!” Liam yells. “Don’t you dare act like they’re the same thing.”

“Nobody else noticed their looks Li.” Niall sighs, dropping down into the chair opposite him. “Just you. I know that you still don’t trust me, but I really don’t want anyone else but you three. What happened with Zee was unexpected, and I know it probably hurt you as much as it did anybody, but that wasn’t within my control.”

“So why would it be if you fell for one, or god forbid, both, of these two?” Liam asks.

“I have everything I’ve ever wanted and more, right here in this house. I have my family, and I’m never looking to add any more people into it.” Niall says gently, placing a hand on Liam’s knee. “Not more children, and certainly not any more men.”

“Well I never planned on you falling for Hazza or Zee, but it happened.” Liam tells him, feeling about ten centimeters tall.

“Li-” Niall starts.

“I can’t lose you again Niall.” Liam whispers. “It’s happened too many times. I can’t handle it again.”

“Well Li, there’s a good chance I’ll die before you, because you’re a bloody health nut and I smoke, drink, and eat like the Irishman I am.” Niall laughs. “But I have no intention of ever leaving your side again.”

“Don’t talk about dying.” Liam tells him firmly. “You’re going to live another hundred years.”

“You’ve got to learn to be a little more realistic Li.” Niall giggles. “I’m not even thirty and I need a full leg replacement. I’ll be lucky to make it to sixty.”

“You’re going to be at least twice that if I have to strap you to a chair and feed you health food every day.” Liam growls, yanking Niall onto his lap.

“Can’t get much exercise if I’m strapped to a chair.” Niall points out. “But I like the kinky direction this is taking.”
“Oh you’ll get plenty of exercise.” Liam grins, kissing at Niall’s neck.

“Stop it!” Niall squeals. “Your beard is tickly!”

Liam laughs and shoves his face further into the hollow of Niall’s neck, causing the other man to squirm around and gasp “Liam? Is that for me?”

“Is what for you?” Liam asks, continuing his beard-scratches against Niall’s shoulder.

“This.” Niall says as he grinds his hips down onto Liam’s apparent erection.

“Didn’t even notice I had it.” Liam admits.

“Want me to leave so you can get some use out of it?” Niall asks cheekily.

“Actually, I think we should go help pick out the rest of the candidates before Eleanor just picks for us.” Liam sighs. “She’s very intense.”

“How do you think she keeps Tommo under control?” Niall asks with a laugh.

“Mostly sexual deprivation.” Louis calls from the other side of the door. “Your useless boyfriends selected me as the sacrifice to come and find you two.”

“We’re coming.” Niall grumbles, sliding off of Liam’s lap and walking towards the door. He turns around and holds out his hand. “Listen Li, this isn’t my farm anymore. It’s yours. Pick whoever you want to help you with the place.”

“It’s still your farm Niall.” Liam smiles.

“No it isn’t Li.” Niall says with a shake of his head. “Me Da wouldn’t recognize this place. We live in a bloody mansion. I don’t know shite about horses. This is my home, and I love it, but this isn’t the farm I grew up on. The land is the same, but nothing else is. This place is yours now, and I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

“Nialler-” Liam starts.

“Li, in some ways you were more my father’s son than I ever was.” Niall laughs. “I never wanted this farm in the first place. That’s why I sold it the second it was mine. Turn this place into your success story.”

“What if I fail?” Liam asks quietly.

“You won’t.” Niall tells him, his voice resolute. “You’re not your father Liam.”

“Would you still love me if I did? If I failed you?” Liam asks.

“Of course I would. We all would.” Niall smiles. “I’ll never stop loving you.”

“Really?” Liam asks cautiously.

“Li, you’re my first love. You’re my best friend. The only person I planned on spending my life with from the time we were just kids, even before I fell in love with you. Things didn’t work out quite like that, but that doesn’t change the fact that I love you and always will.” Niall says, stroking his thumb over Liam’s hand reverently.

Liam presses the smaller man up against the door, kissing him harder than he has in months. Niall’s
smile takes a minute to fade before he’s kissing back as much as he can as well, his thin fingers twisting in the fabric of the suit Liam is wearing and tugging him closer. “I love you too.” Liam mumbles against Niall’s lips.

“You’d better mister.” Niall grins. “Now go pick your staff, because the horses will be here in two days and we need to get everything ready by the time they show up.”

“My staff.” Liam mutters to himself, still uncomfortable with the idea of having employees.

“Yes Li, your staff.” Niall laughs. “You’re in charge, so in the end all of the decisions come down to you and Haz, since he owns the place. Zee, El, and myself are just offering opinions.”

“I’ll hire Asher and Lucas.” Liam tells him. “I do trust you, and they were the best for each of those positions.”

“It’s Ashton and Luke.” Niall corrects him again. “You might want to know their names before you call them.”

“Zee is doing all of that part. There are tax forms and shite that I’m not allowed to touch.” Liam laughs.

“Hey!” Harry bellows from somewhere beyond the door. “Get your stupid arses back in here and help pick out people!”

“Coming dear!” Niall croons, pulling open the office door.

“I’ve decided on hiring the couple from Australia.” Liam tells them when he takes a seat.

“They seem like the top candidates from what I’ve seen.” Zayn replies. “Half of these people are ridiculously under-qualified.”

“That would pretty much fit the theme of this place.” Niall giggles. “Got a Pop-Idol for an owner and his agent as our CPA. Our vet is straight out of school.”

“Top of her class!” Eleanor calls from across the kitchen where she’s pumping milk for the boys.

“You still see my point.” Niall scoffs.

“That’s exactly why we need people who know what they’re doing Nialler.” Zayn says in his no-nonsense tone. “We need the best, because this farm is being run by people who have no real idea what they’re doing. The only one here who has any real clue about the day to day running of a farm from the top down is you. Even Li doesn’t have any experience with the management side of things. Except you’ve made it very clear you want nothing to do with this place, so we need to hire people who can help teach us things.”

“Relax.” Harry says gently. “It’s fine that Nialler doesn’t want to work on this farm. The twins are going to need at least two of us up here anyways.”

“I didn’t say it wasn’t fine.” Zayn snaps. “I said that none of us have a clue how to do this besides him, and it’s all very real now. We have to call these people by the end of the day and get all their paperwork done by tomorrow, or else we’re fucked.”

“Stand up and take a walk with me Zee.” Niall says calmly.

“Ni-” Zayn starts.
“Now.” Niall says firmly, his voice leaving no room for argument. “Haz and Li can handle this. You need to calm down.”

Zayn sighs and places the stack of folders he’s holding in front of Harry before handing Sam over to Liam. He shuffles out of the room behind Niall, looking completely put out. “He’s not entirely wrong you know.” Harry says quietly. “Niall is the only one who knows how to do any of this.”

“I can do most of it, and what I can’t he’ll teach me if I ask.” Liam says loyally.

“I hope so. He’s kind of drifting right now, and I don’t think he has any clue what he wants to do with his life.” Harry sighs.

“Zayn suggested that he start working with charities, and I think that’s a good idea. Just haven’t had any time to bring it up.” Liam admits. “Last night kind of got in the way.”

“I know.” Harry grins. “It was fun though.”

“I was pretty much a wreck.” Liam scoffs.

“Again, I know Babes.” Harry says sweetly. “Never seen you look so unsure as when he pulled off your pants.”

“Did it show that much?” Liam asks.

“I’m pretty sure I’m the only one who was looking at your face.” Harry says with a wink. “The other two were pretty focused elsewhere. It was Zee’s first look after all.”

“Pretty Boy hadn’t seen your cock yet Payne?” Louis asks with a cackle.

“Not that it’s any of your business Louis, but no, he hadn’t.” Liam huffs.

“Be nice!” Eleanor hisses, smacking his arm with the hand she isn’t using to hold her breast pump. “It’s sweet that they’re taking things slow.”

“These blokes don’t do anything slowly!” Louis groans, rubbing the sore spot on his arm. “They shacked up the day they met, and Harold proposed after less than six months. Payne had one foot out the door, and then he was getting plowed by Lips over there five minutes later. Slow isn’t in their dictionary.”

“Is there anything Niall doesn’t tell you?” Liam asks, a frown settling on his face that he’s come to associate with being around Louis.

“I’m pretty sure there’s a lot, but you’d have to ask Pretty Boy Malik for that information.” Louis says with a shrug. “I got replaced months ago. All of that was what I learned before Apollo, The Golden God, came along.”

“Well it’s not like you make it easy to talk to you about things.” Liam grumbles.

“Just because I’m willing to call people on their shite, doesn’t mean I’m not personable.” Louis says smugly. “I’m a good friend to nice people.”

“You are literally the only person I can think of that Li isn’t nice to Louis.” Harry says, springing to Liam’s defense. “And he still took a bullet for you.”

“He took a bullet for a stranger that he didn’t know was me.” Louis scoffs.
“How does that support your statement in any way?” Harry asks. “I’d say someone willing to do that for a perfect stranger is even kinder than someone who’d do it for someone they knew.”


“You egg him on and you know it. And even after all the shite you give him, he still came up with all the idea of having you guys move in down the hill so that you could actually see Niall and have help with the kids.” Harry says angrily. “Which also means that, while we’re providing you with free childcare, you can go back to work part time so that you don’t go insane. That may have been Nialler’s idea, but it came from Liam’s. So whatever rude thoughts cross your mind about him from now on need to stay firmly inside you, where they belong.”

“El, help me out here!” Louis says desperately.

“No.” Eleanor huffs. “He’s absolutely right. Liam and you have had your problems, but they’re mostly on you. Get yourself out of this hole, though I do suggest an apology to start with.”

“Don’t bother.” Liam tells him. “We both know you won’t mean it.”

“How did I end up being the bad guy here?” Louis asks.

“Eleven months of hard work.” Liam says with a grin.

“Well I am sorry for what it’s worth. I don’t mean to be such a prick all the time.” Louis says quietly.

“Thank you.” Liam smiles. “I’ll work on my end of things too.”

“What’s the matter?” Niall asks once they’re out the door.

“I don’t even know.” Zayn sighs.

“Zee, you can’t lie to me.” Niall tells him. “You never don’t know what’s going on in your own mind to some degree.”

“Did you have sex with him?” Zayn asks suddenly, throwing Niall so off balance he nearly faceplants in the gravel of the driveway.

“What?” Niall asks, swinging his arms like a windmill until he regains his balance. “Zee, no. We were gone for like ten minutes. And more than that, I told you that it’s you I need the first time. Is that what’s got you in such a nasty mood? Jealousy?”

“Not entirely.” Zayn admits. “I just- I thought you were forgetting about me or something. Yesterday after I told you I was jealous, you got all up on Haz. It was like you were trying to make it even worse or something. And then you go off with Leeyum and at first it was really loud, but then it got quiet and I know how sometimes fighting can turn to sex really quickly.”

“You do realize that eventually I’m going to have sex with him, yeah?” Niall asks, worrying at his lip almost painfully. “I can hold back a while until you’re more comfortable with things, but I can’t turn my back on my relationship with him. Especially now that we’re finally getting more comfortable around each other again.”

“I know that, you knob.” Zayn says with a chuckle. “I just- I need some more time. I love you more than I’ve ever even imagined loving anyone in my entire life. More than is probably healthy if I’m
being perfectly honest. It’s all consuming sometimes, and it’s everything I can do not to lash out at anyone who threatens that bond, even if it’s someone I care so much about too. Shite- this was all supposed to be easier.”

“No, it wasn’t.” Niall tells him. “Nothing about this is easy. Nothing worth having or doing is ever easy. This is a major adjustment for you, and you’ve had very little time to actually come to terms with things. This thing between the four of us is just over a week old. A month ago we were barely speaking, and now you’re sleeping in our bed. Pile a new job on top of that and you’ve got a powder keg waiting to go off.”

“Where are we going?” Zayn asks suddenly, finally taking note of the path Niall is leading him down.

“Definitely avoiding all my points I see.” Niall laughs. “My old house. I realized you’ve never really seen my old room except for when you slept in there that one time, and when we got the guns. You’ve seen Has-a-Rich-Boyfriend-Me, and PTSD-Me, but never the Old-Me. You don’t know me from before the twins, not really.”

“I’d like to.” Zayn says with a soft smile.

“You could teach Haz a thing or two about being charming, and that’s saying something.” Niall laughs, a warmth building in his stomach that he hasn’t felt in ages. Zayn is always there for him, always ready to take whatever Niall is ready to give, but never forcing him into anything. Niall wants to give him the sun and the stars and everything in between. “I told Liam something, and he didn’t really react. I’m afraid to tell you though.”

“You never have to be afraid to tell me anything Nialler.” Zayn says soothingly, rubbing a thumb over Niall’s own.

“It’s just- things have been so great between us.” Niall sighs. “This could mess up everything.”

“Ni, I promise nothing you say could make me feel anything less than I already do about you.” Zayn tells him resolutely.

“I don’t want any more kids.” Niall admits after a few moments of silence. “I know that’s what messed things up between-”

“Niall.” Zayn says, coming to a halt and nearly sending Niall into the ground again. His strong grip keeps the Irishman standing, though just barely. “What happened between me and Pez was a lot more than just her not wanting kids. We just didn’t work. I didn’t love her. Not really. I only realized it after I fell for you, but I stayed with her because I knew our relationship wasn’t meant to last. It was safe because I knew it would end in disaster one day. There was a built-in escape hatch that I had been one step away from using for far too long.

“I’m not going to lie to you and say I’m not a little disappointed, but it’s not for the reasons you probably think. I love Sam and Gems, and I hope one day they see me as their father just like you three, but I don’t need kids to be happy. I need you, and I need you to be comfortable enough that you’re never scared to tell me anything. I want to be with you, and Haz, and Leeyum. I want to be a part of this, and that’s all I need to be happy.”

“Really?” Niall asks, his throat suddenly drier than he can ever remember it being. “Because if it isn’t okay I need you to tell me. I don’t want you resenting me somewhere down the line because of this. I couldn’t stand it if I held you back from something you really-”
Zayn cuts him off with a strong kiss pressed against his lips. It never gets any deeper, and it's not really meant to Niall supposes. This isn’t a passion-kiss. This is an I-Love-You-and-I-Always-Will-Kiss. This is Zayn, once again, using every fiber of his being to show Niall something rather than say it. He pulls away after a few moments, pressing another quick peck against Niall’s lips before saying “I love you, you stupid sod. I already have everything I want and need.”

“I’m rubbing off on you.” Niall giggles. “Don’t think I’ve ever heard you insult anyone except Tommo, and now I get two affectionate and rude names all in one talk.”

“It’s how you express it.” Zayn tells him with a noncommittal shrug. “I probably wouldn’t do it to Haz or Leeyum, but with you it works.”

“I like it.” Niall grins.

“I know.” Zayn says smugly. “Now let’s go see your old room and you can tell me all about the old you. I bet I fall in love all over again.”

“Sod off, you soppy git.” Niall laughs.

“I love you too.” Zayn says with a smile.

“Good walk?” Harry asks, sliding Sam onto his hip.

“Yeah.” Zayn nods. “Sorry I kind of exploded before.”

“This house has seen far worse than that.” Liam smiles, snatching Sam off of Harry’s hip and running away.

“You utter arse!” Harry cries after him, but he can’t be bothered to chase them down. Sam is cackling that little baby cackle as Liam raises him up and then lowers him, like a plane flying through the foyer. It’s unbearably adorable. “You can change him then, since that’s what I was on my way to do.”

“Daddy Haz thinks that’s a punishment.” Liam coos. “Like I haven’t changed about a half a million of your nappies already.”

“Actually their average should be somewhere around three thousand total between the two of them.” Zayn says out of nowhere. “So far that is.”

“How could you possibly know that?” Niall asks, his face looking equal parts confused and grossed out.

“Diaper calculator.” Zayn says with a shrug. “Got an app on my phone that lets me know just about everything about raising the twins. Not that it bloody works right in some aspects because they’re much further along developmentally than the average nearly-six-month-old.”

“You are such a daddy.” Harry laughs. “Isn’t that right Sammy? Daddy Zee does all kinds of unexpected things. Who knew he was such a softy? I didn’t. He once threatened to-”

“That is not a story that needs to be told until much later in life.” Zayn says quickly. “Or ever.”

“You don’t even know which one I was going to tell.” Harry says with a pout.

“New Year’s Eve, two years ago.” Zayn guesses. “Broken champagne flute and the body guard
-selling your secrets to a tabloid.”

“Damn.” Harry mutters, hating how Zayn can predict him so easily. “‘S a good story though.”

“Not for infants.” Zayn squawks. He seems nervous, less put together than usual and Harry wonders why. “Certainly not for ones being raised around me. They’ll be terrified of me, even if they don’t understand why.”

“They could hardly be afraid of such a big sop like you.” Harry returns with a grin.

“I’m not a sop!” Zayn groans.

“I have plenty of evidence to the contrary.” Niall giggles. “Would it please the defendant for me to present it to the court?”

“No.” Zayn growls, pulling Niall flush against himself and whispering something Harry can’t hear.

“You wouldn’t!” Niall gasps, his eyes huge with fear.

“I would.” Zayn says, his voice as resolute as Harry has ever heard it.

“I’ll behave.” Niall says with a desperate nod.

“Good lad.” Zayn says with a smug smile, patting Niall’s bum and directing him towards the kitchen. “Now get us some tea.”

Niall grumbles something under his breath and heads into the kitchen, snagging Sam from out of Liam’s hands on the way. “You’re coming with me. Your other three daddies don’t know shite about making tea, so you’re my assistant.”

“How dare you!” Harry squawks after him. “I make excellent tea!”

“He’s just grumpy about my threat.” Zayn laughs. “We all know you make a brilliant cuppa, Haz.”

“What did you say to him that could make him obey so easily?” Liam asks, stretching himself over Harry’s back.

“Can’t tell you.” Zayn tells them with a wicked grin. “It’ll lose it’s effect if everyone can do it.”

“So it’s not just withholding sex then.” Liam mumbles. Harry can hear the wheels turning in Liam’s head, trying to figure out how to bring Niall to heel when necessary. “How about- No. I’ve done that before. It didn’t work. Maybe- No, probably not that either. I give up.”

“You could just threaten to stop giving him massages.” Harry offers. “Lord knows he loves those enough, and it’s actually something Zee apparently can’t do.”

“That wasn’t my fault!” Zayn sputters. “The screw was loose. I couldn’t have known that!”

“He’s cute when he’s flustered.” Liam whispers in Harry’s ear.

“He’s pretty cute all the time.” Harry giggles.

“I can agree with that.” Liam says, pressing a grin into Harry’s neck.

“Stop it.” Zayn groans, a light blush showing up on his cheeks.
“There’s that shy side you were talking about.” Liam says.

“It’s great right?” Harry asks. “He knows he’s bloody gorgeous, he’ll say he’s bloody gorgeous, but if anyone else points it out he gets like this.”

They don’t get a chance to say anything else before Niall comes back in with a cup of tea and Sam clapping as best as he can. His hands wave around wildly before they come together in a small smack, and he repeats the process over again. “Sam did a brilliant job if i say so myself.”

“Half of this is gone.” Zayn pouts.

“Couldn’t help myself.” Niall shrugs. “Our little boy makes a great cuppa, but I had to test it out.”

“Of course you did.” Zayn huffs.

“I can give you something better to drink.” Niall says with a wink. “It’s a little salty, but still, it’s satisfying.”

“Mm, my favorite.” Zayn grins, ducking in to nibble on Niall’s earlobe.

“Not while you’re holding the boy!” Harry groans, taking back Sam and completing the little journey he’s been on. “S weird.”

“Did you two finish picking the other people you need?” Niall asks, not bothering to swat Zayn away from his neck where the darker man is sucking little love-bites down towards his collar bone.

“No.” Harry admits, shaking his head. “Li and Louis got into it and then had a sweet little make up.”


“I’ve never seen Haz yell at anyone except me and you.” Niall laughs, slipping a hand up the back of Zayn’s shirt.

“Me either.” Liam tells him. “It was proper sexy. He defended my honor and everything.”

“Are you four planning to shag right here in the foyer?” Louis snarks, walking in and placing Gemma into Liam’s arms. “Or can you hold it together until after we leave?”

“I don’t know.” Niall shrugs. “You came over on our monthly Orgy-in-the-Foyer-Day. You’re welcome to join if you like, but the new guy provides the lube.”

“You’d be saving me a bundle.” Zayn giggles.

“I’ll catch you next month.” Louis laughs. “Need to sleep better if Liam is going to fist me on the staircase.”

“And that’s it for us.” Eleanor chimes from the doorway. “Louis, grab Edmund in his carrier and the bag please. Liam, I’ll be here bright and early tomorrow. Until then please try to keep your hand out of my husband.”

“No promises.” Liam says with a dopey grin.

“Yeah babe, no promises.” Louis says very seriously. “Just a fist up the arse, and then I’ll threaten to sell the story to the newspapers and we’ll be set for life.”
“I’ve destroyed men for threatening Haz with that.” Zayn says warningly. “Don’t think I’d hold back just because you have kids.”

“He’s scary as fuck.” Louis says with a shiver. “I still down-vote adding him into this cult thing if he’s going to be scary.”

“It’s not a cult!” Harry groans. “And you don’t get a vote. He makes steak better than I do, and eats arse as well as Liam does. He stays.”

“Harry!” Zayn bellows, his face mortified.

“Trust me, that’s a compliment.” Niall giggles.

“And more information than I needed.” Louis cackles. “With that lovely thought, we’ll make our exit through the garage.”

“See you tomorrow Louis.” Niall calls after him with a wave.

“See ya Niall!” Louis yells back. “You too Harold!”

“I’ll have the truck at yours by eight!” Harry shouts, covering Sam’s ears so he doesn’t startle him.

“We have to be there by eight?” Niall whines.

“I hired movers for them.” Harry tells him. “They won’t have to lift a finger, and neither will we. By tomorrow night the house down the hill will be set up for them and your old stuff will be in storage.”

“I’ll go through it sometime and donate the stuff I don’t want.” Niall sighs.

“After the last two hours you spent telling me about everything in that room I doubt they’ll be getting much.” Zayn grins, ducking back in to nibble at Niall’s neck again.

“Oh, just go upstairs.” Liam laughs.

“Care to join?” Zayn asks, sliding his hands down Niall’s back until he finds the Irish man’s bum.


“I’ll put the twins down.” Liam offers. “Meet you guys upstairs in a minute.”

Zayn’s heart is racing and he isn’t sure if it’s because of what’s about to happen, or what already is. Harry’s lips are on his neck, sucking in bruises while his hands open the buttons of his shirt. Niall is behind him, mirroring Harry’s actions with his mouth, but unbuckling Zayn’s jeans instead. “Been waiting for this.” Harry mumbles against the spot right under Zayn’s ear.

“Not nearly as long as I have.” Zayn moans, pulling Harry into a sloppy and mildly desperate snog.

“Now that’s a beautiful sight.” Liam says when he walks in.

“It’ll be better once you join in.” Niall tells Liam before going back to Zayn’s neck.

“What do you want to do?” Liam asks, walking up and slowly unbuttoning his own shirt, his eyes piercing straight through Zayn’s.
“Everything.” Zayn groans, giving in to his greedy side.

“We don’t have the time for everything. That could take days.” Niall whispers. “Narrow it down to a few things. Anything you want, we’ll do.”

“Well there is something I’ve wanted for a long time.” Zayn says, running his thumb over Harry’s bottom lip.

“Say no more.” Harry grins, dropping down to his knees.

“You’re in for a treat.” Liam tells him, immediately filling the space Harry had left. “He’s bloody brilliant at this.”

“I’ve hea-” Zayn starts before Harry’s mouth is on him and every thought he’s ever had is gone. “rd.”

“Words don’t really do it justice.” Niall mumbles, sliding his hand up Zayn’s torso. “Do they?”

“No.” Zayn choked out, curling his fingers through Harry’s hair. It’s even better than he ever thought it would be, and he’s thought about it a lot. It’s warm and wet, Harry taking him all the way to the back of his throat before humming lightly. His tongue does things Zayn has never even imagined. “Haz. Fuck!”

“Just let us know before you cum.” Liam whispers, sending a shiver down Zayn’s spine. “Don’t want this to end too quickly.”

Zayn nods, nearly swallowing his tongue when Liam bites down on his shoulder. If he hadn’t gotten sucked off by Niall in his old bedroom twenty minutes ago he’s sure he’d already be right on the edge of orgasm. It’s just shy of being too much, the stimulation of all three men focusing on him at once. He gets his mind together enough to pull Niall into a kiss, keeping one hand on the back of Harry’s head. Niall’s nails rake across Zayn’s stomach, kickstarting the heat that pools underneath and he knows he has to stop Harry.

“Haz, stop.” Liam says before Zayn can. “He’s close.”

“How did you-” Zayn starts.

“Niall squeezed my arm.” Liam shrugs.

“And I can just tell.” Niall grins.

“Do you just want me to stop for a minute and then keep going, or do you want something else?” Harry asks. His lips are swollen and red, smirking in that impossibly attractive way that only he can pull off. “Because I’m good to keep going, but I can tell Li really wants a turn with you.”

“Haz.” Liam groans. “Don’t push him into anything.”

“Is it true Leeyum?” Zayn asks, turning his full attention to the muscular man fidgeting beside him. “Do you want a turn with me?”

“Yes.” Liam mumbles. “But I know you’ve wanted to be with Hazza for a long time, so you can-”

“What do you want to do to me Leeyum?” Zayn asks, sliding a hand down Liam’s torso until he reaches the waistband on his jeans.

“I want to eat you.” Liam admits. “Wanna hear what kinds of noises you make.”
“Then what are you waiting for?” Zayn asks, smirking as he shrugs out of his shirt and wiggles out of his jeans. “On my back, or all fours?”

“On your back.” Liam tells him. “That way I can see your face.”

“Haz and I might be obscuring that view.” Niall grins.

“Obscure each other.” Liam tells him, his tone commanding. “This is my turn and I’m not getting overshadowed.”

“I seriously doubt that could happen.” Zayn says, far too turned on by the possessiveness Liam is showing about him to be distracted. “Niall, you spend some time with Haz. You’ll get your turn soon enough.”

“Just save your best stuff for me.” Niall whispers in his ear. “Been waiting far too long to have you inside me to let you be too worn out to really fuck me.”

“I promise meri jaan.” Zayn tells him, giving him a peck on the cheek before crawling into the bed with Liam close behind.

He barely has time to get on his back before Liam is pressing his knees to his chest and tonguing at him. It’s insane how good it feels and Zayn lets his approval be known with a loud moan that echoes in his own ears for minutes afterwards. His fingers bury themselves in the duvet, clutching so hard he’s afraid he’ll tear it to shreds. “Oh fuck Leeyum!” he moans.

Liam doesn’t say anything, but he doubles his efforts when his name rolls off Zayn’s tongue. Apparently he really does like that, which Zayn makes note of for later. His eyes flick over to where Harry is doing the same thing to Niall that Liam is doing to him, except Niall is laid out on his stomach, grinding desperately against the mattress. The sight makes Zayn’s cock swell even more, almost painfully hard now, but Liam lays a firm smack on the inside of his thigh to pull his attention back. “Sorry Leeyum.” Zayn mumbles.

Liam rewards him by pressing his tongue flat and licking a slow stripe up him, sending a warm ripple all the way up his body and back down to the tips of his fingers. Zayn is pretty sure he could cum from just this if Liam did it for long enough, but that doesn’t stop his hand from wandering down to his prick and making slow strokes. Liam bats his hand away, causing a low whine to escape past Zayn’s lips before he can stop it. It turns into a moan that arches Zayn’s back off the bed when Liam takes over where he’d left off with his own hand.

A loud smacking noise echoes through the room, followed shortly by a startled yelp from Liam. “You do not get to make him cum Liam!” Niall growls.

“He’ll stop me in time, won’t you Zee?” Liam asks.

“Um-” Zayn says with a gulp, unsure of the answer.

“That tells you everything you need to know.” Niall says, glaring angrily at both of them in turn. “Now is when you bloody pick to lose your self control?”

“He’s really good though.” Zayn offers stupidly, his mind not really giving him anything better.

Niall looks like he’s about to shout something, but then Harry flips him over and crawls over the top of him. “I was doing something you know.” he huffs. “I know you want Zayn to shag you until your brains ooze out your ears, but the least you could do is pay me some attention too.”
“Sorry Haz.” Niall mumbles.

“Not yet you aren’t.” Harry tells him with a wolfish grin. “But we can save that for another time. You go have your fun.”

Liam moves easily to the side, giving Niall full access to Zayn as his legs lower slowly back onto the bed. Niall straddles his thin legs over Zayn’s waist and then lays down on top of the darker man, his lips only millimeters away. “Hey there.” he drawls, sounding as slow and deliberate as Harry usually does.

“Get jealous did you?” Zayn asks.

“No.” Niall huffs. “I’m bloody gagging for it. I need this more than you know.”

“I believe we’ve already had that conversation.” Zayn tells him, deciding to pepper alternating kisses and nips down Niall’s jawline. “Now we’re just wasting time. If you need time, then I can give it to you though.”

“You know bloody well what I want you to give to me.” Niall growls, pushing his hips down against Zayn’s cock and nearly making him cum right then.

“Let me cool down a minute.” Zayn mumbles. “Open you up a bit first.”

“No too much.” Niall whispers to him. “I like it tight.”

“Fuck Nialler.” Zayn groans, passing an arm over Niall’s back and flipping them both over so he’s now on top. “You can’t talk any more or this is never going to last.”

Niall nods, pressing his lips into a thin line. “Okay.” Zayn giggles. “You can talk a little, but first tell me where the lu—”

“Here you go.” Liam says, pushing the bottle of lube into Zayn’s hand before he can finish the question. “Give it back when you’re done yeah? I always end up needing extra when I bottom.”

Zayn’s mind does cartwheels at the thought of watching Liam bottom for Harry, but the truth is that he’ll probably be far too absorbed in him and Niall to pay much attention to the other two. He must be thinking about it for too long because Niall buckles up against him with a low, pleading whine. Their cocks slide together and Zayn almost collapses on top of Niall from the wave of pleasure that rips through him. “Getting to it, Love.” Zayn tells him, a small smile stretching his lips.

“Get to it faster.” Niall huffs, drawing him in for a desperate kiss. “Please Zee.”

“Yeah.” Zayn nods, spilling a puddle of lube onto his hand and coating his fingers. He tosses the bottle back to Liam presses a finger to Niall’s entrance and then asks “You’ll let me know if it’s too much, yeah? If you want to stop at any point, then you have to tell me.”

“I will.” Niall tells him gently. “But I don’t think that’s going to happen, meri jaan.”

Zayn shivers when he hears Niall call him that, blushing a bit at the way the words fall so easily from the smaller lad’s lips. He presses his finger through the tight ring, feeling the way Niall relaxes into it. He doesn’t tense, doesn’t squeeze, but instead reaches down and pulls Zayn’s hand further into himself. “I’m not going to break Zee.” he mutters.

“I’m well aware of what you can handle from my fingers.” Zayn says with a smirk. “But just getting you to cum isn’t the goal here Nialler. I’m going to make love to you, and that requires a certain
degree of finesse for the first time. Just let me take care of you, Love.”

“Yeah, alright.” Niall says with a nod, letting go of his grip on Zayn’s wrist.

Zayn crooks the finger inside the other lad, finding the spot he’d memorized the location of in a heartbeat and sending Niall’s back arcing off the bed and moans echoing off the walls. “More.” Niall gasps.

“All in good time.” Zayn tells him, pressing Niall’s hips back down and kissing at the v-shaped lines of his pelvis. He works his finger in and out slowly, soaking up all the moans that both Niall and Liam are sending careening through the room. He risks a quick glance over at the other pair and watches how Liam writhes and fucks himself down on Harry’s fingers. Zayn, never one to back down from competition decides now is a good time to add the second finger. He pulls out his finger and then slips two inside slowly. “Still good love?”

“Fuck yes.” Niall groans, pushing his arse down to sheath Zayn’s fingers inside him fully.

Zayn works him open properly now, always keeping the pad of one finger circling on Niall’s prostate while the other scissors apart to open the smaller lad up a bit. Niall doesn’t hold back any more, and Zayn doesn’t try to stop him as he pushes up and down wildly, riding Zayn’s hand with everything he has. “Do you want me to go to three now?” Zayn asks.

“No.” Niall grunts. “Just get inside me. Please.”

“Hazza?” Zayn asks, pulling his hand free.

“Lube and a rag.” Harry laughs, tossing him a bundle.

Zayn smiles gratefully and wipes his fingers off on the cloth before squirting more lube onto his hand and coating his prick in it. He lines himself up with Niall’s hole and looks up, a silent question being asked with his eyes. Niall nods, never breaking eye contact with Zayn. There’s a softer look in his eyes now, not as desperate, but still as happy as Zayn has ever seen him.

It takes a few moments for him to push in fully, not wanting to startle Niall with the feeling of it all even as the younger man whines in protest of it. He takes a breath, willing himself under control before pulling back and thrusting back in. Niall is so warm around him, so impossibly tight, that Zayn has to squeeze his eyes shut to keep himself from losing control. The sight of Niall all fucked out is too much and he has to press his lips against Niall’s in a frenzied kiss to stop the moans coming out of him.

His hips move slowly at first, short little thrusts until Niall is tugging on his hair and kissing him more desperately than he ever has before. He finds a better rhythm, one that has Niall groaning and tossing his head back, while still keeping his own orgasm from building too quickly. He angles his hips a bit more upwards and it’s like everything changes in Niall. His nails scrape themselves down Zayn’s arms, scrambling to hold on to anything as he practically screams “Fuck yes! Just like that Zayn!”

Zayn picks up speed, forgetting his self control in favor of chasing his own orgasm. Niall goes rigid underneath him, spurting streams of cum over his own stomach without ever touching himself while Zayn jack-rabbits into him. He cums a few thrusts later, his body rocking forward, even as his mind goes blank. He puts the last vestiges of conscious thought into kissing Niall, soft and slow because this, this is the only thing that matters anymore.

Harry is woken by the sound of the door slamming open and something glass shattering on the
ground. “Get up!” a familiar voice screeches. “Lads, you need to get up right bloody now!”

“Tommo?” Niall groans, somewhere behind Harry. “What the fuck?”

“Get downstairs. Leave your clothes if you’re starkers, because this is more important.” Louis shouts, and then he’s gone.

Harry crawls out of the bed, terrified that one of the twins or the triplets is hurt. His feet race across the floor while three sets follow straight behind him. He flies down the stairs, Liam pulling ahead of him as they race into the foyer. “In here!” Louis calls them from the telly room.

There’s something playing across the screen and Harry’s heart stops beating in his chest. An image of himself, Niall, and Liam, curled up on the sofa at Liam’s birthday party, shows up next to some newscaster’s overly-perky face and the words “Cult of Styles” flare dramatically at the bottom. Everything he’s ever feared is happening, and there’s nothing he can do about it. He can't protect his family from the storm that's about to hit.
I want to preface this by saying that this story means so much to me. It's my baby, and nothing I ever write will be more important to me than this story. For now though, I have to put it on an indefinite hiatus.

Anyone who follows my writing on here knows that at the beginning of April my computer was irreparably broken. Among the other things that were lost, was forty five thousand words of the final chapter of this story. That in itself was hard enough, but Zayn-gate happened too and that struck a particularly strong nerve with this story. I can't write the final chapter the way I want to until I forgive Zayn for abandoning the boys the way he did. Every time I've tried to pick it back up I write him leaving, and that's not the way I want this story to end. I have a plan for this story, but my writing has a habit of getting away from me and I can't let that happen this time.

I'm sorry that I broke my promise about posting the final chapter at the end of May, but I WILL finish this story. I promise that I will, and I won't break this one. It's just going to take some time. Please bear with me for that. I'm sorry because this story, and the people who like it, deserve better than having to wait even longer for the ending, but I just can't give this story that ending right now.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!